

Translation Strategies and Cultural Meaning Shifts of *Sambet*-Related Expressions in the Netflix English Subtitles of *Para Perasuk*

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Abstract

This research investigates the ways in which *sambet*-related expressions are translated in the Netflix English subtitles of the Indonesian film *Para Perasuk* and examines the cultural meaning changes resulting from those translation choices. Four expressions were selected as the focus of analysis: *sambetan*, *di-sambetin*, *alam sambet*, and *sambetin*. The study applies a qualitative descriptive approach through a comparison of the Indonesian source dialogues and their corresponding English subtitles. Recent research on culture-specific subtitling, particularly Abdelaal (2019) and Alaa and Al Sawi (2023), provides the analytical basis for identifying the translation strategies. The analysis reveals two strategies, namely generalization and substitution. Generalization is identified in *sambetan* → *Trance Party*, *di-sambetin* → *be possessed*, and *sambetin* → *put ... in a trance*. Substitution is identified in *alam sambet* → *hallucination realm*. The results indicate that the subtitles generally retain the broad supernatural or trance-related dimension associated with *sambet* in the film, although several culturally specific associations become less explicit. The rendering of *alam sambet* also introduces a different conceptual perspective in the target text. Furthermore, the findings indicate that contextual interpretation and grammatical function contribute to the selection of different English renderings for related *sambet*-forms.

Keywords: translation strategies; cultural meaning shifts; culture-specific expressions; *sambet*; subtitling

INTRODUCTION

Translation involves more than replacing expressions in a source language with corresponding forms in another language. The process also concerns the transfer of meaning between communities that may possess different cultural knowledge and interpretive backgrounds. Consequently, expressions containing cultural associations may undergo changes when they are presented in another language.

Baker (2018) points out that translation requires translators to manage differences between languages and cultures, particularly when an exact equivalent cannot readily be found. Munday, Ramos Pinto, and Blakesley (2022) likewise explain that contemporary Translation Studies considers linguistic, cultural, social, and contextual dimensions. Translation can consequently be viewed as an intercultural activity in which choices made by translators influence the way source meanings are presented to target audiences.

These considerations are especially relevant to audiovisual translation (AVT). According to Pérez-González (2019), audiovisual translation operates within a multimodal environment in which verbal language is combined with visual and auditory resources. Consequently, the interpretation of a film is not determined solely by its spoken dialogue. Visual elements, music, sound, gestures, acting, camera work, and narrative circumstances may all contribute to the construction of meaning.

Subtitling, as a form of audiovisual translation, has additional limitations. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021) explain that subtitles have to accommodate spatial and temporal restrictions because audiences must read the written text while following the visual and auditory components of the film. These conditions may influence how culturally marked expressions are represented in the target language.

Culture-specific expressions present a particular challenge because their cultural associations may not be shared by target viewers. Abdelaal (2019) demonstrates that different strategies can be employed when culture-bound terms are transferred into film subtitles. Alaa and Al Sawi (2023) similarly show that culturally specific references may require strategic treatment when translated for target audiences.

Studies involving Indonesian audiovisual materials also demonstrate this issue. Firdausi and Setiawan (2022) investigate cultural loss and gain in the English subtitles of *Tilik*, showing that the translation of culture-specific items can modify the cultural information received by target viewers. Halim et al. (2024) likewise examine culturally specific items in *Perempuan Tana Humba* and demonstrate the relevance of strategic choices in transferring local cultural concepts into another language.

The pragmatic dimension of subtitles is also significant. Guillot (2020) emphasizes that subtitles participate in cinematic communication and should not be regarded simply as written replacements for spoken dialogue. Their interpretation is connected to the broader audiovisual environment.

This study examines *sambet*-related expressions in *Para Perasuk*. Within the context established by the film, *sambet* is associated with supernatural or trance-related experiences and activities. Nevertheless, the term should not be assumed to correspond to one fixed English expression in every occurrence. Its related forms appear in different grammatical and contextual positions.

Four expressions are examined: *sambetan*, *di-sambetin*, *alam sambet*, and another *sambetin*. Their corresponding English subtitle forms are *Trance Party*, *be possessed*, *hallucination realm*, and *put ... in a trance*. Although these forms are related to the same source concept, the subtitles employ different target-language expressions.

The variation provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between translation strategy, grammatical function, contextual meaning, and cultural representation. Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions:

1. What translation strategies are used to render *sambet*-related expressions in the Netflix English subtitles of *Para Perasuk*?
2. How do these translation strategies affect the cultural meaning of *sambet*-related expressions in the English subtitles?

The study aims to identify the strategies employed in translating the selected expressions and to explain the cultural meaning shifts associated with those strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation and Cultural Representation

Translation takes place between linguistic systems that are embedded in particular cultural environments. Consequently, translating an expression may also involve transferring cultural associations. Baker (2018) notes that translators frequently encounter differences for which direct lexical equivalence is unavailable.

Munday et al. (2022) similarly present translation as an activity involving linguistic and contextual decision-making as well as cultural considerations. Olohan (2021) adds that translation practice is shaped by the circumstances and contexts surrounding the act of translation.

These perspectives are relevant to the analysis of *sambet*-related expressions because their significance is connected to the cultural and supernatural context of *Para Perasuk*. Their meanings cannot be adequately understood by examining the lexical forms in isolation. Both linguistic content and cultural associations need to be considered.

Audiovisual Translation

Audiovisual translation concerns the transfer of verbal material within media that combine several modes of communication. Pérez-González (2019) emphasizes the multimodal character of AVT, in which linguistic material interacts with visual and auditory resources.

In film, therefore, dialogue is only one component of meaning. Character movements, facial expressions, music, sound effects, visual representations, and narrative development may reinforce or modify the interpretation of a culturally specific expression.

This aspect is particularly important when analyzing supernatural concepts. Cultural information that is reduced in a subtitle may still be communicated through other components of the audiovisual text.

Subtitling and Its Constraints

Subtitling represents translated dialogue through written text displayed on the screen. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021) explain that subtitlers must work within spatial and temporal limitations. Subtitles must be sufficiently concise and readable while remaining synchronized with the audiovisual material.

Such limitations can influence the translation of culture-specific expressions. A culturally marked term may be rendered through a more familiar or general expression when the target audience needs to process the subtitle rapidly.

Guillot (2020) further emphasizes the communicative role of subtitles within cinematic discourse. Thus, subtitle analysis should consider the relationship between the translated text and the audiovisual scene in which it appears.

Culture-Specific Items in Subtitling

Culture-specific expressions contain meanings associated with particular cultural environments. Their translation may be problematic when equivalent cultural knowledge is not available to the target audience.

Abdelaal (2019) examines culture-bound terms in film subtitles and demonstrates the importance of translation strategies in dealing with such expressions. Alaa and Al Sawi (2023) similarly investigate culturally specific references and identify the use of strategies such as generalization and substitution.

Indonesian audiovisual research also supports the importance of this issue. Firdausi and Setiawan (2022) investigate cultural loss and gain in *Tilik*, while Halim et al. (2024) examine cultural-specific items in *Perempuan Tana Humba*. Both studies demonstrate that the translation of local cultural expressions involves choices that may affect their representation in English.

The present study applies this perspective to a culturally embedded supernatural concept, namely *sambet*, and connects strategy identification with the cultural meaning changes observed in the English subtitles.

METHOD

Research Approach

A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted for this study. The approach enables the researcher to describe the translation strategies found in the selected data and interpret their effects on cultural meaning.

The dataset consists of four *sambet*-related expressions appearing in *Para Perasuk* and their corresponding Netflix English subtitles. Each expression is examined according to its source form, target rendering, grammatical function, contextual meaning, and audiovisual setting.

The identification of strategies follows the analytical approach used in recent research on culture-specific subtitling, particularly Abdelaal (2019) and Alaa and Al Sawi (2023).

Data

No.	Time	Indonesian Expression	English Subtitle	Strategy
1	00:46	<i>sambetan</i>	<i>Trance Party</i>	Generalization
2	00:58	<i>di-sambetin</i>	<i>be possessed</i>	Generalization
3	01:24	<i>alam sambet</i>	<i>hallucination realm</i>	Substitution
4	1:10:49	<i>sambetin</i>	<i>put ... in a trance</i>	Generalization

Data Collection

The researcher viewed *Para Perasuk* and identified dialogue containing *sambet*-related forms. The source expression, corresponding English Netflix subtitle, and timestamp were recorded for each selected occurrence.

The four expressions were selected because they demonstrate different grammatical functions and contextual uses of the *sambet* concept.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through four steps. First, relevant *sambet*-related forms were located in the Indonesian dialogue. Second, each source expression was compared with its English subtitle. Third, the translation was assigned to an appropriate strategy based on the analytical framework represented in recent culture-specific subtitling studies (Abdelaal, 2019; Alaa & Al Sawi, 2023). Fourth, the resulting cultural meaning shift was interpreted by considering semantic content, grammatical function, and audiovisual context.

The analysis does not assume that *sambet* has a single permanent English equivalent. Each occurrence is interpreted according to its particular context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identified Strategies

Two strategies were found in the four selected data: generalization and substitution.

Generalization occurs in three instances:

1. *sambetan* → *Trance Party*
2. *di-sambetin* → *be possessed*
3. *sambetin* → *put ... in a trance*
4. Substitution occurs in one instance:
5. *alam sambet* → *hallucination realm*

Thus, generalization appears more frequently in the selected dataset. The finding corresponds with previous research indicating that broader target-language expressions can be used when culturally specific source expressions need to be made accessible to target audiences (Abdelaal, 2019; Alaa & Al Sawi, 2023).

Sambetan → *Trance Party*

Time: 00:46

Source dialogue:

“Yang baru aja datang, silahkan gabung di pesta sambetan sanggar Bondan.”

Netflix subtitle:

“For those of you who just arrived, welcome to Bondan's Trance School Party.”

The lexical correspondence examined in this datum is *sambetan* → *Trance Party*. The word *School* in the complete subtitle is not included in the analysis because it is not part of the expression being investigated.

In Indonesian, *sambetan* refers to a party or gathering associated with *sambet*, particularly an activity involving a supernatural or trance-related cultural practice. Thus, the term does not simply denote an ordinary party; it carries a specific cultural association with *sambet* and the trance-related activities connected to it. In the film, *sambetan* is therefore used to refer to a particular type of culturally specific gathering.

The translation is categorized as generalization. The English expression *Trance Party* conveys the broader concept of a party involving a trance-related activity, but it does not fully reproduce the specific cultural associations embedded in the Indonesian term *sambetan*. The element *trance* represents the altered-state dimension of the original expression, while *party* communicates the idea of a social gathering. However, the cultural meaning associated specifically with *sambet* is not explicitly retained in the English subtitle.

Consequently, the English rendering improves conceptual accessibility for English-speaking viewers while making the cultural reference less specific. This translation choice illustrates how a culturally specific Indonesian expression can be rendered through a broader target-language concept to facilitate comprehension within the limited space and processing time of subtitles. Such a choice is relevant to the constraints of subtitling, in which readability, brevity, and processing time can influence translation decisions (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021).

Di-sambetin* → *Be Possessed

Time: 00:58

Source dialogue:

“Nah buat yang mau di-sambetin, boleh langsung aja samperin.”

Netflix subtitle:

“For those who wish to be possessed please approach us.”

The Indonesian form *di-sambetin* is rendered as *be possessed*. This rendering is classified as generalization.

Within the scene, *di-sambetin* refers to a person who wants to experience the supernatural condition associated with *sambet*. The expression *be possessed* provides a familiar supernatural interpretation in English, although it does not necessarily reproduce the complete cultural meaning associated with the Indonesian expression.

The grammatical construction is also significant. The source form emphasizes the person experiencing a state, and the English passive construction similarly places the focus on the person undergoing that state.

The example demonstrates that translation strategy needs to be interpreted together with grammatical and contextual function rather than through lexical correspondence alone.

Alam Sambet* → *Hallucination Realm

Time: 01:24

Source dialogue:

“Dan tentunya mantra hari ini, alam sambet semuanya dibawah asuhan pimpinan sanggar kita pak guru Bondan Junaedi”

Netflix subtitle:

“And of course, we have mantra today in the hallucination realm, everything is under the care of our trance school leader, Mr. Bondan Junaedi”

The translation of *alam sambet* as *hallucination realm* is categorized as substitution.

The target expression introduces a conceptual frame that differs from the source. *Alam sambet* presents a culturally embedded supernatural domain, whereas *hallucination* primarily evokes an altered perceptual experience.

Although *realm* maintains the idea of a domain, the term *hallucination* changes the conceptual orientation of the expression. As a result, target viewers may approach the expression from the perspective of perception or altered consciousness rather than the culturally specific supernatural framework represented by *sambet*.

This example demonstrates that substitution can affect not only cultural detail but also the conceptual interpretation of a source expression.

Sambetin → *Put ... in a Trance*

Time: 1:10:49

Source dialogue:

“Nanti kalau bapak digebukin, bapak bonyok, sambetin bapak pakai roh bulus biar bapak kebal ya.”

Netflix subtitle:

“If they beat me up, put me in a trance. Use the turtle spirit so I'm protected.”

The form *sambetin* is translated as *put ... in a trance* and is classified as generalization.

In this context, the expression has a causative function. The speaker asks another person to perform an action that will cause him to enter a particular supernatural or trance-related state.

The English rendering successfully communicates the intended action and resulting state. Nevertheless, the culturally specific associations of *sambet* are less explicit in *put ... in a trance*. The translation therefore retains a broad semantic component while reducing some of the cultural information carried by the source expression.

This observation is consistent with the discussion of cultural loss and gain in subtitle translation presented by Firdausi and Setiawan (2022).

Cultural Meaning Changes

The three generalization cases retain the broad supernatural or trance-related dimension of the source expressions. However, their cultural specificity is reduced.

Trance Party presents a general notion of a trance-related event. *Be possessed* represents a supernatural state. *Put ... in a trance* expresses an action intended to produce an altered state. Although these renderings remain related to the source concept, they do not necessarily activate the same cultural associations as *sambet*.

The fourth example, *hallucination realm*, involves a more substantial conceptual shift. Rather than broadening the source meaning, the translation frames the concept through another perspective. The supernatural domain of *alam sambet* is represented through the notion of hallucination.

The results therefore indicate that translation strategies influence both the quantity of cultural information retained and the way the target audience may conceptualize the source expression.

Grammatical and Contextual Factors

The four expressions perform different grammatical functions:

Source Expression	Contextual Function	English Rendering
<i>sambetan</i>	event/activity	<i>Trance Party</i>
<i>di-sambetin</i>	state/passive experience	<i>be possessed</i>

<i>alam sambet</i>	domain/realm	<i>hallucination realm</i>
<i>sambetin</i>	causative action	<i>put ... in a trance</i>

The table illustrates that the same source concept cannot automatically be translated using one English form.

The contrast between *di-sambetin* and *sambetin* is especially clear. The former emphasizes a state experienced by a person, whereas the latter expresses an action intended to bring about that state. Their different English renderings therefore correspond to their respective contextual functions.

This supports the view that translation decisions are affected by context and communicative purpose (Baker, 2018; Olohan, 2021).

Accessibility versus Cultural Specificity

The selected English expressions are generally accessible to target viewers because terms such as *trance* and *possessed* provide recognizable conceptual references.

However, greater accessibility may involve a reduction in cultural specificity. A viewer may understand the general supernatural meaning without receiving all the cultural associations attached to *sambet*.

This does not necessarily indicate an inaccurate translation. Rather, it demonstrates the balance between comprehensibility and cultural representation that frequently occurs in the translation of culture-specific expressions (Abdelaal, 2019; Halim et al., 2024).

Audiovisual Context

Subtitle meaning cannot be separated entirely from the audiovisual material. Visual representation, character performance, music, sound, costumes, and narrative context may contribute cultural information that is absent from the written subtitle.

Pérez-González (2019) emphasizes the multimodal nature of audiovisual translation, while Guillot (2020) considers subtitles as components of cinematic discourse.

In *Para Perasuk*, supernatural and trance-related concepts are presented through the entire audiovisual construction of the film. Consequently, even when a subtitle uses a broader expression such as *trance*, the scene may provide additional information that assists viewers in interpreting the cultural concept.

Cultural meaning shift should therefore be understood primarily as a change in the subtitle representation rather than as the complete disappearance of cultural meaning from the audiovisual work.

Comparison with Earlier Research

The present findings correspond with previous research on culture-specific subtitling. Abdelaal (2019) and Alaa and Al Sawi (2023) demonstrate the relevance of strategies such as generalization and substitution when translating culturally specific references.

Firdausi and Setiawan (2022) examine cultural loss and gain in *Tilik*, which is relevant to the present finding that an English subtitle can preserve a broad semantic meaning while reducing cultural specificity.

Halim et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate the importance of translation strategies in representing Indonesian cultural-specific items in English subtitles. The present study extends this discussion to a supernatural concept embedded within the cultural context of *Para Perasuk*.

The findings are also consistent with the broader understanding of audiovisual translation and subtitling presented by Pérez-González (2019) and Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021). Both

the multimodal character of audiovisual texts and the practical constraints of subtitles need to be considered when interpreting cultural meaning.

The distinctive contribution of the present study lies in its focused examination of *sambet*-related expressions and in its attention to the contextual differences among related forms of the same source concept.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the translation strategies and cultural meaning changes found in four *sambet*-related expressions in the Netflix English subtitles of *Para Perasuk*: *sambetan*, *di-sambetin*, *alam sambet*, and *sambetin*.

The analysis identified two strategies, namely generalization and substitution. Generalization was found in three cases: *sambetan* → *Trance Party*, *di-sambetin* → *be possessed*, and *sambetin* → *put ... in a trance*. Substitution was identified in *alam sambet* → *hallucination realm*.

The results demonstrate that the English subtitles generally retain the broad supernatural or trance-related component of the source expressions. Nevertheless, several culturally specific associations are weakened or made less explicit. Generalization increases accessibility for target viewers while simultaneously reducing some cultural specificity.

The translation of *alam sambet* as *hallucination realm* represents a different kind of change because the source concept is interpreted through another conceptual frame. The target expression shifts attention toward altered perception rather than directly maintaining the culturally embedded supernatural domain.

The findings further show that grammatical function and contextual meaning are important in determining subtitle choices. The difference between *di-sambetin* and *sambetin* demonstrates that related forms may require different target-language constructions.

Because the analysis covers only four expressions from one film, the findings should not be generalized to every occurrence of *sambet* or to Indonesian audiovisual translation as a whole. Further research could use a larger dataset, compare different subtitle languages and platforms, or examine audience responses to culturally specific supernatural expressions.

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