

# TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES AND TRANSLATION IDEOLOGIES OF CULTURE SPECIFIC ITEMS IN THE NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY *STREET FOOD: USA*

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## Abstract

This study investigates and classifies culture-specific items in the Netflix documentary *Street Food: USA*, along with the translation techniques and ideologies applied. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data source was the Netflix documentary *Street Food: USA*, using English and Indonesian subtitles as target language. A total of 164 data containing culture-specific items were analyzed. The study draws on Newmark's (1988) theory for culture-specific items, Molina and Albir's (2002) framework for translation techniques, and Venuti's (2004) concept of translation ideology. Data were analyzed using translation equivalence and distributional methods. All categories of culture-specific items were identified in the subtitles. Material culture dominated (95 instances), followed by social organization (39), social culture (28), and ecology (1). Nine of eighteen techniques were identified. Pure borrowing was most frequent (78), followed by literal translation (36), adaptation (10), reduction and amplification (3), and particularization and calque (1). The dominant couplet technique was literal + pure borrowing (12). Foreignization dominated (145), while domestication appeared in 19. These findings contribute to audiovisual translation studies by demonstrating how subtitle translators negotiate cultural preservation and audience accessibility in documentary contexts.

**Keywords:** *culture specific items; netflix documentary; translation ideologies; translation techniques.*

## 1. Introduction

In the current era of digital globalization, audiovisual translation has become increasingly important in facilitating cross-cultural communication and enabling audiences to access information beyond linguistic boundaries. The rapid expansion of streaming platforms has intensified the global circulation of audiovisual content, making translation an essential medium for transferring meanings across languages and cultures. Among these platforms, Netflix has become one of the most influential global streaming. In Indonesia, Netflix is the most popular streaming platform (Alfianti et al., 2026). The platform has reached users in 190 countries and continues to broaden its marketing strategies to strengthen its global presence (Januar et al., 2023). Netflix has many genres to offers to viewers, including

documentary film. *Street Food: USA* is one of Netflix documentary. Documentary film portrays real life events and social realities. According to Plantinga (2005) documentaries can be classified into six categories, one of which is the observational mode. *Street Food: USA* is an observation documentary, which is this film shows the American society, the traditional foods, and the immigrant community in American. This film highlights the cultural diversity of United States and explored the culinary heritage by immigrant communities, such as Latino, Asian, and African American culture.

However, translation is not merely the replacement of words from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL), but a communicative and cultural process. According to Catford (1965), translation involves transferring textual material from one language into another while maintaining equivalence at the linguistic level.

Prior studies have highlighted the gap. Simbolon et al. (2025) investigated the translation ideologies and techniques of song lyrics. Kurniawan (2023) focused on culture specific items, translation techniques, and translation method on Novel. Firdaus and Putrananda Naully (2022) analyzed cultural terms and techniques of film. Yatuzzuhriyah and Hilman (2022) focused on translation techniques and translation quality in novel. Thus, several previous studies have not fully explored the culture specific items, translation techniques, and translation ideologies on documentary film.

To address this gap, this study extends previous translation studies by examining how culture specific items categorization, translation techniques, and ideology interact within documentary subtitle translation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Culture Specific Items**

Culture is a broad concept that can be categorized into Big-C Culture and Small-C Culture. According to Kramsch (1998) Big-C Culture refers to visible and tangible aspects such as arts, history, literature, national figures, and political systems. In contrast, Small-C Culture encompasses beliefs, social norms, interaction patterns, some visible (e.g., religious celebrations) and others embedded unconsciously in identity. Moreover, Hall's (1977) cultural iceberg model illustrates that culture consists not only of visible elements such as food, clothing, and language, but also invisible elements including values, perceptions, and social norms.

According to Newmark (1988), culture specific items consist of five categories, such as ecology, material culture, social culture, social organization, also gestures and habits.

### **2.2 Translation Techniques**

According to Newmark (1988, as cited in Hartono, 2020), translators may employ one or more techniques in the process of translating texts. Using one technique is referred to as a single technique, while combining two techniques is known as a couplet. Many experts have introduced different terms to refer to these translation procedures. Different scholars use varied terminology: Vinay and Darbelnet (1977) call them procedures, Newmark (1988) procedures, Vazquez-Ayora (1977) operative techniques, Hatim & Munday (2004) strategies, and Molina & Albir (2002) translation techniques. Then, the translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002) consists of eighteen categories, including adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent,

generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation.

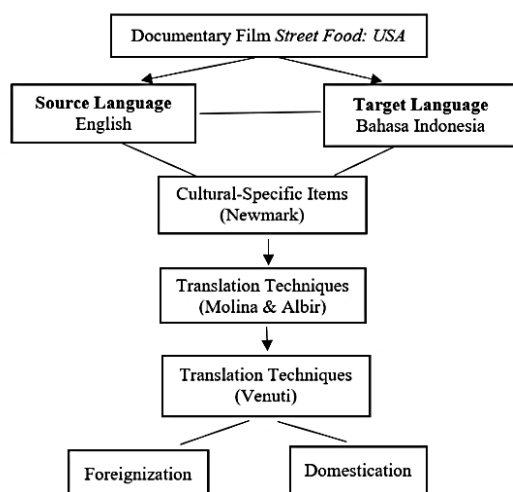
### 2.3 Translation Ideologies

Translation ideology encompasses the values and assumptions that guide translators in negotiating cultural and linguistic differences between source and target texts. Venuti (2018) identifies two influential ideological orientations in translation: foreignization and domestication. Foreignization emphasizes the preservation of source-culture elements and linguistic peculiarities, encouraging target readers to engage with the cultural distinctiveness of the original text. By maintaining traces of the source culture, this approach challenges ethnocentric tendencies and promotes intercultural awareness. Conversely, domestication adapts the source text to the linguistic conventions and cultural expectations of the target audience, producing a more fluent and natural-sounding translation. While domestication facilitates readability and accessibility, foreignization foregrounds cultural diversity and the visibility of the translator. Consequently, these ideologies serve as important analytical frameworks for examining translators' decisions and their impact on cross-cultural communication (Munday, 2016; Venuti, 2018).

### 2.4 Conceptual Relationship

**Figure 1.**

*Conceptual Relationship*



This study analyzed the English-Indonesian subtitles of a documentary film and draws on Newmark's (1988) theory for culture specific items, Molina and Albir's (2002) framework for translation techniques, and Venuti's (2004) concept of translation ideology.

The previous studies, Eryanto et al. (2024) analyzed subtitles of the Netflix film *Forrest Gump*, focusing on translation quality. Khoiriyatunnisa & Yuniar (2022) examined subtitles of the film *Al-Farabi*, focusing on translation strategies. Both studies focused on fictional films and emphasized translation quality and strategies. By contrast, this study examines a non-fiction documentary that highlights cultural practices and everyday habits. This study specifically analyzes subtitle translation, focusing on techniques and ideology.

### 3. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen to examine translation ideology, techniques, and culture specific items in depth. The researcher served as the primary instrument, functioning as observer, analyst, and interpreter, consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of human instrument.

Furthermore, this study analyzes the Netflix documentary *Street Food: USA*, focusing on English-Indonesian subtitles. Although, the documentary film consists of six episodes, four were selected for analysis due to their shared focus on African and Asian cultural representations in the United States. The study employed purposive sampling. The first series from Los Angeles, California, with a duration of 35 minutes, followed by Portland, Oregon (30 minutes); Oahu, Hawaii (32 minutes); and Miami, Florida (28 minutes). Data were analyzed using translational equivalence to assess meaning transfer and distributional methods to examine linguistic structures. The distributional method was applied to analyze linguistic structures of culture specific items across source and target language. Data classification was independently by two translation scholars. The subtitle source was obtained from Netflix.

The data collection in this study employs the observational method (*metode simak*), which is divided into two stages: basic and advanced techniques (Sudaryanto, 2015). The basic technique involves the tapping technique (*teknik sadap*), which is used to extract subtitles from the documentary series of *Street Food: USA*. The advanced technique consists of the taking-note technique (*teknik catat*), whereby the researcher records vocabulary containing translations of cultural terms and organizes into a data table. Data collection involved watching the documentary, extracting English and Indonesia subtitles, identifying culture specific items, and compiling them into categorized tables for analysis.

The data analyze process by several stages. First, analysis proceeded through observation, followed by identification of culture specific items, classification by category, and examination of translation techniques and ideologies.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Culture Specific Items

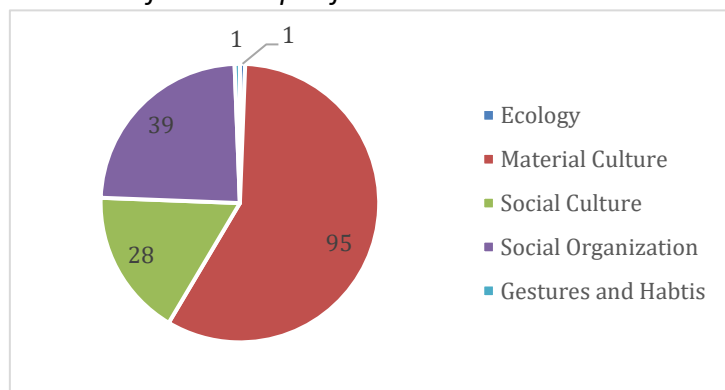
**Table 1**

*Culture Specific Items Category*

No.	Culture Specific Items	Occurrences	Percentages
1.	Ecology	1	0.6%
2.	Material Culture	95	57.9%
3.	Social Culture	28	17.1%
4.	Social Organization	39	23.8%
5.	Habits and Gestures	1	0.6%
Total		164	100%

**Figure 2.**

*Pie chart of Culture Specific Items*



### 1. Ecology

SL: "I was born and raised on **Oahu**, and on the weekend my dad and I come up to the North Shore and spend time with family". (5:40)

TL: "*Aku lahir dan besar di **Oahu**, dan di akhir pekan, aku dan ayahku pergi ke Pesisir Utara, kumpul keluarga.*"

Oahu is classified as an ecological cultural term, denoting a Hawaiian island with distinctive environment features. This finding support Newmark's concept of culture specific items, is connected to geographic features. The ecological category only one occurrence identified. This finding can be interpreted in relation to the thematic focus of *Street Food: USA*, which highlight culinary traditions, personal stories of food vendors, and culture habits. This findings differs with Muslim & Triyono (2022) that focused on ecology term. The discrepancy explained by different genre.

### 2. Material Culture

SL: What can I get for you today. A rib **banh mi**. (3:49)

TL: *Mau pesan apa hari ini.? **Banh mi** rusak.*

Banh Mi, a traditional Vietnamese bread, is categorized as material culture. Material culture was the third most frequent category, with 95 identified. This finding support Newmark's cultural classification, such element belongs to material culture because it represents product and object and align with previous studies Sari & Gusthini (2023), reported the material culture dominated to foods. This finding is consistent with the genre film *Street Food: USA* that focus on local foods and cultural artifact.

The translator preserves the local food name, because local food and cultural artifact often lack equivalent in target language, thus the culture specific concept embedded in the authentic culinary tradition.

### 3. Social Culture

SL: We usually have a **potluck**, make a bunch of dishes, and enjoy the time together. (5:53)

TL: *Kami biasanya **makan bersama**, buat banyak hidangan, dan menikmati waktu bersama.*

Potluck, a communal dining tradition in North America, is categorized as social culture. The term '*makan bersama*' is more familiar in TL. The translator employed this term to enhance comprehensibility and cultural accessibility. This support Venuti's concept of domestication and align previous studies from Jaya (2020).

#### 4. Social Organization

SL: Man, you doing some **vodou** or something, man. (20:51)

TL: *Kau melakukan **Vodou** atau semacamnya.*

Vodou, originating in West Africa and Haiti, is categorized under social organization as a religious belief system. The translator retained the SL term in its original form to preserve its cultural authenticity. It supports the Newmark's concept of social organization and aligns previous studies from Sari & Gusthini (2023).

#### 5. Gestures and Habits

SL: *Just smile and **shaka**.* (28:20)

TL: Senyum dan beri tanda **shaka**.

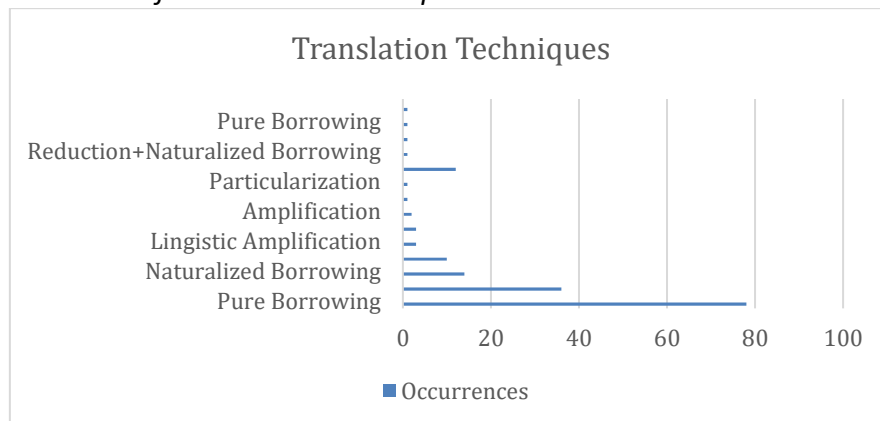
Shaka is a gesture hang loose classified under gestures and habits. It was the least frequent of culture specific items, with only one occurrence identified. This support with Newmark's classification of culturally specific body language and align previous studies from Korneenkova, et al. (2025). As a result, the finding focused on material culture and social culture. Therefore, visual gestures are not prominently highlighted in the documentary.

### 4.2 Translation Techniques

**Table 2.**

*Translation Techniques Category*

No	Translation Techniques	Occurrences	Percentages
<b>Single Technique</b>			
1.	Pure Borrowing	78	47.56%
2.	Literal	36	21.95%
3.	Naturalized Borrowing	14	8.54%
4.	Adaptation	10	6.10%
5.	Linguistic Amplification	3	1.83%
6.	Reduction	3	1.83%
7.	Amplification	2	1.22%
8.	Calque	1	0.61%
9.	Particularization	1	0.61%
<b>Couplet Technique</b>			
10.	Literal + Pure Borrowing	12	7.32%
11.	Reduction + Naturalized Borrowing	1	0.61%
12.	Pure Borrowing + Particularization	1	0.61%
13.	Pure Borrowing + Calque	1	0.61%
14.	Literal + Naturalized Borrowing	1	0.61%
Total		164	100%

**Figure 3***Bar Chart of Translation Techniques***4.2.1 Single Technique****1. Pure Borrowing**

SL: A lot of people say, “**Carnitas** is just carne”

TL: *Banyak orang bilang, “**Carnitas** hanya carne”*

Carnitas, a Mexican pork dish, was retained through pure borrowing due to lack of TL equivalence. The dominance of pure borrowing indicates the translator’s preference for preserving source-culture authenticity. This finding supports Molina & Albir’s concept of pure borrowing and aligns with previous translation studies from Doni Jaya (2020), that pure borrowing technique indicates to foreignization.

**2. Adaptation**

SL: I was still on **Section 8 housing**. (12:19)

TL: *Aku masih di **perumahan subsidi**.*

Section 8 Housing refers to a housing assistance program in the United States that provides rental vouchers to low-income residents. the translator chose to use *perumahan subsidi* in order to make it more accessible and comprehensible for target language (TL) audiences. It was used because the SL lacks an equivalent term. This finding supports Venuti’s concept of foreignization and aligns with previous studies from Doni Jaya (2020) and Hadi et al. (2020), adaptation technique indicates to domestication.

**4.2.2 Couplet Techniques****1. Reduction + Naturalized Borrowing**

SL: Food in LA, in **strips malls** and on the street, is incredibly rich, incredibly diverse, and just bursting with flavor. (7:12)

TL: *Makanan di Los Angeles, di **mal** dan di jalanan, sangat kaya, sangat beragam, dan penuh cita rasa.*

Strips malls were translated as ‘mal’, reflecting reduction and naturalized borrowing. However, ‘ruko’ would have been a closer equivalent. This finding supports Newmark’s concept of couplet technique and aligns with previous studies from Chotimah, et al. (2022).

### 4.3 Translation Ideology

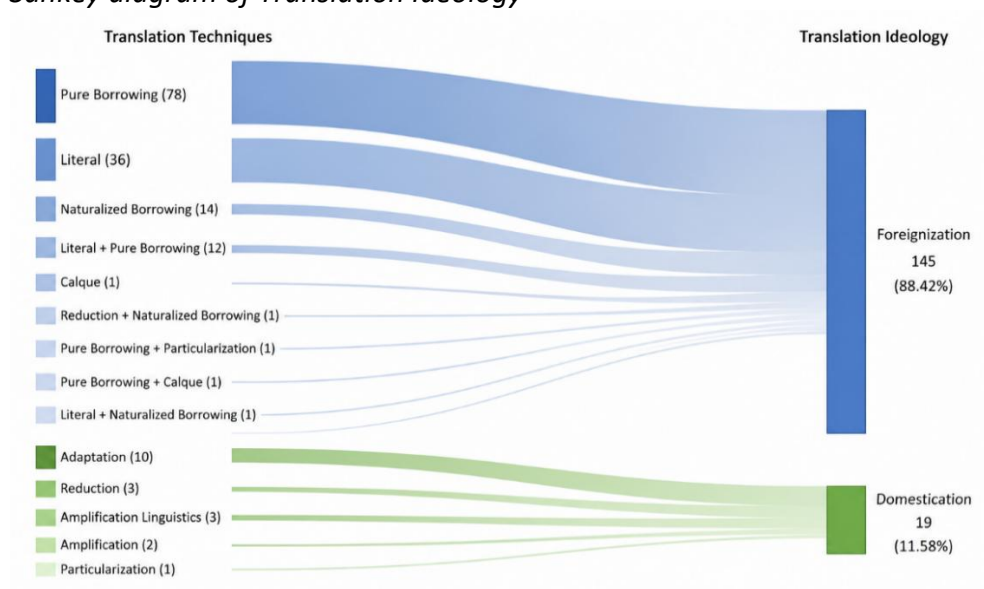
**Tabel 3.**

*Translation Ideologies Category*

No.	Translation Techniques	Occurrences	Percentages	Ideology
1.	Pure Borrowing	78	47.56%	Foreignization
2.	Literal	36	21.95%	
3.	Naturalized Borrowing	14	8.54%	
4.	Literal + Pure Borrowing	12	7.32%	
5.	Calque	1	0.61%	
6.	Reduction + Naturalized Borrowing	1	0.61%	
7.	Pure Borrowing + Particularization	1	0.61%	
8.	Pure Borrowing + Calque	1	0.61%	
9.	Literal + Naturalized Borrowing	1	0.61%	
Total		145	88.42%	
10.	Adaptation	10	6.10%	Domestication
11.	Reduction	3	1.83%	
12.	Amplification Linguistics	3	1.83%	
13.	Amplification	2	1.22%	
14.	Particularization	1	0.61%	
Total		19	11.59%	

**Figure 4.**

*Sankey diagram of Translation Ideology*



#### 1. Foreignization

SL: Waiting on my Souse, **Souseman**. (0:45)

TL: *Aku tunggu souse-ku, Souseman*.

Souseman is a culture specific items referring to an occupation, denoting a seller of souse. The term 'Souseman' was maintained in TL, reflecting foreignization. It dominated

with 145 data, consistent with the content of *Street Food: USA* that focuses on local foods and cultural artifact. This finding support concept Venuti's of domestication and previous studies from Jaya (2020).

## 2. Domestication

SL: Souseman Larry is also a **pitmaster**. (4:01)

TL: *Souseman Larry juga seorang pemanggang*.

Based on the context, the translator translated a 'pitmaster' to 'pemanggang'. The translation demonstrates that the translator selects an equivalent expression that is more familiar and accessible to the target audience in the target language (TL). This approach indicates that the original meaning and cultural characteristics of the source language (SL) are not fully maintained." Pitmaster was domesticated into 'pemanggang,' prioritizing accessibility over cultural specificity. This finding support concept Venuti's of domestication and previous studies from Jaya (2020).

Overall, the findings reveal that *Street Food: USA* represents culture primarily through material culture, highlighting culinary practices, local foods, and culture artifact. The frequent of pure borrowing indicates a strong preference for preserving culture specific items, thereby maintaining the authenticity of source culture. This tendency reflects a foreignization ideology, which cultural preservation is prioritized to target language. As a result, the subtitles serve not only as a means of communication, but also for cross-cultural representation. Allowing the target language (TL), especially Indonesian audiences understanding of the culture represented in American street food tradition.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the translation of Culture Specific Items (CSIs) in the Netflix documentary *Street Food: USA*, focusing on culture-specific items categories, translation techniques, and ideologies. The findings indicated that material culture was the most dominant category, whereas ecology was the least represented. Pure borrowing emerged as the most frequently employed translation technique, while foreignization was identified as the dominant translation ideology. The study contributes to the field of audiovisual translation by identifying the predominance of material culture in culinary documentaries and highlighting the role of foreignization in preserving culture-specific items. In practical terms, the findings offer valuable insights for translators, translation students, and audience comprehension when translating culturally embedded expressions. However, this study was limited to the analysis of English-Indonesian subtitles in a documentary film. Therefore, this study recommends that future research extends beyond translation techniques and ideology. Future research should examine translation quality, including accuracy, readability, and acceptability. Moreover, future research may investigate culture-specific items in other language pairs. Since research on the translation of English-Indonesian texts has been widely.

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