



Translation Strategies for Culture-Specific Words and Phrases in The Novel *Schön Wie Die Acht*

Reqita Wijaya Al-Makkah¹, Ending Khoerudin¹, Dani Hendra¹
¹ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Article Info

Paper Type:
Research Paper

Received: September 10, 2025
Revised 1: Oktober 20, 2025
Revised 2: November 20, 2025
Accepted: December 02, 2025
First Available online: December
02, 2025
Publication Date: December 02,
2025

Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the translation strategies of culturally-based words and phrases from German into Indonesian in the novel *Schön wie die Acht*. This study uses a comparative descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through documentation studies and analyzed using Peter Newmark's (1988) cultural category theory and Mona Baker's (1992) translation strategy theory. The results show that there are 20 culturally-conceptual words and phrases consisting of five cultural categories, namely material culture, social culture, organizational or conceptual culture, ecological culture, and gestural or habitual culture. The most dominant translation strategy was translation using loanwords and adding explanations. These findings confirm that translators strive to preserve cultural meaning in the target text without losing the original nuances. This study contributes to the study of cross-language cultural translation, particularly between German and Indonesian.*

Keywords: Translation strategies; Culture; Culture-specific terms; German; Indonesian

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, people in Indonesia can easily become familiar with literary works from around the world due to the existence of translation. Many literary works have been translated into Indonesian and can be accessed by purchasing printed books available in physical bookstores and through e-commerce platforms, as well as by reading their electronic book versions.

In translating literary works, translators are confronted not only with linguistic differences, but also cultural differences. Nikola Huppertz's novel *Schön wie die Acht* is a German literary work that contains distinctive cultural elements. These cultural elements include terms, expressions, and customs of German society that do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Indonesian. Therefore, translators must choose the right strategy so that cultural meanings are conveyed without causing misunderstandings. This study aims to identify the cultural categories that appear in the novel and analyze the translation strategies used by the

*Corresponding author: dani.hendra@upi.edu

translator. The ultimate goal of this study is to provide an overview of the translation strategy trends applied in the German-Indonesian cross-cultural context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation is a neutral term used for all types of tasks in which the meaning of an expression in one language (source language) is converted into the meaning of an expression in another language (target language), whether it is oral, written, or symbolic (Crystal, 1987). Translation is also referred to as a general term that refers to the transfer of thoughts or ideas from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL), whether the language is spoken or written (Brislin, 1976). Meanwhile, Newmark (1978) states that translation is a skill that consists of replacing messages or written statements in one language with the same messages or statements in another language. In addition, Newmark (1988) argues that translation is translating the meaning of a text into another language in accordance with the author's intention.

Amir (2012) argues that, denotatively, the verb “translate” or in German, “übersetzen” means “to transfer or shift from one language to another.” The persona of this verb is “der Übersetzer”, which means “someone who translates texts and books, or a translator.” The noun is “die Übersetzung”, which means “a copy of language such as texts and books from one language into another language, or a translation.” The infinitive noun is “das Übersetzen”, which means “translation.” Translation here refers to the process and points to an activity. From this explanation, we can see that the meaning of translating refers to the process and activity of translating. It can be said that the verb translate is a term that has the same meaning as translation.

According to Crystal (1987), the purpose of translation is to provide an equivalent meaning between the source language and the target language. In line with this, Sinclair (1994) also states that the main purpose of translation is to reproduce the message in the target language. Meanwhile, Larson (in Ginting, 2022) mentions that the purpose of translation is to convey the meaning of the source text clearly in the translation. Furthermore, Ma'mur (2004) mentions that every translation activity (written text) aims to produce a translation, and every translation produced is intended to help bridge the communication gap between the author of the source text and the reader of the target text.

Amir (2012) explains that translation serves to convey messages from source language to target language in a reasonable manner and as closely as possible, both in terms of meaning and style. That way, target language readers can still understand the content of the text well, as if they were reading the original version. In addition, translation also opens the way for readers to learn about the knowledge, information, and culture of other countries or languages. In the world of education, translation is also useful as a language and cultural skill exercise, especially for students or learners of foreign languages. Through translation, they can learn to understand sentence structure, idiom usage, and adapt texts to the appropriate cultural context. Thus, translation is not just about replacing words, but also conveying meaning so that it can be understood by readers.

Lorscher (in Junining, 2018) explains that translation strategies are methods used by translators to solve problems when translating. Translation strategies apply when a problem is identified in the translation process. Meanwhile, Mona Baker (in Hapsari et al., 2020) explains that translation strategies are various methods used by translators to overcome problems when translating words, expressions, or concepts that do not have direct equivalents in other languages. With these strategies, translators can still convey the same meaning or message to readers, even though the words are different. Furthermore, Mona Baker (1992) in her book *In*

Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation explains that there are eight strategies used to overcome lexical (word) equivalence problems in translation, namely as follows:

1. Translation by a more general word
This strategy uses words with more general or broad meanings if there are no specific equivalents in target language. The translator chooses words that are more common or have a broader meaning so that readers can still understand the intended meaning.
2. Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word
This strategy is used when a word in the source language has an expressive or emotionally strong meaning, or is related to a specific cultural value, but does not have an equivalent in target language.
3. Translation by cultural substitution
This strategy is carried out by replacing cultural terms in source language with equivalents that are more familiar and have a similar impact in target language culture. This strategy allows target language readers to feel a similar impact of meaning, even though the cultural terms are different.
4. Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation
This strategy uses loanwords or loanwords accompanied by explanations. The translator retains terms from the source language because they are considered to have a cultural context that is difficult to translate directly.
5. Translation by paraphrase using a related word
This strategy uses related words. It is usually used when a concept in source language actually has an equivalent in target language, but the form or usage is different.
6. Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words
This strategy is typically used when no direct equivalent is found in target language, or when the existing equivalent sounds unnatural when used. In this case, the translator chooses to convey the main meaning clearly with phrases that are more familiar to target language readers, even if it means sacrificing the cultural context implied in the original term.
7. Translation by omission
This strategy removes certain parts of the source text because they are considered irrelevant, too difficult to translate, or could confuse readers in the context of the target language culture. This strategy allows the translated text to remain natural and neutral without losing its main message.
8. Translation by illustration
This strategy is used when a word has no direct equivalent in target language, especially when it concerns concrete objects, so images can be used as substitutes to convey meaning. This approach not only helps readers understand the concept without needing a lot of text, but also maintains a concise, compact appearance that is not cluttered with additional explanations.

Challenges faced by translators in translating cultural terms

According to Benny Hoed (in Junining, 2018), translation is a one-way activity, meaning that a text in target language can only be formed if there is a translation process from source language. In this case, the formation of the translated text is highly dependent on the existence and understanding of the source text. The main problem often faced by translators is the difference in patterns and structure between the source language and the target language. In line with this, Nida (in Junining, 2018) identifies that problems in translation generally cover four main aspects, namely linguistic, socio-cultural, religious-cultural, and material-cultural aspects.

The theory of cultural categories in translation

Newmark (1998) explains the concept of culture based on several categories in translation, namely:

1. Ecology: flora, fauna, geographical names, wind or weather elements, plains, hills. For example, *honeysuckle* (a type of plant) and *selva* (tropical rainforest).
2. Material culture (artifacts):
 - a. Food and drink
For example, *Kaiserschmarren* (a type of pancake)
 - b. Clothing
For example, *kanga* (from Africa)
 - c. Houses and cities
For example, *kampong* and *tower*
 - d. Types of transportation
For example, *rickshaw* (a two-wheeled cart pulled by humans in Japan)
3. Social culture
For Example, *work and leisure*.
4. Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts: political and administrative terms, religion, and art.
For example, *temple* (kuil or candi).
5. Gestures and habits.
For example, *spitting*

Meanwhile, Bugarski (1985) mentions that cultural elements and systems range from food, clothing, work, entertainment, sports, to economic, political, religious, legal, and philosophical systems.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a comparative descriptive research design with a qualitative approach. The research focuses on comparing the source text and the target text in order to describe cultural elements and translation strategies used in the translation of the novel.

Research Population

The population of this study consists of all cultural expressions found in the German source text and the Indonesian target text of the novel *Schön wie die Acht*.

Research Sample

The sample of this research includes selected data in the form of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences containing cultural elements that are classified according to Peter Newmark's (1988) cultural categories.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a documentation study by examining the source text (German) and the target text (Indonesian) of the novel *Schön wie die Acht*. Relevant data containing cultural elements were identified and classified based on Newmark's cultural categories: material culture, social culture, organizational or conceptual culture, ecological culture, and gesture or habit culture.

Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The cultural data were examined to identify the translation strategies applied, based on Mona Baker's (1992) theory, which includes eight strategies: translation using more general words, more neutral or less expressive words, cultural substitution, loanwords or loanwords with explanation, paraphrasing using related words, paraphrasing using unrelated words, omission, and illustration.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that there are 20 cultural concepts in the novel *Schön wie die Acht*. Each concept is classified into cultural categories according to Peter Newmark's theory (1988). The following table summarizes the cultural categories and translation strategies used:

Table 1. Classification of Culture-Based Words and Phrases

No.	Cultural Categories	Frequency
1.	Ecology	1
2.	Material culture	12
3.	Social culture	4
4.	Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts	2
5.	Gesture and habits	1
Total		20

Based on the table above, material culture is the most dominant category. This shows that cultural elements that are physically visible or related to the daily life of German society appear more frequently in literary texts.

Example of an ecological cultural term: Überweidung der Tundra Überweidung der Tundra: Overgrazing in cold regions

For example, according to Duden, *Überweidung* is *das Überweiden oder das Überweidetwerden*, which means overgrazing or being overgrazed. Furthermore, *die Tundra* is *baumlose Steppe nördlich der polaren Waldgrenze oder Kältsteppe*, which means treeless steppe north of the polar forest line or cold steppe. *Überweidung der Tundra* falls under the category of ecology, specifically flora, because it refers to a unique and specific natural condition, namely the tundra, which is only found in the northern hemisphere (Arctic Circle), as well as near Antarctica and on high mountain peaks.

In terms of translation strategy, several strategies were found, as summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Classification of Translation Strategies

No.	Translation Strategies	Frequency
1.	Translation by a more general word	4
2.	Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word	1
3.	Translation by cultural substitution	3

No.	Translation Strategies	Frequency
4.	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation	10
5.	Translation by paraphrase using a related word	1
6.	Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words	0
7.	Translation by omission	1
8.	Translation by illustration	0
Total		20

The most dominant translation strategy is the use of loanwords accompanied by explanations. This strategy allows translators to preserve the original cultural meaning while providing additional understanding to readers. This finding is in line with Baker's (1992) view that in a cross-cultural context, the strategy of adding explanations is very effective in maintaining a balance between fidelity to the source text and comprehensibility of the target text.

Example of Translation Strategy with Common Words: Überweidung der Tundra Überweidung der Tundra: Overgrazing of livestock in cold regions

For example, the translation of this term uses a translation strategy with more common words, because the technical and culturally specific term “Tundra” is replaced with a more common form, namely “cold regions,” to make it easier for readers of the target language to understand.

Table 3. Data on Culture-Based Words and Phrases in the Novel *Schön wie die Acht*

No.	Ch apt er	Page	Source Language	Page	Target Language	Cultural Category	Translation Category
1.	1	6	Abendbrottisch	8	Meja makan	Material culture, house and city	Translation by a more general word
2.	1	8	Hobbykeller	11	Rubanah (Ruang bawah tanah)	Material culture, house and city	Translation by a more general word
3.	1	8	Herr	11	Herr (Herr is the German form of address for men. It is equivalent to Tuan in Indonesian)	Social culture, greetings	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation

4.	1	8	Kita	12	Taman kanak-kanak	Organisasi atau konsep	Translation by cultural substitution
5.	2	20	Überweidung der Tundra	22	Kelebihan hewan di daerah dingin	Ecology	Translation by a more general word
6.	2	17	Frau	18, 24	Frau (Frau is the German word for “woman.” It is equivalent to ‘Miss’ or “Mrs.” in English)	Social culture, greetings	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation
7.	3	31	Papas Vortrag	33	Celoteh Papa	Social culture, social interaction	Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word
8.	3	31	Den Kartoffelauflauf	33	Kaserol kentangya	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation using a loan word
9.	5	54	Abendbrot	59	Makan malam	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation by a more general word
10.	6	68	Der Waschbeton	74	Beton agregat	Material culture, house and city	Translation by paraphrase using a related word
11.	7	75	Unerträgliche Spießertussi	81	Borjuis menyebalkan	Social culture, social interaction	Translation by omission
12.	7	77	Bechamelsoße	83	Saus Bechamel	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation using a loan word

13.	8	93	Salbeitee	100	Teh sage	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation using a loan word
14.	8	99	Grießbrei	102	Bubur semolina	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation using a loan word
15.	10	106	Frikadelle	116	Perkedel daging	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation by cultural substitution
16.	11	125	Quer-durch-Land-Ticket	137	Tiket Quer-durch-Land (The Quer-durch-Land ticket is a daily train ticket that allows a person to travel to any city in any state in Germany on regional trains operated by Deutsche Bahn)	Material culture, transportati on	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation
17.	15	172	Eine Tüte Haribo	187	Sekantong perman haribo	Material culture, food and beverages	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation
18.	15	180	Tannenbaum	195	Pohon natal	Gesture and habits	Translation by cultural substitution
19.	17	199	REWE	217	REWE (REWE is a supermarket chain in Germany)	Material culture, house and city	Translation using a loan word or loan

							word explanation	plus
20.	19	217	Das Abi	237	Abitur (The Abitur is an exam taken at the end of secondary education in Germany, which also serves as a qualification for admission to a university)	Organizatio ns and concepts	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation	

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the most frequently used translation strategy in the novel *Schön wie die Acht* is translation with loanwords accompanied by explanations. This shows that translators strive to preserve elements of the original culture so that they are not lost in the translation process. Thus, the translation of literary works plays an important role in introducing German culture to Indonesian readers while maintaining accuracy of meaning and cultural context.

From this study, it is hoped that translators will not only understand lexical meaning, but also choose appropriate strategies so that target language readers can understand the text without losing its original cultural context. Then for readers, this study shows that literary translations are always influenced by the translator's choice of strategy, which can affect the understanding of texts that contain foreign cultural contexts. Furthermore, for translation studies, this research reinforces Peter Newmark and Mona Baker's theory with concrete evidence from the translation of a novel from German into Indonesian. These findings demonstrate how the theory can be applied in practice in literary texts, particularly when dealing with cultural contexts or terms.

Author contribution statement

Author 1: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing original draft.

Author 2: Supervision, writing review, validation, and final approval of the manuscript.

Author 3: Supervision, writing review, validation, and final approval of the manuscript.

All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express her gratitude to his supervisor, fellow students, and everyone in the German Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Language and Literature Education, Indonesia University of Education, who have provided guidance, support, and input in the preparation of this article.

REFERENCES

- Al-maziidi, A. K. M., & Hariri, T.** (2022). Translation strategies of cultural words in the novel *Kimi No Na wa* from Japanese into Indonesian. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Jepang Undiksha*, 8(1), 74–84.
- Amir, A.** (2012). Translating German as a source language into Indonesian as a target language: A conceptual-theoretical study. *Allemania*, 2(1), 67–80.
- Baker, M.** (1992). *In other words: A coursebook on translation*. Routledge.
- Dadi, N. W., Wedayanti, N. P. L., & Budiana, I. M.** (2018). Translation strategies and meaning shifts of social cultural terms in the translation of *Garudayana Saga* comics volumes 1–4 by Is Yuniarto. *Jurnal Humanis*, 22(4), 987–995.
- Hapsari, E. K., Setiawati, N., & Mutiara, B.** (2020). Translation strategies of social and organizational cultural terms. *Kagami: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Bahasa Jepang*, 11(1), 16–29.
- Haq, J. A., & Hardjanto, T. D.** (2019). Translation strategies of cultural words in the novel *Bumi Manusia* or *This Earth of Mankind* (Indonesian–English). In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Linguistics*. Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Indriyany, F. N.** (2019). Translation strategies of culturally conceptual words in the translated novel *The Great Gatsby*. In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Linguistics*.
- Junining, E.** (2018). *Translation strategies and practical techniques*. Universitas Brawijaya Press.
- Keesing, R. M.** (1974). Theories of culture (A. Marzali, Trans.). *Antropologi Indonesia*, (52), 1–15.
- Kuswarini, P., Hasyim, M., & Harisman, H.** (2023). Translated literary works in comparative literature studies. In *Proceedings of SEMNASTRA 2: National Seminar on Literature*. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370760634>
- Newmark, P.** (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Nord, C.** (1997). Defining translation functions: The translation brief as a guideline for the trainee translator. *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*, (33), 39–54.
- Poerwanto, M. A.** (2024). Cultural transition in literary translation: Challenges and innovations. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(2), 299–312.
- Satori, D., & Komariah, A.** (2014). *Qualitative research methodology*. Alfabeta.
- Sujarweni, V. W.** (2014). *Research methodology*. Pustaka Baru Press.
-