



CULTURAL DILUTION IN INDIRECT ARABIC TRANSLATION OF INDONESIAN POPULAR LITERATURE: *LASKAR PELANGI* TO '*ASĀKIR QAWS QUZAH*

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Literary translation involves the transfer of linguistic meaning, as well as the cultural values and identities inherent in the source text. Translation difficulties increase in the realm of indirect translation, particularly when the target text is rendered through an intermediary language. This phenomenon is observed in the translation of Andrea Hirata's novel *Laskar Pelangi* into Arabic, '*Asākir Qaws Quzah*, utilizing the English version, *The Rainbow Troops*. This translation process exemplifies multi-level translation, which may result in cultural dilution. This study aims to identify and analyse the manifestations of cultural dilution in indirect translation. This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology within the framework of a descriptive translation study. The data sources comprise three parallel texts: *Laskar Pelangi* as the source text, *The Rainbow Troops* as the intermediary text, and '*Asākir Qaws Quzah* as the target text. Data were gathered via document analysis by identifying cultural terms in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, and subsequently classified according to Newmark's cultural categories. The analysis was performed comparatively to identify changes in cultural significance. The results reveal that cultural dilution occurs in three primary forms: cultural deletion, cultural substitution, and cultural neutralization. The forms illustrate the systematic and cumulative erosion of Indonesian cultural distinctiveness resulting from indirect translation. This research contributes to indirect translation studies by offering an analytical framework for cultural dilution and emphasising the significance of ideological awareness in cross-cultural literary translation practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Since its initial publication in 2005, Andrea Hirata's novel *Laskar Pelangi* (LP) has been translated into multiple languages, including Arabic as *'Asākir Qaws Quzah* (AQQ). The Arabic translation was derived indirectly from the English version of *The Rainbow Troops* (TRT), rather than being translated directly from the Indonesian source text. The practice of indirect translation constitutes more than a mere two-stage linguistic transfer; it serves as a platform for intricate and multifaceted negotiations of cultural meanings. The cultural elements of the source text may undergo multiple adaptations by the original author, the first translator, and the second translator, which can lead to the shifting and blurring of cultural meanings (Gambier, 2016; Pięta, 2019; Hosseini, 2021). Research indicates that indirect translation often heightens the risk of diminishing the cultural specificity of the source, particularly in literary texts rich in local values (Ayoub, 2019; Martinez, 2024; Kłos, 2022). The Arabic translation of *Laskar Pelangi* may significantly dilute Indonesian culture, as it originates from a translated version of another language.

Numerous scholars have examined the translation of *Laskar Pelangi* into English (*The Rainbow Troops*), Japanese (*Niji no Shonentachi*), German (*Die Regenbogen-Truppe*), and Arabic (*'Asākir Qaws Quzah*). Previous studies on *The Rainbow Troops* primarily concentrate on micro-linguistic elements and translation methodologies. This research analyses the translation of linguistic units, including metaphors, similes, prepositions, causative constructions, and grammatical structures, from Indonesian to English. The findings indicate a prevalence of literal techniques, transference, and grammatical variation designed to enhance the readability of the target text, though these often result in shifts in meaning (Amelia et al., 2016; Barathayomi, 2015; Mariam & Vonti, 2020). These shifts encompass alterations in units, word classes, and the structures of clauses and sentences, which indicate source language interference and modifications to conform to target language norms (Rahmadhani & Yusrah, 2023). These studies highlight that translators' linguistic choices are strategic and not always neutral in terms of meaning and nuance in the source text.

A separate set of studies examines the translation of cultural terms, translation ideology, and their influence on translation quality in *The Rainbow Troops*. These studies consistently indicate that the translation of the novel adopts a domestication ideology, which facilitates the adaptation of Indonesian culture to a Western cultural framework, thereby enhancing readability for the target audience (Kuncara, 2015; Pahlawanita et al., 2019; Seinsiani & Oktavia, 2016). Different translation procedures, including cultural equivalent, reduction, omission, and borrowing, are recognised as effective methods for simplifying foreign cultural elements. However, these approaches may also lead to decreased cultural acceptance and a diminished representation of local values (Megawati, 2019; Yesi et al., 2021). Moreover, various postcolonial studies have highlighted that this domestication strategy is not neutral; it plays a role in the stereotyping of Eastern culture and the erosion of local Belitung Malay identity by altering or omitting specific cultural and religious elements (Kuswarini, 2017; Hasyim, 2020; Venuti, 2017). *The Rainbow Troops* serves as an ideological practice that helps shape Indonesia's cultural image on the global stage.

Multiple studies have investigated macro-level changes in meaning via transitivity analysis, translation quality, and the application of translation technology in *The Rainbow Troops*. The findings of these studies demonstrate that transitivity shifts, clause expansion, and alterations in the prevalence of material processes are frequently

employed to align the text with the expectations and norms of the target audience. However, these strategies influence characterisation and the intensity of narrative meaning in the target text (Tinambunan et al., 2019; Syathroh & Husnussalam, 2019; Hapsari & Tou, 2015). The evaluation of translation quality revealed significant levels of loss, addition, and distortion of information, which negatively impacted the accuracy and representation of Indonesian culture in the translated text (Yasin et al., 2018; Hidayah et al., 2019; Fedora, 2015). In technology-based translation, grammatical and semantic equivalence remain low, requiring post-editing by human translators who possess linguistic competence and an understanding of the source culture (Hatim, 2021; Yulianti et al., 2024). These studies suggest that *The Rainbow Troops* has undergone a systematic shift in meaning, which could significantly impact the representation of Indonesian culture.

Research on the translation of *Laskar Pelangi* into German, Japanese, and Arabic reveals distinct patterns of cross-cultural adaptation, highlighting the intricacies of meaning transfer in multilingual literature. Research on *Die Regenbogen-Truppe* indicates a tendency to omit and adapt similes, employing cultural transposition to address cultural incompatibilities, particularly for elements lacking direct equivalents in the target culture (Halimurti & Suhardijanto, 2021; Lapasau & Setiawati, 2022). *Niji no Shonentachi* exhibits significant structural and semantic modifications, including subject ellipsis, alterations in metaphor classification, and the substitution and omission of cultural terms, all intended to preserve the narrative fluency and aesthetic quality of the target text (Kusmawati & Airlangga, 2018; Irwan & Pujiono, 2019; Nurjana, 2017). Meanwhile, *‘Asākir Qaws Quzah* underscores the translator's prominent role as a reader who ideologically reinterprets the source text, particularly by highlighting themes of poverty and social inequality (Utami, 2024). These studies indicate that the translingual translation of *Laskar Pelangi* entails both linguistic transformation and substantial cultural and ideological reconstruction.

Previous studies have extensively reviewed the translation of *Laskar Pelangi* into various languages, including English, German, and Japanese. However, research continues to be predominantly focused on the analysis of direct translations from the Indonesian source text, examining linguistic, cultural, and ideological aspects (Kuncara, 2015; Halimurti & Suhardijanto, 2021; Irwan & Pujiono, 2019). Currently, research on the Arabic translation of *‘Asākir Qaws Quzah* remains scarce, primarily focusing on the translator's narrative response while neglecting the structural implications of indirect translation via English (Utami, 2024). Previous studies indicate that *The Rainbow Troops* has undergone notable changes in meaning, cultural adaptation, and ideological distortion (Kuswarini, 2017; Yasin et al., 2018; Pahlawanita et al., 2019). *‘Asākir Qaws Quzah* may experience cultural dilution due to the chain translation process, a factor that has not been systematically examined. This study seeks to address the gap by examining cultural dilution in the indirect translation of *‘Asākir Qaws Quzah*.

This study was conducted to address a primary question arising from the identified research gap: what forms of cultural dilution are present in the Arabic translation of the novel *Laskar Pelangi* (*‘Asākir Qaws Quzah*)? This study distinguishes itself from prior research that concentrated on direct translation or micro-linguistic elements by investigating the influence of indirect translation via English as an intermediary language on the portrayal of Indonesian culture. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic mapping of cultural dilution forms, including the omission, substitution, and neutralization of cultural meanings that may accumulate during the translation process (Venuti, 2017; Gambier, 2016; Pięta, 2019). This study theoretically

advances the fields of indirect translation studies and cultural studies within the context of literary translation. The findings of this study suggest that translators and publishers of cross-language literature should critically assess the risks of cultural distortion in translations that rely on intermediary texts (Ayoub, 2019; Venuti, 2017). This study underscores the crucial role of cultural awareness in global literary translation practices.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology to investigate the phenomenon of cultural dilution in the indirect translation of *'Asākir Qaws Quzah* via an English intermediary text. The qualitative approach was selected due to its capacity to facilitate the interpretation of meanings, ideologies, and cultural transformations that are contextual and discursive, aspects that cannot be quantified, particularly in the realm of cross-cultural literary translation (Tracy, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research design employs descriptive translation studies, which conceptualize translation as a social and cultural artifact that embodies norms, ideologies, and translation practices within a specific context (Munday, 2016; Toury, 2019). The research data sources include three material texts: *Laskar Pelangi* (Indonesian) as the source text (Hirata, 2005), *The Rainbow Troops* (English) as the intermediary text (Hirata, 2009), and *'Asākir Qaws Quzah* (Arabic) as the final target text (Hirata, 2013). The three texts constitute a small corpus that exemplifies a chain translation process, facilitating the examination of layered shifts in cultural meaning (Gambier, 2016; Pięta, 2019).

The research data were gathered using document study techniques, involving careful, systematic, and repeated readings of the three texts to identify cultural terms in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. This method is frequently employed in qualitative translation research as it facilitates a thorough examination of contextual meanings and intertextual relationships (Bowen, 2009; Tracy, 2020). The identified cultural terms were recorded and classified according to Newmark's cultural categories: ecology, material culture, social culture, organization/custom/concept, and concepts, as well as habits and gestures. These categories remain relevant and widely utilised in contemporary studies (Newmark, 1988; Munday, 2016; Guerra, 2019). The data analysis phase involved a comparative examination of equivalent cultural terms among the source text, intermediary text, and final target text to identify instances of cultural dilution, including deletion, generalization, substitution, and neutralization. The analysis incorporates the translation ideologies of domestication and foreignization as an interpretive framework to elucidate the tendency of cultural meaning transformation in the final target text (Venuti, 2017; Ayoub, 2019; Gambier, 2016). This analytical approach facilitates a systematic and transparent examination of the cultural meaning shifts arising from indirect translation.

RESULT

This study identifies three forms of cultural dilution as delineated by the concept of invisibility proposed by Venuti (2017): cultural deletion, cultural substitution, and cultural neutralisation. This study observed the dilution of Indonesian culture when it was translated into Arabic via an English intermediary text. The researcher categorized each cultural element according to Newmark's (1988) concept to facilitate the analysis

of cultural values in English and Arabic translations. The subsequent data presents the percentage of cultural dilution observed.

No	Cultural Dilution (Venuti, 2017)	Categories (Newmark, 1988)					Total
		Ecology	Material Culture	Social	Organizations	Gesture and Habits	
1	Deletion	8	14	10	8	6	46
2	Substitution	8	16	8	4	2	38
3	Neutralization	14	12	8	4	7	45
Total		30	42	26	16	15	129

According to Table 1, 'Asākir Qaws Quzah contains 137 instances of cultural terms that underwent cultural dilution, comprising 48 cases of cultural deletion, 40 instances of cultural substitution, and 49 occurrences of cultural neutralization. Following the presentation of the table, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to elucidate the three forms of cultural dilution. This analysis pertains to the transfer of cultural values in the indirect translation of the novel 'Asākir Qaws Quzah from *Laskar Pelangi* through the intermediary translation of *The Rainbow Troops*. The analysis will be presented in the subsequent data, categorised by forms of cultural dilution and cultural categories.

Cultural Deletion

Cultural Deletion refers to the elimination of foreign cultural elements to render them more natural within the target language. 'Asākir Qaws Quzah omits 48 Indonesian cultural terms from the source text of *Laskar Pelangi*. This analysis examines cultural dilution in translation based on Newmark's cultural category of ecology, which encompasses elements such as flora, fauna, geography, and various other phenomena. The deletion arises from 'Asākir Qaws Quzah, as stated in the following terms.

Excerpt 1 *Lalu beliau bercerita pada bu mus bahwa kemarin sore kawanannya burung pelintang pulau mengunjungi pesisir. Burung-burung keramat itu hinggap sebentar di puncak pohon ketapang.* (LP. Hirata, 2005:10)

He went on to tell her about how the sacred birds perched momentarily on the tip of an almond tree. (TRT. Hirata, 2009:5)

Deleted. (This narrative is not included in AQQ)

The ecological terms in Excerpt 1 include *burung pelintang pulau* and *pohon ketapang*. In *Laskar Pelangi*, Andrea Hirata describes *burung pelintang pulau* as belonging to the parrot and bayan family, highlighting its significance in Malay-Belitung mythology as a mysterious entity. In *The Rainbow Troops*, *burung pelintang pulau* is referred to as *sacred birds*. Local cultural terms are often supplanted by global terminology that is comprehensible to international audiences, resulting in the erosion of local identity. The term *pohon ketapang* is rendered as *almond tree* in *The Rainbow Troops*. The *pohon ketapang* is a coastal species characterised by its extensive distribution, which includes sandy beaches, mangrove margins, and inland areas distant from the coast. In the Arabic translation of the novel 'Asākir Qaws Quzah, these two

terms are either excluded or not referenced. It is likely that the terms *burung pelintang pulau* and *pohon ketapang* have been omitted in the English text, thereby obscuring their cultural significance.

Deletion is evident in material culture, specifically through the omission of the term *antip*, which carries local significance. This is illustrated in Excerpt 2 below.

Excerpt 2 *Lalu memotongi ujung-ujung kukunya dengan antip.* (LP. Hirata, 2005:177)

Trim their nails with clippers. (TRT. Hirata, 2009:77)

(AQQ. Hirata, 2013:89) وقلموا لظفارهم

The phenomenon of cultural dilution is evident in the use of the term *antip* as illustrated in Excerpt 2 above. In the glossary of *Laskar Pelangi*, Andrea Hirata defines *antip* as a term specific to Malay, referring to nail clippers. This term encompasses both the object's function and its local cultural nuances, reflecting the originality of the Malay language in daily life. In the English translation, the term *antip* is replaced with *clippers*, a generic designation that is functional and devoid of cultural significance. The translator fails to utilise strategies for preserving local terms, such as borrowing or providing additional explanations, resulting in a loss of cultural uniqueness. The process of dilution becomes more evident when the English text serves as an intermediary for translation into Arabic. In the Arabic version, *antip* is absent as a material object and is instead represented by the phrase *وقلموا لظفارهم*, which means *and they cut their nails*. The translation's emphasis is exclusively on the action, with minor aspects of material culture entirely omitted.

Cultural Substitution

'*Asākir Qaws Quzah* revealed multiple substitutions of Indonesian cultural terms. The substituted terms were either those generalised by Western culture and translated directly by the Arabic translator, or terms that experienced several modifications to align with the cultural context of Arab readers. '*Asākir Qaws Quzah* involved the substitutions of 39 Indonesian cultural terms. One instance is the substitutions of culture in social contexts, as illustrated in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3 *Di akarnya yang menonjol kami duduk berkeliling mendengar kisah Bu Mus tentang petualangan Hang Jebat.* (LP. Hirata, 2005:64)

On its protruding roots, we sat around listening to Bu Mus tell the story of Robin Hood. (TRT. Hirata, 2009:27)

وعند جذورها النافرة جلسنا حول بو مس نستمع اليها وهي تحكي لنا قصة "روبن هود" (AQQ. Hirata, 2013:35)

The cultural substitution in Excerpt 3 is evident in the term *Hang Jebat*, which translates to *روبن هود* in the Arabic translation. The two terms exhibit significant

differences in cultural background. The narrative of *Hang Jebat* represents a significant epic within the classical Malay literary tradition. *Hang Jebat* is a central figure in the Malay heroic narrative, recognised for his loyalty to the Malacca kingdom and his close friendship with *Hang Tuah*. In contrast to *Robin Hood*, a legendary English figure recognised for robbing affluent nobles to aid the impoverished, he remains a symbol of resistance against social injustice and inequality prevalent in England during that era. The substitutions of the Arabic translation with *روبن هود* result from an indirect translation via the English version. The translation has been modified to align with Western cultural norms. Consequently, the Arabic translator maintained the equivalent without considering the cultural context of the source text. This leads to the erosion of unique Malay historical and literary references, thereby creating a greater disconnect between the cultural representation of the source text and that of a foreign culture.

Cultural substitution in *'Asākir Qaws Quzah* can be analysed ecologically through the representation of flora and fauna, specifically the names of birds and plant species that embody Indonesian culture, particularly that of Malay-Belitung. For instance, the replacement of the term *pohon kuini* in Excerpt 4 below.

Excerpt 4 "*Lihatlah itu, ada pohon kuini di pinggir Sungai Buta.*" (LP.
Hirata, 2005:324)

"*Look there, the mango tree at the edge of the River.*" (TRT.
Hirata, 2009:130)

(AQQ. Hirata, "انظروا، هناك شجرة مانغروف عند حافة النهر!"
2013:241)

The term *pohon kuini* in Excerpt 4 has undergone substitutions in two layers: first in the English translation and subsequently in the Arabic translation. *Kuini*, or *kuweni*, is a fruit tree belonging to the mango family and is closely related to the rice cake. The aroma of *kuini* is more intense than that of mango, and its flesh exhibits greater fibrousness. This tree is widely grown in Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, the Malay Peninsula, and the southern Philippines. The English text substitutes *pohon kuini* with *mango tree*, a term more familiar to Western audiences, thereby removing local specificity. In the Arabic translation, the term is substituted with *مانغروف*, which conveys the same meaning as *pohon mangrove* in Indonesia. Substituting the term *pohon kuini* with *مانغروف* is incorrect, as it not only omits cultural specificity but also significantly alters its meaning to refer to a different type of tree. This may occur due to the Arabic translator's limited access to the original source text, resulting in a misinterpretation and incorrect association of the *pohon kuini* with the coastal tree *mangrove*.

Cultural Neutralization

This study identified the most prevalent form of cultural neutralization dilution. 45 cultural terms were identified as having been neutralized within the Arabic target culture. The simplification of these terms for English and Arabic audiences has resulted in a distortion of the cultural values originally intended by the author of *Laskar Pelangi*, Andrea Hirata. Consequently, these neutralized terms from the source culture will be

examined in a similar manner to other instances of dilution. This section analyses the phenomenon of cultural neutralization within the context of material culture. This analysis aims to explore how the implications of material culture are conveyed in representing the source cultural context within the target text. The Indonesian term *celengan ayam jago* is translated to *piggy bank* in English and *حصالة النقود* in Arabic as reflected in Excerpt 5 below.

Excerpt 5 *Adapun orang Tionghoa yang menjadi tukang sepuh emas memecahkan celengan ayam jago disaksikan tangisan anak-anaknya.* (LP. Hirata, 2005:406)

The Chinese gold plater broke open his piggy bank in front of his weeping children. (TRT. Hirata, 2009:206)

كسر الصبني الذي يعمل بطلاء الذهب حصالة النقود أمام أطفاله المنتحيين
(AQQ. Hirata, 2013:232)

The term *celengan ayam jago* was rendered as *piggy bank* in the English translation of the text. The design of the *piggy bank* in Indonesia is closely linked to the *rooster*. The term *celengan* etymologically derives from the root word *celeng*, which translates to wild boar in Javanese. In Indonesia, *piggy banks* shaped like roosters are more prevalent and are typically crafted from clay. This *piggy bank* incorporates local visual and symbolic elements from Chinese culture in Indonesia, where chickens are regarded as symbols of teaching independence to humans. The term *piggy bank* serves as a universal equivalent but fails to capture the specific form or meaning of *ayam jago* within the Indonesian cultural context. Additionally, the Arabic text employs the general term *حصالة النقود* (*place to keep money*) following the English version, thereby eliminating the visual, symbolic, and cultural elements inherent in the source term.

Additional terms that experienced cultural neutralization were identified in relation to the unfamiliar and distinctive Indonesian environment-ecosystem, specifically Belitung. The terms were substituted with more familiar language for the intended audience, specifically those from Arabic and Western cultures. This is illustrated in Excerpt 6 below.

Excerpt 6 *Menuju ke sana harus melewati empat kawasan pohon nipah.*
(LP. Hirata, 2005:11)

In order to get there, you had to pass through four thatch palm areas. (TRT. Hirata, 2009:6)

لوصول الى هناك، عليك أن تمر عبر أربع أراض من قش النخيل
(AQQ. Hirata, 2013:13)

Pohon nipah is a species indigenous to mangrove ecosystems, typically found along tidal riverbanks. All components of the *pohon nipah* possess utility, particularly the leaves and fruit. The leaves serve as traditional roofing materials, whereas the fruit is utilised for consumption and beverages. In Arabic texts, the term *pohon nipah* is

rendered as قش النخيل, which refers to straw or fronds in botanical terms, while النخيل denotes the date palm or a category of palm trees. The term قش is ambiguous in this translation, introducing an additional meaning absent in the source text. Nonetheless, this term is prevalent in the Arab world; however, it fails to represent the ecological or geographical attributes of Southeast Asia as effectively as *pohon nipah*. The alteration of the term *pohon nipah* in Arabic translations occurs more frequently, attributed to the English designation *thatch palm*. The term *palm* refers to a category of tropical, unbranched plants characterised by leaves that are positioned at the apex of the stem. The Arabic text inherits only the diluted term, rather than the original Indonesian term. Arab readers may interpret النخيل as referring to the *date palm*, which is not a species of flora in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION

This study's findings suggest that *'Asākir Qaws Quzah* exemplifies a systematic and multi-layered phenomenon of cultural dilution. The parallel data analysis of *Laskar Pelangi-The Rainbow Troops-'Asākir Qaws Quzah* identifies cultural dilution in three primary forms: cultural deletion, cultural substitution, and cultural neutralization. According to Newmark (1988), these three forms are closely linked to the inability to uphold cultural specificity, particularly when aspects of the source culture are not conveyed through methods aimed at preserving cultural meaning, such as transference or cultural borrowing. Cultural deletion represents a strategy that removes cultural realities deemed irrelevant to the target audience, whereas cultural substitution and neutralization involve the use of functional equivalents and a reduction of cultural values to generic meanings. This finding confirms that indirect translation enhances the likelihood of cultural distortion, as cultural meanings have already been subject to ideological modifications during the intermediate translation stage. Cultural dilution in *'Asākir Qaws Quzah* encompasses not only linguistic aspects but also ideological and representational dimensions.

This research diverges from prior studies on *The Rainbow Troops*, which primarily focused on micro-level features, including metaphors, similes, prepositions, circumstantial details, and grammatical shifts. Instead, it addresses a more fundamental issue: the transformation of Indonesian cultural representation during the translation process within the Indonesian–English–Arabic chain. Prior research typically characterised shifts as technical outcomes resulting from linguistic modifications or attempts to enhance the readability of the target text, such as through literal strategies, transposition, modulation, or the reduction of specific units (Amelia et al., 2016; Barathayomi, 2015; Hidayah et al., 2019; Rahmadhani & Yusrah, 2023). While numerous studies indicate a trend towards domestication and a decrease in cultural acceptability in English translations, these investigations are confined to the relationship between the source text and the initial target text (*Laskar Pelangi-The Rainbow Troops*), neglecting the broader consequences of chain translation (Kuncara, 2015; Pahlawanita et al., 2019; Yesi et al., 2021). This research is novel due to its shift in analytical focus, moving from the examination of translation techniques to an exploration of layered cultural dilution as a structural and ideological consequence of indirect translation practices.

A further distinction is observable in the analytical design employed. Research on German and Japanese translations has demonstrated the omission of culturally significant similes, the use of cultural transposition, subject ellipsis, and alterations in metaphor classification as strategies for aligning with target language conventions. Nonetheless, these studies remain confined to the paradigm of direct translation from Indonesian to the target language and have not investigated the cumulative meaning shifts that arise throughout the translation process (Halimurti & Suhardijanto, 2021; Lapasau & Setiawati, 2022; Kusmawati & Airlangga, 2018; Irwan & Pujiono, 2019; Nurjana, 2017). Existing studies of Arabic translations have predominantly concentrated on the translator's voice as an interpretive response to the source text, while failing to systematically analyse the cultural shifts resulting from the chain translation mechanism through intermediary languages (Utami, 2024). This research is novel in its parallel data modelling of *Laskar Pelangi-The Rainbow Troops-'Asākir Qaws Quzah*, enabling the gradual tracking of cultural change and determining whether cultural elements have weakened during the intermediate translation stage or experienced further distortion in the final target text. This research methodically examines the process of transferring cultural meaning rather than merely comparing translation products.

This research finding is novel in its conceptualisation of three forms of cultural dilution: deletion, substitution, and neutralization. These patterns serve to explain the loss of Indonesian cultural specificity in indirect Arabic translations. Prior research on English translations has highlighted the risks associated with domestication, stereotyping, and the distortion of Eastern cultural representations in *The Rainbow Troops*. However, these findings remain descriptive and have not been developed into analytical categories that can be tracked throughout the translation stages (Kuswarini, 2017; Hasyim, 2020; Yasin et al., 2018; Pahlawanita et al., 2019). This research elaborates on the argument by demonstrating that multi-level translation is not merely a “two-translation” process; instead, it constitutes a multi-layered ideological space. In this context, cultural decisions in the final target text often result from the accumulation of normalizations and simplifications that occur during intermediate translation stages. The primary contribution of this study is the provision of an operational and replicable framework for assessing the risk of cultural dilution in indirect translation practices, especially in literary works characterised by rich realia and local cultural identity.

This study's findings align with previous research, confirming that the translation of *Laskar Pelangi* consistently encounters significant challenges in preserving the specificity of Indonesian culture. This study corroborates earlier research indicating that translation strategies, including omission, substitution, and neutralisation of cultural elements, are frequently employed to align the text with the language norms and expectations of the target audience. However, these strategies also tend to diminish the meaning of the source culture and weaken its unique cultural values (Kuncara, 2015; Megawati, 2019; Yesi et al., 2021). A further similarity is observed in the inclination to employ the ideology of domestication, recognised in English translations as a significant contributor to the diminishing acceptability and richness of local Indonesian cultural representations (Pahlawanita et al., 2019; Seinsiani & Oktavia, 2016; Yasin et al., 2018). This research reinforces the notion that the translation of Indonesian literature, rich in cultural realia, is structurally susceptible to cultural simplification. This vulnerability is particularly pronounced when the translation approach prioritises readability and

fluency in the target text over the preservation of meaning and cultural identity from the source.

Similar findings indicate that the shift in cultural meaning in the translation of *Laskar Pelangi* encompasses not only linguistic aspects but also ideological and representational dimensions. This research is consistent with postcolonial studies indicating that translations of Indonesian literary works into foreign languages often present local culture through lenses shaped by the expectations and preferences of global audiences, which may reinforce stereotypes about Eastern culture and obscure intricate local identities (Kuswarini, 2017; Hasyim, 2020; Utami, 2024). Moreover, the findings related to alterations in characterisation, changes in thematic focus, and the decline of specific cultural values correspond with research that emphasises shifts in transitivity, narrative development, and adjustments to discourse structures as mechanisms of ideological adaptation in translated texts (Tinambunan et al., 2019; Syathroh & Husnussalam, 2019; Hapsari & Tou, 2015). This research confirms that literary translation is not a neutral or value-free practice; instead, it is a process of constructing cultural meaning influenced by the translator's ideology, the translation's purpose, and the power dynamics present in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural interactions.

The findings offer important theoretical and practical contributions to literary translation and cultural studies. This study theoretically extends the discourse on indirect translation by illustrating that multi-level translation functions not merely as a gradual translation process, but as a mechanism for meaning production capable of generating systematic and cumulative cultural dilution. The identification of three types of cultural dilution establishes a framework for analysing the ways in which the distinctiveness of the source culture is diminished, negotiated, or normalised in translated texts across languages. These findings have significant implications for literary translation practices, particularly for translators, editors, and publishers, who should critically assess the use of intermediary texts that may obscure the cultural identity of the source. This study underscores the significance of ideological awareness in literary translation, as each translation decision impacts linguistic accuracy and shapes the construction of meaning and global perceptions of local culture. This study also enhances ethical and cultural perspectives in the dissemination of world literature.

CONCLUSION

This research examines instances of cultural dilution in the indirect translation of *‘Asākir Qaws Quzah* from the original *Laskar Pelangi* via the English intermediary text *The Rainbow Troops*. The analysis of parallel data from the three texts yielded several conclusions. Cultural dilution in indirect translation manifests in three primary forms: cultural deletion, cultural substitution, and cultural neutralisation. The three forms illustrate the erosion of cultural meaning that results from translation strategies that fail to preserve the unique values of the source culture. The findings of this study suggest that indirect translation significantly obscures the identity of the source culture. The layers of interpretation in multilevel translation alter cultural representations and obscure the underlying ideological processes involved. In conclusion, indirect translation, although often a compromise in contexts with limited linguistic resources, requires a critical awareness of its cultural and ideological implications. In literary

translation, it is essential to examine this practice meticulously to preserve the meaning, values, and cultural identity of the translated work.

This study presents significant findings; however, several limitations require careful consideration. The study is confined to one literary work and a specific indirect translation pathway, specifically from Indonesian to Arabic through English. The findings are not applicable to all chain translation practices or to other literary genres that exhibit different cultural characteristics. The analysis primarily examines written text products, excluding the viewpoints of translators, editors, or target readers; consequently, the processual, cognitive, and receptive dimensions of translation remain inadequately explored. This study has not incorporated a quantitative approach or corpus-based analysis, which could enhance the empirical and statistical identification of cultural dilution patterns. Consequently, additional research could broaden the scope to include other Indonesian literary works that have been indirectly translated into various languages, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and incorporating reader reception studies or translator interviews. This multidimensional approach is expected to yield a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the dynamics of cultural dilution and its ideological implications in global literary translation practices.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the design and development of the analysis. However, in the process, the first author played a role in collecting data, providing data or analytical tools, conducting the analysis, and writing the manuscript. The second, third, and fourth authors contributed to the proofreading process, providing input and feedback that helped refine this scientific article.

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