

# Lexical transformations in the translation of definite and indefinite articles in French sentences into Indonesian

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## ABSTRACT

Definiteness is a discourse property inherent to noun phrases, highlighting the identification of a unique referent. This property exhibits variability across languages, notably in the lexical transformations observed when translating French definite and indefinite articles into Indonesian. “Lexical transformation” here signifies alterations in the lexical meaning during the translation of these articles. This research aims to delineate the forms and underlying reasons for such lexical transformations and their consequent implications in the Indonesian language, both from linguistic and cultural standpoints. Drawing upon data from four French novels and their Indonesian translations, the study employs a descriptive-qualitative approach to explore the manifestation of definite and indefinite articles, the drivers of lexical transformations, and the impacts of these transformations on translations. The analysis indicates that French definiteness is characterized by quantity, type, and informational status markers, while Indonesian definiteness markers are distinguished based on informational status, linguistic proximity, social relations, temporal context, and structural considerations. The examination of translations identifies instances of meaning narrowing, expansion, or shift. Translators strategically implement these modifications in lexical aspects to align with the target audience’s preferences. Moreover, translation induces alterations in definiteness status, subsequently influencing sentence information patterns. In conclusion, definiteness in the Indonesian language is more varied in terms of forms and functions than definiteness in French. The lexical transformation in the translation of definite and indefinite articles encompasses a range of modifications, including the omission of markers and changes in definiteness status, which lead to the narrowing, expansion, or shifting of meanings.

**Keywords:** Definiteness; information patterns; lexical; social relations; transformation; translation

**Received:**

27 February 2024

**Accepted:**

17 April 2025

**Revised:**

21 March 2025

**Published:**

2 May 2025

## How to cite (in APA style):

Sajarwa, S., Arrasyid, N. D., & Thanh, T. N. (2025). Lexical transformations in the translation of definite and indefinite articles in French sentences into Indonesian. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 15(1), 251-260. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v15i1.67422>

## INTRODUCTION

The translation of French definite and indefinite articles into Indonesian often entails lexical transformations due to variances in language systems, cultural contexts, and linguistic distances. Definiteness is the status of a noun phrase that relates to old and new information (Bryant, 2020).

Linguistic distance, a measure of the divergence between two languages, plays a significant role in language variation, reflecting the cognitive processes of its speakers and their perception of life’s phenomena (Bonvillain, 2019). Such transformations lead to alterations in the conveyed information, manifesting as either reductions or

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additions. The structural, cultural, and linguistic discrepancies between French and Indonesian underscore the importance of definiteness for individuals learning French as a foreign language (Darmawangsa, et al., 2020).

Beyond its role in developing language elements, transformation within translation processes also entails re-articulating messages through sentence reconstruction (Sastriyani, 2004). Consequently, transformation extends beyond grammatical adjustments to involve the reconfiguration of messages or meanings, a process known as lexical transformation. Geeraerts (2009) categorize these alterations into changes, expansions, restrictions (narrowings), and shifts in meaning, highlighting the multifaceted nature of lexical transformations in translation, encompassing (1) changes in meaning, (2) expansions of meaning, (3) restrictions of meaning, and (4) shifts in meaning.

Contemporary research on definiteness is segmented into five focal areas: information patterns, grammatical-lexical distinctions, referentiality, marking mechanisms, and language learning. Ward and Birner (2006) explored definiteness in relation to information status, distinguishing between established (old) and novel (new) information. Çanta (2018) examined definiteness through both semantic and grammatical lenses, noting that while the English definite article *the* and indefinite articles *a/an* fall into semantic categories, in Albanian, definiteness is considered a grammatical category. The use of the indefinite article *një* in Albanian, in conjunction with case endings, serves to denote uncertainty, with certainty derived solely from case endings. Kieviet (2017) approached definiteness from a referential perspective, where, for instance, the Rapa Nui article *te* is noted for its referential significance and its function as a demonstrative marker. In contrast to Kieviet, Serrano (2024) reported that in Spanish, the definite article *uno* is a tool for creating desubjectification in discourse, i.e., the cognitive process of personal referential accessibility. Definiteness is also analyzed in terms of markedness, with languages either employing specific markers for definiteness or none at all (Jenks, 2018).

Indonesian is highlighted for its use of both marked and unmarked forms of definiteness (Purnawati et al., 2021), with the clitic *-nya* identified as a definiteness marker (Pastika, 2012), alongside the concept of unmarked definiteness or zero marking (Baskoro, 1998). French is recognized for its use of definiteness markers (Gardes-Tamine, 2018), which contributes to the complexity of translating articles between these languages. Meanwhile, Sicilians use a negative indefinite pronominal as a quantifier marker (Cruschina, 2025).

Scholars have extensively pursued investigations into lexical transformations within translation. This body of research bifurcates into two primary categories: transformations driven by shifts in meaning and those prompted by information alterations. Notable contributions to this field include the work of Pascarina et al. (2017), Smail (2018), and Dost and Tekin (2021), spanning translations of literature, speeches, religious texts, and cinematic scripts. Their collective findings elucidate that lexical transformations manifest across phrases, clauses, and sentences. Parallel investigations have centered on the phenomena of information loss and gain, as demonstrated by Nozizwe and Ncube (2014), who explored the intricacies of translating courtroom dialogues from Ndebele to English, and Yang (2016), who examined the translation of President Obama's speeches from English to Chinese, in which the resulting information in Chinese tends to be more concise than the original English version. From the perspective of language learning, an analysis conducted by Bryant (2020) indicated that learners need to understand the form and function of definiteness, especially language students whose mother tongue does not have definiteness, such as Czech and some Baltic languages. Similarly, the research results of Mukti and Soraya (2024) and Derkach and Alexopoulou (2024) show that language learners have difficulty using definite, indefinite, and partitive articles in their research.

Several studies take a different approach from those mentioned above by examining definiteness in relation to culture, which significantly influences the semantic content of source texts. The interdependence of language and culture is profound and multifaceted (Nasution et al., 2022), with language serving not only as a pivotal cultural component but also as the principal vehicle for cultural heritage transmission, evolution, and dissemination (Purnama, 2023). The translation of address terms exemplifies the intricate relationship between language (or translation) and culture (Tumbole & Cholsy, 2022). Furthermore, the specific domain of articles is intricately tied to historical contexts (Macherey, 2020), underscoring that a comprehensive understanding encompassing cultural facets is essential for grounding translation studies within the broader discourse of language and culture.

Addressing gaps in prior research, particularly the neglect of cultural considerations in the analysis of target language lexical transformations, this study endeavors to elucidate the patterns of lexical transformation evident in the translation of French definite and indefinite articles into Indonesian, with a keen emphasis on cultural dimensions. It poses two pivotal inquiries: (a) What forms do the translations of French definite and indefinite articles into Indonesian take, and (b) What socio-cultural

factors exert influence over the translation of these articles? The question of the form of definiteness translation of French into Indonesian and the social factors that cause it is important because language is part of socio-culture. Answers to these questions aim to furnish a nuanced comprehension of translating French definite and indefinite articles into Indonesian.

## METHOD

This study delved into the lexical transformations encountered in translating definite and indefinite articles from French novels to Indonesian novels, focusing on their forms, causative factors, and the implications for equivalence in the target text. The investigation was based on the premise that translation inherently affects both semantic and cultural equivalence, as the transfer of meaning between languages is shaped by cultural context and norms. While French articles reflect grammatical gender, this analysis of definiteness focuses specifically on cultural and semantic equivalence, without extending to issues of gender. Given the emphasis on written translation, the requisite data were textual, necessitating empirical and authentic sources, specifically the Source Text (ST) and the Target Text (TT) (Williams & Chesterman, 2002). The data encompassed discourses or sentences featuring nouns with markers of definiteness and without such markers in French novels as the source texts and their Indonesian translations as the target texts.

Employing a descriptive-qualitative methodology, this research aimed to elucidate the underlying causes of lexical transformation in translation. Nassaji (2015) articulates that the goal of descriptive research is to detail a phenomenon and its inherent characteristics. Ary et al. (2010) further affirm that qualitative research typically involves data in the form of words, sentences, or images. Creswell & Guetterman (2021) define the qualitative research approach as one that deeply explores information from objects or participants. In contrast, quantitative research, as outlined by Sugiyono (2010), involves the discovery of knowledge through numerical data. Additionally, this study used a matching method to juxtapose the notion of definiteness in French and Indonesian. Intralingual matching is an analytical approach that involves connecting and comparing linguistic elements and characteristics within a single language or across multiple languages (Mahsun, 2005).

The data for this research were derived from four French novels and their Indonesian translations. These four novels were selected due to their popularity and controversies. They also won the best novel awards in French and have been translated into many languages. These included *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage* by Michael Tournier (1971), published by Gallimard, and *Le Rocher de Tanios* by Amin Maalouf (1993), published by Grasset & Fasquelle. Their translations into Indonesian are *Kehidupan Liar*, translated by Ida Sundari Husen (1992), published by Pustaka Jaya, and *Cadas Tanios*, also

translated by Ida Sundari Husen (1999), published by Yayasan Obor Indonesia, respectively. Additionally, the study examined *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert (1972), translated into Indonesian as *Nyonya Bovary* by Winarsih Arifin (1990), and *Syngué Sabour-Pierre de Patience* by Atiq Rahimi (2008), published by P.O.L. Paris and translated as *Batu Kesabaran* by F. I. Mokoginta (2016), published by Jalasutra Yogyakarta. The novels are highly regarded because they have been translated into several languages, including Dutch, Indonesian, and several African languages. The novels have also received awards, such as the Prix Goncourt in 2008 for *Syngué Sabour*, the Prix Goncourt award in 1993, and the Grand Prix des Lecteurs in 1996 for *Le Rocher de Tanios*.

The data collection process involved (i) reading both the French novels and their translations, (ii) identifying the instances of French definite and indefinite articles based on the classification by Gardes-Tamine (2018), (iii) cataloging the translations reflecting lexical transformations of these articles into Indonesian, (iv) noting the effects of such lexical transformations on the Indonesian translations, and (v) documenting all definiteness data from both languages.

Because the definiteness systems of French and Indonesian are different, the data classification is as follows: (i) classifying the translations according to marked and unmarked definiteness and the nature of lexical transformation. This classification aims to identify the definiteness markers in sentences, (ii) evaluating the effects of translating definiteness. This stage is intended to examine the effect of the translation of the source language into the target language, for example, whether there is a change in the status of definiteness from the source language into the target language, (iii) dissecting the causes behind the lexical transformations of marked and unmarked definiteness. This stage aims to discover the factors that cause the change in the status of definiteness, (iv) assessing the implications of translating both marked and unmarked definiteness to explore the implications of definiteness change in Indonesian and (v) synthesizing the findings regarding the translation of French definiteness into Indonesian to illustrate and discover the translation patterns of French to Indonesian definiteness in order to benefit translators.

## FINDINGS

The collected data were categorized according to the forms used to translate definite and indefinite articles, as well as the socio-cultural factors influencing these translations. In total, 423 instances were analyzed: 143 translations retained definiteness markers, while 212 omitted them. Further breakdowns include 177 cases of definite-to-indefinite translation, 24 indefinite-to-definite, 41 cases involving structural changes from indefinite forms, 72 definite-to-indefinite, and 181 definite-to-without-marker translations. Consequently, the data have been systematically organized into three main

categories: translations that preserve definiteness markers, those that omit them, and those that alter the status of definiteness.

The findings show that in Indonesian, definiteness is expressed through various markers such as *ini*, *itu*, *tersebut*, *-nya*, *sang*, *si*, and classifiers like *sebatang*, *seorang*, and *suatu*.

Analysis of the collected narrative discourse data reveals that all nouns are accompanied by either definite or indefinite markers; none appear without such indicators. In contrast, French nouns are always marked with either definite or indefinite articles.

**Table 1**

*Translation of Definiteness with Markers*

N o.	Definiteness	Loss/ Gain	Source Text	Target Text
	Definite	Loss		
	Indefinite	Not found		
1			<i>Le navire était tout près maintenant, et Robinson le voyait distinctement incliner gracieusement toute sa voilure.</i> (VVS: 26) (The ship was very close now, and Robinson could distinctly see it gracefully tilting all its sails.)	<i>Sekarang kapal itu dekat sekali, dan Robinson melihat dengan jelas layar-layarnya terayun-ayun.</i> (KL: 29)
2			<i>Mais, à tout cela, M. Bovary, peu soucieux des lettres, disait que ce n'était pas la peine !</i> (MB: 28) (But, to all this, Mr. Bovary, little concerned with letters, said it wasn't worth it!)	<i>Tetapi Monsieur Bovary, yang tidak punya minat dengan kebudayaan, menganggap hal-hal seperti ini sebagai aktivitas « buang-buang waktu ».</i> (NyB: 16)
3			<i>Dit le professeur, qui était l'homme de l'esprit.</i> (RT: 31) (Said the professor, who was the man of wit.)	<i>"Kata pak guru, yang memang cerdas tersebut."</i> (CT: 34)
4			<i>Il avait le cheveux coupés droit sur le front, comme un chantre de village</i> (MB: 82) (He had the hair cut straight on the forehead, like a village cantor.)	<i>'Rambutnya dipotong lurus di dahi menurut model penyanyi kor gereja desa.'</i> (NyB: 83)
5	Definite		<i>Avant que l'obscurité totale se fasse, Robinson eut encore le temps de voir le capitaine plonger la tête la première par dessus la table. Robinson se leva et se dirigea vers la porte.</i> (VVS: 11) (Before total darkness fell, Robinson still had time to see the captain dive headfirst over the table. Robinson got up and walked toward the door.)	<i>Sebelum kegelapan total terjadi, Robinson masih sempat melihat sang Kapten tersungkur di atas meja, kepalanya yang lebih dahulu kena. Robinson bangkit dan berjalan menuju pintu.</i> (KL: 13)
6		Gain	<i>Hippolyte, le garçon de l'auberge, vint prendre par la bride les chevaux du cocher, et tout en boitant de son pied bot, il les conduisit sous le porche du Lion d'Or où beaucoup de paysans s'amassèrent à regarder la voiture.</i> (MB: 193) (Hippolyte, the waiter at the inn, came to take the coachman's horses by the bridle, and while limping on his clubfoot, he led them to the porch of the Lion d'Or where many peasants gathered to watch the carriage.)	<i>Hippolyte, si bocah pengurus kuda di penginapan, datang untuk mengambil alih urusan kuda dari pak kusir, kemudian dengan terpincang-pincang karena kakinya menderita clubfoot membawa kuda itu ke teras penginapan Lion d'Or, tempat segerombol petani berkumpul untuk menjaga kereta itu.</i> (NyB: 196)
7			<i>Charles monta, au premier, voir le malade</i> (JUDUL: HALAMAN) (Charles went up, to the first floor, to see the patient.)	<i>Charles naik ke lantai pertama untuk memeriksa yang sakit</i> (JUDUL: HALAMAN)
8			<i>Puis il ramassa une branche pour s'en faire une canne et s'enfonça dans la forêt.</i> (VVS: 13) (Then he picked up a branch to make a walking stick of it and went into the forest.)	<i>Kemudian dia memungut sebatang dahan untuk dijadikan tongkat lalu masuk ke dalam hutan.</i> (KL: 13)
9			<i>Une vieille femme, maigre et échevelée, allait et venait en chancelant au milieu du cercle formé par les hommes.</i> (RT: 40) (An old woman, thin and disheveled, staggered back and forth in the middle of the circle formed by the men.)	<i>Seorang wanita tua yang kurus dan lusuh, dengan terhuyung-huyung berjalan di tengah lingkaran yang terdiri dari para pria.</i> (CT: 42)
10	Indefinite		<i>Cependant qu'un tremblement imperceptible faisait bouger les commissures de ses lèvres.</i> (MB: 102) (Meanwhile, a tremble that was imperceptible moved the corners of his lips.)	<i>Suatu getaran lembut menggoyangkan kedua sudut bibirnya.</i> (NyB: 104)

Notes:

MB : Madame Bovary  
NyB : Nyonya Bovary  
VVS : Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage  
KL : Kehidupan Liar  
SS : Syngue Sabour  
BK : Batu Kesabaran

The translation of French definite articles into Indonesian is marked by a wide variety, including the use of the demonstrative *itu* in *kapal itu* (the ship) for *le navire* in datum (1); the demonstrative *ini* or *seperti ini* in *hal-hal seperti ini* (such things) for *la peine* in (2); the particle *tersebut* in *cerdik tersebut* (the shrewd ...) for *l'homme de l'esprit* in (3); the particle *-nya* in *rambutnya* (his hair) for *le cheveux* in (4); the honorific particle *sang* in *sang kapten* (the captain) for *le capitaine* in (5); the particle *si* in *si bocah* (the boy) for *le garçon* in (6); as well as the conjunction *yang* in *yang sakit* (the sick/the patient) for *le malade* in (7). Similarly, the translation of French indefinite articles into Indonesian indefinite markers also varies, including the classifier *sebatang* in *sebatang dahan* (a piece of branch) for *une branche* in (8); the classifier *seorang* in *seorang wanita tua* (an old woman) for *une vieille femme* in (9); and the classifier *suatu* in *suatu getaran* (a tremble) for *qu'un tremblement* in (10).

These findings suggest that in Indonesian, definiteness is not always overtly marked; many sentences contain nouns without explicit definiteness markers. This pattern aligns with Jenks's (2018) view that definiteness fundamentally encodes the identifiability and uniqueness of a referent, but that languages vary in how explicitly they signal this property. In Indonesian, the absence of a dedicated article system like French means that speakers often rely on context and discourse cues to infer definiteness, using markers such as *ini*, *itu*, *tersebut*, or *-nya* only when needed for clarity. Geeraerts (1998) further explains that definiteness is shaped by cognitive and pragmatic factors, emerging from speakers' shared knowledge and communicative needs. Thus, Indonesian speakers can typically determine whether a noun is definite or indefinite based on contextual information, reflecting a pragmatic and flexible approach to definiteness that contrasts with the more rigid, grammaticalized system found in French.

**Table 2**  
*Translation of Definiteness without Markers*

No.	Definiteness	Loss/ Gain	Source Text	Target Text
11	Definite	Loss	<i>Lorsque les pirogues eurent disparu derrière les falaises, Robinson s'approcha du bûcher. (VVS: 42)</i> (When the pirogues had disappeared behind the cliffs, Robinson approached the pyre.)	<i>Ketika perahu-perahu itu telah menghilang di balik karang, Robinson mendekati tempat mayat dibakar. (KL: 44)</i>
			<i>Dans l'autre main, celle de gauche, elle tient un long chapelet noir (SS: 15)</i> (In the other hand, the left, she holds a long black rosary.)	<i>Di tangan kirinya, Ia memegang tasbih hitam (BK: 15)</i>
13	Indefinite		<i>Sauf sur le mur qui sépare les deux fenêtres où on a accroché un petit kandjar et, au-dessus du kandjar, une photo, celle d'un homme moustachu (SS: 13)</i> (Except on the wall which separates the two windows where we hung a small kandjar and, above the kandjar, a photo, that of a mustachioed man.)	<i>Kamar itu kosong. Tanpa hiasan apa pun, kecuali khanjar ↓ golok bermata dua ↓ tergantung di dinding yang memisahkan dua jendela kecil. Di atasnya, ada sebuah foto, foto seorang lelaki (BK: 12)</i>
14		Gain	<i>Quand je pense à ton père, je déteste de plus en plus ta mère. Elle l'a laissé reclus dans une petite chambre humide où il dormait sur la natte. (MB: 115)</i> (When I think of your father, I hate your mother more and more. She left him confined in a small damp room where he slept on the mat.)	<i>Ketika aku memikirkan ayahmu, aku semakin membenci ibumu. Ia meninggalkannya sendirian di dalam sebuah kamar yang kecil dan lembab tempat ia tidur beralaskan tikar dari tangkai daun kercut. (NyB: 117)</i>

Notes:

MB : *Madame Bovary*  
NyB : *Nyonya Bovary*  
VVS : *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage*  
KL : *Kehidupan Liar*  
SS : *Syngue Sabour*  
BK : *Batu Kesabaran*

In French, both definite and indefinite articles are translated into Indonesian with markers as well as without markers. Data (11)–(12) represent translations without markers of definiteness categorized as loss, while data (13)–(14) are categorized as gain. For definite articles, in example (11), *les falaises* is translated into *karang* (cliff). Similarly, for indefinite articles in French, in datum (12) *un long chapelet noir* is translated as *tasbih*

*hitam* (black rosary), and in datum (17) *un vent* is translated as *angin semilir* (a gentle wind). Translations without markers in data (13)–(14) are categorized as gain: in (13), *un petit kandjar* is translated as *khanjar ↓ golok bermata dua* (a double-pointed dagger), and in (14) *la natte* is translated as *tikar dari tangkai daun kercut* (a mat made from pandanus leaves).

Table 3

Implications of Definiteness Translation

No.	Definiteness Status	Source Text	Target Text
15	Indefinite → definite <i>ini</i> (this)	Voici <b>un élève</b> que je vous recommande, il entre en cinquième. Si son travail et sa conduite sont méritoires, il passera dans les grands, où l'appelle son âge. (MB: 107) (Here is <b>a student</b> that I recommend to you, he is entering the fifth grade. If his work and his conduct are meritorious, he will move on to the big leagues, where his age calls him.)	" <b>Murid ini</b> saya serahkan kepada Tuan. <u>la masuk kelas lima</u> . Kalau pekerjaan dan kelakuannya memuaskan, ia akan dinaikkan ke kelas anak-anak yang lebih dewasa yang sebenarnya lebih sesuai dengan umurnya." (NyB: 109)
16	Indefinite → definite <i>-nya</i>	C'était <b>un gros petit homme de cinquante ans, à la peau blanche, à l'oeil bleu, chauve sur le devant de la tête, qui portait des boucles d'oreilles</b> . (MB: 38) (He was <b>a fat little man of fifty, with white skin, blue eyes, bald on the front of the head, who wore earrings</b> .)	<b>Orangnya pendek gemuk</b> umur lima puluh tahun, kulitnya putih, matanya biru, kepalanya botak di bagian depannya, di telinganya ada anting-anting. (NyB: 39)
17	Indefinite → definite with change in structure	On entendit <b>une ritournelle de violon</b> et les sons d'un cor. (MB: 63) (A <b>violin ritornello</b> and the sound of a horn were heard.)	Mereka mendengar <b>biola memainkan lagu refrein</b> dan suara terompet. (NyB: 65)
18	Definite → indefinite	Oui, dit le pharmacien, pas d'imagination, pas de saillies, rien de ce qui constitue <b>l'homme de société</b> ! (MB: 114) (Yes, says the pharmacist, no imagination, no sass, nothing that constitutes <b>a man of society</b> !)	« Memang, » kata apoteker, « tak ada daya khayalnya, tak ada daya kelakar, tak ada apa pun yang lazimnya terdapat pada <b>seorang tokoh masyarakat</b> . » (NyB: 114)
19	Definite → indefinite without marker	<b>Le maïs</b> dépérit complètement, et les pièces de terre où Robinson l'avait semé furent à nouveau envahies par les chardons et les orties. Mais, <b>l'orge</b> et <b>le blé</b> prospéraient. (VVS: 33) ( <b>The corn</b> completely withered, and the patches of land where Robinson had sown it were once again invaded by thistles and nettles. But <b>barley</b> and <b>wheat</b> prospered.)	<b>Tanaman jagung</b> telah musnah sama sekali dan lahan yang baru disemainya kembali dipenuhi tanaman berduri dan semak. Tetapi, <b>tanaman jiwawut</b> dan <b>gandum</b> tumbuh dengan subur. (KL: 32)

Notes:

MB : *Madame Bovary*  
NyB : *Nyonya Bovary*  
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The translation of French definite and indefinite articles into Indonesian results in changes in definiteness status. These changes involve shifting from an indefinite status in the source text to a definite status in the translation, and vice versa. The change from indefinite to definite status is seen in datum (15) where *un élève* becomes *murid ini* (this student); in (16), *un gros petit homme de cinquante ans* is translated as *orangnya pendek gemuk umur lima puluh tahun* (the guy is short, stout, of fifty years old); and in (17), *une ritournelle de violon* becomes *biola memainkan lagu refrain* (a violin playing a refrain). The shift from definite

to indefinite status occurs in datum (18) where *l'homme de société* becomes *seorang tokoh masyarakat* (a social figure), and in (19) where *le maïs* is translated as *tanaman jagung* (corn plants).

## DISCUSSION

The use of articles as markers for definiteness and indefiniteness demonstrates that the reference of a definite or indefinite noun phrase may or may not be identifiable by the interlocutor intralinguistically or extralinguistically. The employment of definite article markers, the demonstratives *itu* (that) and *ini*

(this), is related to the proximity to the speaker. *Ini* is used to refer to entities close to the speaker, while *itu* is used to indicate entities relatively far from the speaker or close to the listener (Alwi et al., 2019). The definite marker *tersebut* is temporal in meaning (Purnawati et al., 2021), originating from the verb *sebut* (to mention) plus the prefix *-ter* (signifying passive form). The clitic *-nya* is included as a definite marker (Pastika, 2012).

In datum (4), the *-nya* in *rambutnya* (his hair) is a definite marker, signifying part of a whole (Macherey, 2020). The definite markers *sang* and *si* are titular articles (Purnawati et al., 2021). *Sang* is used for individuals considered to have a high social status, whereas *si* is for those deemed to have a lower social status. In French, expressions of honorifics are conveyed through pronouns or modes (Gadet, 2003). In datum (7), *yang* serves as a relative pronoun (Budiman et al., 2013), followed by a relative clause. Moreover, *yang* in datum (7) acts as a determiner (Keraf, 2001) and is definite. French indefinite articles are translated into Indonesian in the form of classifiers *sebatang* (a piece of [stick]), *seorang* (a [person]), and *sebuah* (an [item]) in data (8), (9), and (10), respectively. The presence of the above definite markers indicates that they are used to express nouns previously mentioned or understood by the participants in the conversation. Conversely, indefinite markers are used for nouns mentioned for the first time. This condition is similar to Italian (Morosi & Espinal, 2025).

The implication of translating definiteness with markers is that Indonesian has a more diverse range of definiteness markers than French. This diversity is determined by (i) the clarity of the noun being discussed (Gardes-Tamine, 2018), (ii) the proximity of the noun to the speaker (Çanta, 2018), (iii) the structure of phrases using relative pronouns (Sajarwa, 2003), and (iv) the social distance between the speakers. This diversity requires translators to be careful in selecting definiteness markers accurately to ensure the message of the French text is optimally conveyed in Indonesian.

Data (11)–(14) show Indonesian translation sentences appearing without markers, both definite and indefinite. Such markers are referred to as zero markers (Baskoro, 1998). Data (11)–(12) are categorized as loss. In datum (11), *les falaises* is translated as *karang* (cliff) without a definite article, and moreover, *les falaises*, which is plural, is translated into *karang* in singular form, thus reducing information from plural to singular. Indonesian has four types of plural markers: noun reduplication, verb reduplication, adjective reduplication, and numeral words (Alwi et al., 2019; Cholsy, 2005). Meanwhile, the French indefinite article in *un long chapelet noir* in datum (12) is translated as *tasbih hitam* without an indefinite marker, and there is a reduction in information,

namely the loss of the meaning ‘long.’. Conversely, data (13)–(14) are categorized as gain. In datum (13), *un petit kandjar* is translated as *khanjar — golok bermata dua*, without an indefinite marker but with an added explanation of *golok bermata dua* (double-edged dagger). Similarly, in datum (14) *la natte* is translated as *tikar dari tangkai daun kercut* without a definite marker but with an added explanation of *dari tangkai daun kercut* (made from pandanus leaves).

The implications of adding and subtracting in the translation of definiteness without markers lead to difficulties in identifying the definiteness status of nouns due to the absence of markers (Darmawangsa, et al. 2020). The identification of definiteness status relies on discourse context (Purnawati, et al. 2021). Moreover, the addition and subtraction of information impact the equivalence and quality of the translation

The change from indefinite to definite status in data (15) *un élève* becoming *murid ini* (this student) and (16) *un gros petit homme de cinquante ans* becoming *orangnya pendek gemuk umur lima puluh tahun* (the guy is short, stout, of fifty years old) is due to the change in sentence structure between the two languages. French sentence structures with *c’est* or *voici/voilà* are called presentative sentences (Gardes-Tamine, 2018), followed by an indefinite noun. The translation into Indonesian changes the structure by placing *murid ini* as the subject. Subjects tend to have a definite status unless meant for generic meanings (Abbott, 2006). The reason for the change from indefinite to definite status in (15)–(16) differs from (17). The change from indefinite to definite status in (17) *une ritournelle de violon* becoming *biola memainkan lagu refrein* (a violin playing a refrain) is due to the change from a phrase to a sentence. The phrase *une ritournelle de violon* positions *une ritournelle* as the core noun and *de violon* as an attribute. However, in its translation, *biola* serves as the core followed by *memainkan lagu refrein* with *refrein* as the object.

The change from definite to indefinite status occurs in datum (18), with *l’homme de société* becoming *seorang tokoh masyarakat* (a social figure) due to differences between the French and Indonesian language systems. In French, to express something unique, the definite articles *le*, *la*, or *les* are used (Sajarwa, 2003), whereas in Indonesian, the definite classifier *seorang* (a [person]) is utilized (Alwi et al., 2019). The change from definite to indefinite status in datum (19), with *le maïs* becoming *tanaman jagung* (corn plants), is because *le maïs* acts as the subject, while the translation into Indonesian *tanaman jagung* is generic, thus without a definiteness marker.

Changes in definiteness status imply alterations in the status of information conveyed. Nouns designated as definite carry previously

known information, while indefinite nouns introduce new information (Ho-Abdullah et al., 2013). This leads to a shift in the pattern of information presentation, as observed in data (15) and (16), where the sequence of new information followed by old information transitions to old information followed by new information. In contrast, datum (19) exhibits a shift from a combination of old and new information to solely new information. Additionally, in datum (17), the transformation from a phrase to a sentence is accompanied by a shift in information, with *une ritournelle* transitioning from new to old information in its translated form and *violon* being categorized as old information. The implications of these shifts in information status, as seen in datum (18), necessitate translators' precision in rendering unique nouns and their associated markers.

The analysis reveals that lexical transformation in the translation of definite and indefinite articles encompasses a range of modifications, including the omission of markers and changes in definiteness status, which lead to the narrowing, expansion, or shifting of meanings. Translators tailor these lexical transformations to address the requirements of the target text audience. For instance, the elimination of markers in lexical transformations is frequently employed to emphasize the lexical unit's meaning for the target text readers, as demonstrated in data (13)–(14). This approach involves substituting markers with supplementary information. However, such alterations may hinder the target text readers from grasping the intended original meaning.

The diverse lexical transformations outlined are primarily influenced by two factors: the disparities in linguistic systems and cultural distinctions. In relation to culture, this study revealed that the French use the articles *le* or *la* to mark a noun. However, when translated into Indonesian, these articles are sometimes translated into *sang* or *si*, as seen in data (5) and (6). The findings show that articles in French do not indicate social relations, while in Indonesian, they indicate social relations. In Indonesian, *sang* is used as a noun marker for people with high positions, while *si* is used as a marker for people with lower positions.

Such translation choices highlight the need for cultural adaptation, not just linguistic equivalence. The translator must consider not only the grammatical function of articles but also the cultural context in which the target language operates. This adaptation may involve adding honorifics or social markers that are absent in the French source, ensuring the translation resonates appropriately with Indonesian readers.

The uniqueness of each language and culture, as noted by Sajarwa (2021), means that translation is not a mere word-for-word substitution but a process that requires careful negotiation of both form and meaning, encompassing both denotative (literal) and

connotative (implied or cultural) aspects (Olk, 2013). For instance, the use of *sang* or *si* in Indonesian not only marks definiteness but also encodes social relationships and attitudes, which are culturally significant and must be preserved in translation for the text to maintain its intended effect.

Further, the analysis of data (17) and (18) shows that shifts in definiteness status, such as moving from definite to indefinite or vice versa, are sometimes necessary to align with Indonesian linguistic and cultural expectations. These shifts underscore the translator's role in mediating between two cultural frameworks, making choices that reflect both the source text's meaning and the target culture's communicative norms.

Interestingly, current research on definiteness tends to focus on grammatical clarity (Bryant, 2020) or spatial/temporal distance from the speaker (Çanta, 2018) but rarely addresses the social or cultural distance that definiteness markers can convey, as demonstrated in Indonesian. This study thus contributes a novel perspective by highlighting how definiteness in translation can serve as a vehicle for expressing social relationships, a dimension that is often overlooked in traditional linguistic analyses.

## CONCLUSION

From the analysis presented, it is evident that lexical transformation is a significant phenomenon in the translation of definite and indefinite articles, manifesting as either narrowing, expanding, or shifting of meaning. This examination underscores the complexities translators face, impacting both the fidelity and quality of their translations. Due to the diversity of definiteness functions in Indonesian, translators must be careful when translating definiteness from French texts into Indonesian so that there is no change in information. Culturally, translating French definiteness into Indonesian showcases the nuances of linguistic distance and social relationships, distinguishing between individuals of high and low social standing. Indonesian text also features definiteness without explicit markers, where the definiteness status is inferred from the discourse context. Such translations precipitate changes in the definiteness status.

Definite and indefinite articles serve pragmatic roles. This aspect of pragmatism diverges from Contini-Morava and Danzige's (2022) association of definiteness with reference and grounding. The insights into definiteness derived from this research emphasize social relations, contributing significantly to the academic discourse on definiteness. Furthermore, translations that induce shifts in definiteness status offer fresh perspectives to the scholarly examination of definiteness and translation practices.



This study's approach to definiteness, particularly within the narrative discourse of novels, introduces a pioneering angle. Broadening the dataset to encompass oral discourse, such as speeches, interviews, and film dialogues, could generate richer insights. Moreover, the observation that translations affect definiteness status opens avenues for further research into how discourse patterns in French and Indonesian languages evolve through translation. In addition, the analysis of definiteness from a gender perspective also provides great opportunities, as suggested by Gözen and Köroğlu (2022).

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