

Cultural Representation, Identity, and Meaning Shifts in Multilingual Poetry Translation: A Comparative Study of Indonesian, English, and Hubula

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi budaya dan identitas dalam puisi multibahasa melalui analisis komparatif terhadap puisi berbahasa Indonesia serta terjemahannya dalam bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Hubula. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk-bentuk representasi budaya dan identitas, menganalisis bagaimana elemen-elemen tersebut diterjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Inggris dan Hubula, mengidentifikasi pergeseran atau perubahan makna yang terjadi selama proses penerjemahan, serta menelaah persamaan dan perbedaan di antara ketiga versi bahasa tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif-komparatif. Data penelitian terdiri atas puisi yang disajikan dalam versi bahasa Indonesia, Inggris, dan Hubula. Unit analisis mencakup kata, frasa, klausa, kalimat, dan bait yang memuat elemen budaya, identitas, simbol, metafora, nilai, serta pergeseran makna. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa puisi-puisi tersebut merepresentasikan berbagai elemen budaya, termasuk nilai-nilai spiritual, pendidikan, hubungan sosial, kerja sama, kerja keras, ketekunan, harapan, rasa syukur, rasa hormat, dan aspirasi manusia akan masa depan. Identitas direpresentasikan melalui ekspresi individu dan kolektif, peran sosial seperti guru dan murid, serta secara khusus melalui identitas linguistik lokal dalam versi bahasa Hubula. Simbol dan metafora—seperti jalan, persimpangan jalan, cahaya, pena, dan perjalanan—memainkan peran penting dalam membangun makna budaya dan identitas. Analisis juga mengungkapkan beberapa pergeseran penerjemahan, meliputi pelestarian makna, penambahan, perluasan semantik, modifikasi semantik, penghilangan, dan perubahan pada citraan metaforis. Meskipun makna inti dan nilai-nilai budaya utama umumnya tetap terjaga dalam ketiga versi bahasa, perbedaan muncul akibat pilihan penerjemahan dan struktur linguistik. Versi bahasa Hubula memberikan representasi identitas lokal yang paling kuat melalui kosakata dan bentuk linguistiknya yang khas, sedangkan versi bahasa Indonesia dan Inggris menawarkan aksesibilitas yang lebih luas. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penerjemahan sastra berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai proses pengalihan bahasa, tetapi juga sebagai proses pelestarian, transformasi, dan reinterpretasi makna budaya serta identitas.

This study investigates the representation of culture and identity in multilingual poetry through a comparative analysis of Indonesian poems and their English and Hubula translations. The study aims to describe the forms of cultural and identity representation, analyze how these elements are translated into English and Hubula, identify the shifts or changes in meaning that occur during the translation process, and examine the similarities and differences among the three language versions. This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive-comparative method. The data consisted of poems presented in Indonesian, English, and Hubula versions. The units of analysis included words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and stanzas containing cultural elements, identity, symbols, metaphors, values, and meaning shifts. The findings show that the poems represent various cultural elements, including spiritual values, education, social relationships, cooperation, hard work, perseverance, hope, gratitude, respect, and human aspirations for the future. Identity is represented through individual and collective expressions, social roles such as teachers and students, and particularly through local linguistic identity in the Hubula version.



Symbols and metaphors, such as roads, crossroads, light, pens, and journeys, play an important role in constructing cultural and identity meanings. The analysis also reveals several translation shifts, including meaning preservation, addition, semantic expansion, semantic modification, omission, and changes in metaphorical imagery. Although the central meanings and major cultural values are generally preserved across the three language versions, differences occur because of translation choices and linguistic structures. The Hubula version provides the strongest representation of local identity through its distinctive vocabulary and linguistic forms, whereas the Indonesian and English versions provide broader accessibility. Overall, the study demonstrates that literary translation functions not only as a process of transferring language but also as a process of preserving, transforming, and reinterpreting cultural meanings and identities.



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INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the primary means through which human beings express their experiences, thoughts, values, and cultural identities. In literary works, the relationship between language and culture becomes even more closely interconnected because language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for conveying the social and cultural experiences of a society. One literary form that has a strong capacity to represent such experiences is poetry. Through word choice, metaphors, symbols, imagery, and particular expressions, poetry can portray the ways in which individuals perceive themselves, their communities, their environment, and their future.

The statement above is supported by Sapir (1921: 7) in his book *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. Language is not merely a means of communication; it is also closely connected to the ways in which individuals and communities express experiences, values, beliefs, and cultural identities.

Furthermore, Erimbetova (2025), in *The Role of Language in Shaping Cultural Identity*, emphasizes that language constitutes a fundamental component of cultural identity. It serves as a medium through which individuals and communities articulate, preserve, and transmit their cultural heritage, values, and traditions.

The relationship between language, culture, and identity becomes increasingly complex when a literary work is translated into different languages. Translation is not merely a process of replacing words from one language with those of another; it is also a process of transferring meaning that is closely related to social and cultural contexts. Differences in linguistic systems, cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and the availability of particular equivalents may cause cultural elements to be preserved, adapted, clarified, or transformed in the target text.

In the context of multilingual literature, this issue becomes particularly interesting because a single work may exist in several languages, creating the possibility of shifts in meaning and representation. A poem originally written in Indonesian, for example, may contain particular concepts, values, or experiences that are subsequently translated into English and Hubula. Each translation process has the potential to produce different forms of representation because the target languages possess different linguistic systems and cultural backgrounds.

In this study, the Hubula language is positioned as one of the target languages in the translation of poetry. The inclusion of Hubula provides an opportunity to examine how cultural and identity elements contained in the source text interact with the language and cultural context of the local community. Therefore, translation into Hubula can be viewed not only as a linguistic process but also as a process related to the representation of identity and cultural meaning.

This study uses ten Indonesian poems as the source texts. Each poem has two translated versions, namely an English version and a Hubula version. Thus, the study consists of three groups of texts: ten Indonesian source texts, ten English translated texts, and ten Hubula translated texts. This data

structure enables the researcher to make direct comparisons between the source texts and the two target texts.

One important issue that can be observed through these data is how cultural and identity elements are preserved or transformed during the translation process. Elements such as prayer, family, nature, struggle, hope, social relationships, and particular symbols may not carry exactly the same meanings when expressed in different languages. Therefore, an examination of the three language versions is necessary to identify forms of cultural and identity representation as well as the changes that occur during the translation process.

For example: One of the poems contains expressions related to “prayer, hard work, and belief,” as well as the struggle to face the future. These expressions do not merely convey an individual message about perseverance but may also be examined as representations of values associated with faith, determination, and hope. When these expressions are translated into English and Hubula, it is necessary to examine whether these values and meanings are preserved or undergo changes.

Therefore, the study of poetry translation can provide an understanding of the relationship among language, literature, culture, and identity. This study does not merely examine linguistic equivalence between the source text and the target texts but also considers how translation choices influence the representation of culture and identity contained in the poems.

Based on the explanation above, this study is entitled “Translating Culture and Identity in Multilingual Poetry: Indonesian, English, and Hubula Perspectives.” This study focuses on how culture and identity are represented in ten Indonesian poems and how these representations are preserved, transformed, or shifted in their English and Hubula translations.

METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-comparative method. A qualitative approach is used because the study focuses on the interpretation of meanings, cultural representations, identities, and changes found in translated texts.

The descriptive method is used to describe the forms of cultural and identity representation found in the source texts and target texts. Meanwhile, the comparative approach is used to compare the Indonesian texts with their English and Hubula versions.

This study also employs the perspective of literary translation studies because the research objects consist of poems translated from one source language into two target languages.

Research Objects

The objects of this study are ten Indonesian poems and their two translated versions, namely English and Hubula.

Therefore, the research data consist of:

1. Five Indonesian poems as the source texts;
2. Five English translations as the first target texts; and
3. Five Hubula translations as the second target texts.

In total, there are thirty texts. However, the three versions that have the same title and content are treated as one unit of work consisting of one source text and two target texts.

Data Sources

The primary data source of this study is a collection of ten poems provided by the researcher. Indonesian functions as the source language, while English and Hubula function as the target languages.

Information concerning the author, year of composition, context of composition, and translation process should be recorded when available. Such information is important to support data interpretation and ensure transparency regarding the research sources.

Units of Analysis

The units of analysis in this study are not limited to the poems as complete texts but also include textual parts containing information relevant to the focus of the study.

The units of analysis may include words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and stanzas.

A textual segment is selected as a unit of analysis when it contains cultural elements, identity, symbols, metaphors, values, or changes in meaning relevant to the translation process.

Data Collection Techniques

The data are collected through documentation and intensive reading techniques. The stages of data collection are as follows:

1. Collecting the ten Indonesian poems.
2. Collecting the English translation of each poem.
3. Collecting the Hubula translation of each poem.
4. Assigning codes to each text.
5. Reading the source texts and target texts repeatedly.
6. Identifying and marking textual segments related to culture and identity.
7. Recording changes or shifts that appear in the translations.
8. Organizing the data into an analysis table.

The data codes used in this study are:

- **P1-ID** = Poem 1 in Indonesian;
- **P1-EN** = Poem 1 in English; and
- **P1-HUB** = Poem 1 in Hubula.

The same coding system is applied to all poems up to P5

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument because the processes of identifying, interpreting, and analyzing the data are conducted by the researcher.

To support the analysis process, a coding table is used as an additional research instrument.

An example of the instrument is presented below:

Poem	Indonesian Text Code	English Text Code	Hubula Text Code
P1	P1-IND-01	P1-ENG-02	P1-HUB-03
P2	P2-IND-01	P2-ENG-02	P2-HUB-03
P3	P3-IND-01	P3-ENG-02	P3-HUB-03
P4	P4-IND-01	P4-ENG-02	P4-HUB-03
P5	P5-IND-01	P5-ENG-02	P5-HUB-03

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is conducted through several stages:

Stage 1: Identification of the Source Texts : The researcher reads the ten Indonesian poems and identifies textual segments containing cultural values and identity elements.

Stage 2: Coding : Each data unit is assigned a code based on the poem number and data number.

For example: **P1-IND-01**

This code refers to the first data unit from Poem 1 in Indonesian.

Stage 3: Categorization : The data are classified into categories of culture and identity. Cultural categories may include spiritual values, family, social relationships, nature, hard work, struggle, traditions, the environment, and cultural symbols.

Stage 4: Textual Comparison : Each segment of the source text is compared with its English and Hubula versions.

Indonesian → English

Indonesian → Hubula

The comparison is conducted to identify:

1. Equivalence of meaning;
2. Changes in diction;
3. Changes in metaphors;
4. Additions;
5. Omissions;
6. Changes in symbols;
7. Changes in cultural values; and
8. Changes in identity representation.

Stage 5: Interpretation

After the changes have been identified, the researcher interprets their effects on the representation of culture and identity.

The interpretation does not merely explain that a word has changed but also addresses the following question: What is the impact of the change on the cultural or identity meaning conveyed by the text?

Stage 6: Final Comparison

The results of the analysis of the ten poems are compared to identify general patterns.

For example, the analysis examines which cultural elements appear most frequently, which elements are most often preserved, which elements undergo changes most frequently, whether the English and Hubula translations demonstrate different tendencies, and how identity is represented across the three languages.

Data Trustworthiness

Data trustworthiness is established through theoretical triangulation and data verification. Theoretical triangulation is conducted by using concepts of translation, cultural representation, identity, and literary studies as the basis for interpretation.

In addition, for the Hubula data, the meanings should be validated by involving a native speaker of Hubula or a person with competence in the language. This is important to ensure that the interpretation of terms, expressions, metaphors, and local cultural concepts is not based solely on the researcher's assumptions.

Whenever possible, the interpretation of the Hubula data should be discussed with at least one competent native speaker or an expert in the local language or culture.

Research Procedures

The research procedures are conducted through the following stages:

Stage 1 — Preparation : Collecting the ten poems and all of their translated versions.

Stage 2 — Identification : Identifying cultural and identity elements in the source texts.

Stage 3 — Comparison : Comparing the Indonesian texts with their English and Hubula translations.

Stage 4 — Analysis : Analyzing the forms of shifts and changes in the representation of culture and identity.

Stage 5 — Interpretation : Interpreting the meanings of the identified changes based on the theories used in the study.

Stage 6 — Conclusion : Drawing conclusions regarding the patterns of cultural and identity representation across the three languages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the representation of culture and cultural identity in the translation of multilingual poetry, particularly poems written in the Huwula language and translated into Indonesian and English. The analysis focused on cultural elements, cultural identity, symbols, metaphors, values, meaning changes, translation shifts, similarities, and differences in meaning.

Based on the analysis of the poems, several conclusions can be drawn.

Cultural Elements

The findings show that the poems contain several important cultural elements. The dominant elements include education, hard work, perseverance, cooperation, hope, respect for teachers, and the relationship between human life and the future.

Educational culture is strongly represented in poems such as *The Teacher's Pen*, *The Shack School*, and *Light in the Classroom*. These poems present education as an important part of life. The classroom, school, books, writing, teachers, and learning become important cultural representations. Education is not only presented as the process of gaining knowledge but also as a process of building character, developing dreams, and preparing for the future.

Another important cultural element is the culture of hard work and perseverance. This is particularly represented in the poem *The Light Behind the Struggle*. The poem emphasizes that challenges, difficulties, and long journeys are parts of the process of achieving success. Therefore, the cultural representation found in the poems reflects the belief that effort, patience, and persistence are important values in life.

The poems also represent collective culture. Expressions such as *kami*, *we*, and *nit* in Huwula show that learning and struggling are not represented only as individual experiences. Instead, the poems emphasize togetherness, friendship, cooperation, and shared experiences.

Cultural Identity

The strongest representation of cultural identity is found in the Huwula versions of the poems. The use of local vocabulary functions as an important marker of local identity. Words related to

education, life, the heart, roads, light, work, teachers, books, and learning preserve the linguistic characteristics of the Huwula-speaking community.

Examples of important Huwula expressions include Esagel (light/lamp), Kewela (road/path), Yawu (work), Nyetaiken (heart), Suesika/Aklanen (book-related expressions), and Eken (fruit). These words do not merely function as linguistic units but also carry local cultural meaning.

The findings indicate that language plays an important role in representing cultural identity. The Huwula language preserves the local identity of the poems, while Indonesian provides wider communication at the national level and English makes the poems accessible to an international audience.

Therefore, the three languages have different functions:

Huwula → Local cultural and linguistic identity

Indonesian → National communication and accessibility

English → International communication and accessibility

Translation thus becomes a bridge between local culture and wider audiences.

Symbols

The analysis identified several recurring symbols across the poems. The first major symbol is light, represented through expressions such as Esagel, *cahaya*, and *light*. Light symbolizes knowledge, hope, guidance, understanding, and a brighter future. In the educational poems, light particularly represents the role of knowledge in guiding students.

The second important symbol is the road or path, represented by Kewela, *jalan*, *road*, and *path*. The road symbolizes the journey of life, while walking or moving forward symbolizes progress toward a goal. A long road represents a difficult or lengthy process, whereas a destination represents dreams, goals, or success.

The third symbol is fruit, especially in *The Light Behind the Struggle*. The fruit symbolizes the result of effort, patience, and sacrifice. The image of sweet fruit communicates the idea that positive results may be achieved after a long process.

The symbolic patterns identified in the study can be summarized as follows:

Light → knowledge / hope / guidance

Road → life journey / struggle / progress

Fruit → achievement / result / success

Metaphors

The poems contain several important conceptual metaphors. The most dominant metaphor is:

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

This metaphor appears through expressions involving roads, paths, walking, steps, moving forward, and destinations. The poems represent human life as a journey in which individuals encounter challenges but continue moving toward their dreams and future goals.

Another dominant metaphor is:

KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT

This metaphor appears particularly in the educational poems. Knowledge is represented as something that illuminates, guides, and helps individuals understand their direction in life.

The analysis also identified:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS GROWTH

This metaphor is represented through expressions describing students as growing and developing into stronger individuals.

Furthermore, the poem about struggle represents:

HOPE IS A LIVING THING

and:

SPIRIT IS FIRE/LIGHT

Hope is described as remaining alive or surviving, while spirit is described as not fading or not being extinguished.

The final important metaphor is:

SUCCESS IS SWEET FRUIT

This metaphor represents success as the positive result of a long process of work, sacrifice, patience, and growth.

These metaphors demonstrate that the poems communicate abstract ideas through concrete experiences from human life and the natural environment.

Values

The study found several dominant values in the poems.

First, there is an educational value. Knowledge and learning are represented as important foundations for the future.

Second, there is the value of hard work. The poems emphasize that dreams and success require effort.

Third, perseverance and resilience are important values. Difficulties and challenges are represented as situations that must be faced with strength and determination.

Fourth, the poems contain the value of patience. Success is presented as something that develops gradually and may come “in its time.”

Fifth, there is the value of cooperation and togetherness. Students learn together, share knowledge, and develop collectively.

Sixth, the poems represent respect and appreciation for teachers. Teachers are portrayed as patient guides who share knowledge and contribute to students' development.

Finally, the poems contain the values of hope, confidence, and aspiration. The future is represented as something that requires preparation, belief, and continuous effort.

The major values found can therefore be summarized as:

Education, Hard Work, Patience, Perseverance, Resilience, Cooperation, Respect, Hope, Confidence, Aspiration

Meaning Changes and Translation Shifts

The findings show that the main messages of the poems are generally preserved in the translations. However, several meaning changes and translation shifts occur between the Huwula, Indonesian, and English versions.

The first type is meaning preservation. Central themes such as education, struggle, hope, hard work, knowledge, dreams, and the future are generally maintained.

The second type is meaning modification. Some expressions change their semantic or metaphorical nuances during translation. For example, an Indonesian expression emphasizing cheerfulness may be translated into an English expression emphasizing stories. Similarly, *lebih pintar* may shift into *wiser*, changing the emphasis from intellectual ability to wisdom.

The third type is meaning addition. In some English translations, additional words are used to make the meaning more natural or explicit, such as adding expressions related to care, time, or the direction of a path.

The fourth type is meaning reduction or omission. Certain details from the Indonesian text are not fully expressed in the English translation. For example, an explicit expression about avoiding being lost may become a more general expression about guidance.

The findings also show metaphorical shifts. For example:

Bekal utama → Greatest tool

changes the metaphor of knowledge from something carried as a provision into something used as an instrument.

Similarly:

Tak pernah padam → Never fades

changes the image of a fire or light being extinguished into the image of something gradually becoming weaker.

Thus, translation does not only transfer words from one language into another. It may also modify imagery, semantic nuance, and cultural representation.

Similarities and Differences in Meaning

The main similarity among the Huwula, Indonesian, and English versions is the preservation of the central messages. All versions generally emphasize:

1. The importance of knowledge and education.
2. The importance of teachers and learning.
3. Hard work and perseverance.
4. Hope and confidence.

5. The importance of dreams and the future.
6. Personal growth and resilience.
7. The importance of continuing despite challenges.

The major difference is found in the degree of cultural specificity and linguistic representation.

The Huwula versions contain the strongest local cultural identity because they preserve local vocabulary and linguistic structures. The Indonesian versions communicate the poems within a national linguistic context. Meanwhile, the English versions make the poems understandable to international readers.

Another difference occurs at the semantic level. Although the central message is preserved, some words and metaphors experience modification, addition, or reduction. Therefore, the translated versions may communicate equivalent general ideas without always maintaining exactly the same linguistic or metaphorical nuance.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study concludes that the translation of the selected poems from Huwula into Indonesian and English functions as both a process of cultural preservation and cultural transformation.

The Huwula texts strongly preserve local cultural and linguistic identity through the use of indigenous vocabulary and local linguistic expressions. Indonesian and English translations make the cultural messages more accessible to wider audiences. However, during this translation process, some changes occur in vocabulary, symbolism, metaphorical imagery, and semantic nuance.

The central cultural meanings are largely maintained. The poems consistently represent important values, including education, knowledge, hard work, patience, perseverance, cooperation, respect, hope, and aspiration.

The recurring symbols of light, roads, and fruit strengthen the cultural and philosophical messages of the poems. Light represents knowledge and hope; roads represent life's journey and progress; and fruit represents the results of effort and sacrifice.

Therefore, the findings demonstrate that multilingual poetry can serve as an important medium for representing and preserving cultural identity. At the same time, translation enables local cultural expressions to move beyond their original linguistic community and become accessible to national and international audiences.

In conclusion

Translation preserves the central cultural message while simultaneously transforming certain linguistic, semantic, and metaphorical expressions. The Huwula language remains the strongest marker of local cultural identity, whereas Indonesian and English function as bridges that communicate this identity to wider audiences.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several suggestions are proposed.

For Translators

Translators should pay careful attention not only to the literal meaning of words but also to their cultural meaning, symbols, metaphors, and values. Local expressions should be translated carefully to prevent the loss of important cultural nuances.

When a direct equivalent does not exist in the target language, translators should consider strategies that preserve the original cultural message as much as possible.

For Researchers

Future researchers may conduct further studies involving more Huwula poems or other local languages in Indonesia. Future studies can also compare different translation strategies and examine how cultural identity changes when a local language is translated into national and international languages. Further research may focus specifically on:

1. Cultural-specific words;
2. Metaphor translation;
3. Symbol translation;
4. Semantic shifts;
5. Translation strategies;
6. Local language preservation;

7. Cultural identity in multilingual literature.

For Teachers and Students

Teachers can use multilingual poetry as a learning medium to introduce students to both language and cultural diversity. Students can also learn that local languages are valuable cultural resources that should be appreciated and preserved.

The use of Huwula together with Indonesian and English may help students develop:

1. linguistic awareness;
2. cultural awareness;
3. translation skills;
4. appreciation of local identity;
5. understanding of global communication.

For the Local Community

The local community should continue supporting the preservation and development of the Huwula language. Local language can be maintained through oral communication, literature, poetry, education, documentation, and translation. Writing and translating poetry in Huwula can contribute to:

Language Preservation → Cultural Preservation → Identity Preservation

Therefore, multilingual literary works can become an important way to introduce local culture to younger generations and wider audiences.

Final Statement

The findings of this research confirm that language, culture, and identity are closely interconnected. Through poetry, cultural experiences and values can be represented symbolically and metaphorically. Through translation, these meanings can travel from a local language to national and international contexts.

However, translation may also cause changes in meaning. Therefore, translating multilingual poetry requires attention to both linguistic accuracy and cultural meaning.

Ultimately, the Huwula, Indonesian, and English versions of the poems demonstrate that:

A local language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of cultural memory, values, identity, and worldview.

By preserving the Huwula language while translating its literary expressions into Indonesian and English, local cultural identity can continue to exist while also becoming accessible to a broader world.

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