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Transferring Culture on Screen: Subtitling Constraints and Strategies in Netflix's *KPop Demon Hunters*

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Abstract: *This study examines cultural specific items and subtitling strategies using Newmark's (1988) theory for categorizing culturally specific items and Gottlieb's (1992) theory for subtitling strategies in the subtitles of the film KPop Demon Hunters. This study uses descriptive analysis to examine the cultural specific items that emerge from data classification and to describe the patterns of subtitling strategies frequently used in movie subtitles. The results of the study found that the Social Culture category dominates with 23 items. The results of the study also found that all 10 subtitling strategies by Gottlieb were used with Transfer with 847 data (55%), followed by Condensation with 163 data (11%), Imitation with 144 data (9%), Paraphrase with 95 data (6%), Resignation with 84 data (5%), Dislocation with 62 data (4%), Expansion with 56 data (4%), Transcription with 31 data (2%), Deletion with 29 data (2%), and Decimation with 26 data (2%).*

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing number of streaming platforms and social media platforms, multimedia texts now provide subtitles for the videos and films they have uploaded. Streaming platforms such as Disney+ Hotstar, VIU, Prime Video, Netflix, WeTV, Vidio, and others have provided subtitles in different languages worldwide. They also provide dubbing to certain films in the application so that they can be enjoyed by viewers from various countries. Subtitles themselves have a fairly dominant role in the understanding of viewers from various countries with different languages. Georgakopoulou (2009) defines subtitles as a written translation of the original dialogue that appears as a line of text at the bottom of the screen. She also defines interlingual subtitling as a type of translation where the translation does not change the source text, but both are presented synchronously in the subtitle version. This definition shows that subtitles or interlingual subtitling are texts that appear synchronously on the screen. It allows viewers to easily understand the dialogue in the film, the core ideas in the film, and engage with the cultural elements embedded in the film. In this case, the quality of subtitles is not limited to technical issues alone, but also includes factors that affect the audience's understanding of the cultural elements in the film. The world of translation, especially film translators/subtitle makers, has one major challenge to face, namely, translating Cultural Specific Items (CSI). Translating CSI is quite challenging because several cultural elements have special meanings in a culture and do not have equivalent words in the Target Language (TL).

Cultural Specific Items are an important category in the world of translation and have a significant role in representing a cultural identity in a film. Cultural elements like this are often less understood by the audience after being translated into the Target Language from the Source Language (SL). Translators face quite a difficult challenge in translating Cultural Specific Items. Should they maintain the cultural authenticity or adapt it to make it easier for the audience to understand? According to Nisak & Ishlahiyah (2025), the social and cultural understanding of the audience depends on the quality of the subtitles. This is in accordance with the translation of cultural elements that appear in the film, where sometimes the audience does not understand the words or terms of the culture. This indicates that the translation of Cultural Specific Items requires special attention when translated into the Target Language to maintain the original cultural originality and can be better understood by audiences who have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This study examines the translation of cultural specific items that are embedded in the film *KPop Demon Hunters*. The popularity of Korean pop culture, or the Korean Wave, is immense and growing rapidly in Indonesia. According to Putri et al. (2019), the Korean Wave first began to develop in Indonesia in 2002, when Korean dramas *Mother's Sea* and *Endless Love* aired on Indonesian television, followed by 50 other Korean drama titles. The peak of the Korean Wave's popularity in Indonesia, which continues to this day, was when the boy band *Super Junior* held a world tour concert in Indonesia in 2012. Many young people are fans of K-pop, K-dramas, and Korean films. Especially in today's digital age, it's easy to access the internet to keep up with idols and their favorites. Many streaming platforms, both international and local, offer numerous Korean drama series and films. To further analyze cultural specific items, the *KPop Demon Hunters* was chosen as the subject of this research due to its unique and compelling appeal. This animation, broadcast on Netflix, incorporates many elements of Korean culture, particularly K-pop, which is very popular internationally.

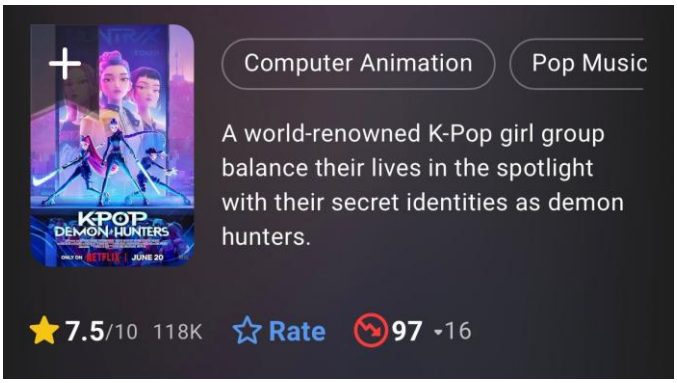


Figure 1. *Kpop Demon Hunters* rating on IMDb, on January 9, 2026

This film was chosen because it received a positive response and was popular with the public. It was released on June 20, 2025. *KPop Demon Hunters* follows the journey of a K-pop girl group called Huntrix, consisting of three members: Rumi, Mira, and Zoey. They use the power of music and their voices to protect the world from demons who devour human souls. Many people have left positive comments and reviews for *KPop Demon Hunters*. According to Figure 1, *KPop Demon Hunters* holds a rating of 7.5 out of 10, with 118,000 ratings on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Meanwhile, on other websites, Rotten Tomatoes *KPop Demon Hunters* has a rating of 4.5 out of 5 with over 5,000 ratings. This animated film is a mixed-language film with English and Korean, which makes this film unique. In this film, English is used more than Korean. Some

dialogues and monologues are in English, with a few Korean terms appearing in between. In addition to K-pop culture, this film also includes words related to cultural elements, including cultural specific items such as the names of typical Korean foods, traditional musical instruments, traditions, and typical K-pop terms. With the phenomenon and popularity of the *KPop Demon Hunters*, research on translating Korean cultural terms into Indonesian is very relevant and important to do.

The *KPop Demon Hunters*, which serves as the object of this research, provides a substantial amount of data containing diverse elements of Korean culture. With this abundant data, the researcher will have sample data to analyze and maximize the results of this study. This research focuses on the cultural specific items to be classified and the subtitling strategies used in the film's subtitles to translate words included in these cultural specific items. This research is useful for understanding the types of cultural specific items and how they are translated into Indonesian in the *KPop Demon Hunters*.

To analyze and classify the cultural specific items appearing in the *KPop Demon Hunters*, this study uses Newmark's theory (1988), which categorizes cultural specific items into five categories: Ecology, which includes geographical features, flora and fauna; Material Culture, which includes names of food and drinks, traditional clothing, traditional houses, and traditional vehicles or transportation; Social Culture, which includes names of occupations unique to that culture, names of typical/traditional musical instruments, names of cultural specific entertainment; Social Organizations, which includes religious terms, historical terms (customs or traditions), and artistic terms; and Gesture and Habits, which includes social habits and expressions that are unique and only exist in that culture. Newmark's classification theory is one of the most popular theories in the world of translation. In this case, Newmark's theoretical approach provides a systematic understanding of the classification of cultural specific items. Therefore, this theory is used to identify cultural specific items appearing in the *KPop Demon Hunters* film and to show which types of cultural specific items appear in this research.

Beyond identifying and classifying cultural specific items, this study also analyzes the subtitling strategies used by the subtitler for the Target Text (Indonesian subtitles) for the *KPop Demon Hunters* film. Translating cultural specific items is challenging for some translators. The limited number of words available for subtitles on screen, finding equivalents in the target language, and synchronizing dialogue and setting are some of the challenges that arise when translating cultural specific items. Therefore, this study will analyze the subtitling strategies used by translators in translating cultural specific items in this film. To analyze the subtitling strategies used, this study uses Henrik Gottlieb's (1992) theory of subtitling strategies: Expansion, which add some additional explanation in the target text; Paraphrase, which paraphrased the source text into the target text with the same meaning but with different word form; Transfer, which completely translate the source text into the target text; Imitation, which maintains the same form, related to people’s names and proper nouns; Transcription, which the source text is nonstandards speech without translation or same form in the target text; Dislocation, where the translation of the expression is more important than the content; Condensation, when subtitlers create a shorter translation of the source text; Decimation, an extreme form of condensation, potentially omits important elements; Deletion, total elimination of part of a text; and Resignation, when the subtitlers encounter untranslatable elements and no translation. With these strategies, this research can find out how cultural specific items are translated and which strategy is most frequently used to translate cultural specific items.

Several previous studies have examined cultural specific items and subtitling strategies. Previous work, such as Puspitasari et al. (2020) focused on the treatment of foreignization and

domestication and the patterns found in the treatment of two subtitles in the films *Grown Up* (English to Indonesian) and *Laskar Pelangi* (Indonesian to English), using Venuti's (1995) theory of foreignization and domestication. This work also used Espindola's (2005) theory to categorize cultural specific items. Their key finding was that the two translators of the two film subtitles are more dominant in using foreignization and using domestication when cultural specific items have local translations in the target culture. Another work, Pramatana (2021) analyzed subtitling strategies in the subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and the key finding was that transfer is the most frequently used subtitling strategy because many sentences about the wizarding world are translated literally in this film.

Yuwanti et al. (2024) focused on the translation process used by Emma Heesters in retelling the lyrics of Anneth Dellicia's song *Mungkin Hari Ini Esok atau Nanti* using Newmark's (1988) V diagram theory. The findings of the study indicated that the predominant translation method employed was one that placed significant emphasis on the target language, with some portions of the lyrics also emphasizing the source language. Simanjuntak & Basari (2016) focused on finding strategies used to translate English subtitles into Indonesian subtitles using Gottlieb's (1992) theory of subtitling strategies with data from the subtitles of the *Real Steel* movie. The results of this research show that not all the subtitling strategies were used, there are 4 out of 10 strategies that left unemployed. Rababah & Moindjie (2025) explore the translation of culturally specific items in the English version of Naguib Mahfouz's novel, *Morning and Evening Talk*. This work uses theories from Newmark (1988), Venuti (1995), and Toury (2012). The results of this study show that direct translation, foreignization, and adequacy prevail over indirect translation, domestication, and acceptability.

From the previous studies above, existing research gaps can be identified. First, no previous research has examined animated films with mixed English and Korean dialogue. The film's dialogue is predominantly English with several prominent terms related to Korean culture. This presents a new challenge in translation studies that has not been explored. Second, this study integrates Newmark's (1988) theory of cultural categories and Gottlieb's (1992) theory of subtitling strategies as a research approach, although both theories have been widely used in previous studies separately. Third, Korean cultural terms, particularly those related to K-pop, have not received much attention in translation studies. Most studies focus on translation between Arabic-English, English-Chinese, English-Indonesian, and vice versa.

Fourth, *KPop Demon Hunters* is a film that was just released in June 2025, making it a new data source that previous researchers have never studied. This film provides new data related to the current trend of subtitling. Fifth, previous studies have mostly examined cultural specific items and subtitling strategies separately. Meanwhile, this study combines the two and will examine how subtitling strategies are used for cultural specific items. Therefore, this study will fill the research gap by integrating the theories of Newmark (1988) and Gottlieb (1992) as a theoretical framework, using *KPop Demon Hunters*, which is a new data source as the object of research, and analyzing cultural specific items and subtitling strategies. This study offers research results that will later be used to understand how subtitling strategies are used to translate cultural specific items, especially Korean cultural terms that are relevant to the needs of translators in the Indonesian streaming world.

The uniqueness of the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, it uses a mixed-language (English and Korean), which makes it rich in Korean culture, raising interesting questions. The first question is about the types of cultural specific items that appear in the film KPop Demon Hunters. The second question is about the subtitling strategies used in its Indonesian version. This research was conducted to answer these questions through further analysis of cultural specific items and

subtitling strategies, and to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the context of cultural specific items and subtitling strategies.

METHOD

This study uses descriptive analysis to explore cultural specific items and subtitling strategies in the English-to-Indonesian subtitles of the film *KPop Demon Hunters*. Descriptive analysis was chosen because it suited this research aim to describe cultural specific items that emerge through data classification and describe the pattern of subtitling strategies used frequently in the film *KPop Demon Hunters* subtitles. This approach facilitates a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Several studies in translation also use this descriptive analysis method in their works, such as the papers by Nisak & Ishlahiyah (2025) and Simanjuntak & Basari (2016).

The primary data for this study are words or terms in the Source Text and the Target Text subtitles of *KPop Demon Hunters*, which fall into the category of cultural words or cultural specific items, based on Newmark's (1988) 5 cultural categories. Using this data, the researcher also analyzed subtitling strategies based on Gottlieb's (1992) 10 subtitling strategies used in film subtitles to translate cultural specific items. The source of the data is the source text and the target text of the *KPop Demon Hunters*, which is available on Netflix and released on June 20, 2025 with a total runtime of one hour and thirty-nine minutes. This is an animated film with mixed language, English and Korean. This film predominantly uses English in its dialogues and monologues, with Korean terms appearing in between, providing a substantial amount of data, including the cultural specific items.

The primary research instrument in this study is the researchers, who watched, transcribed the data, and analyzed the data. To support the analysis process, the researchers used several tools: a Netflix subscription to access the film and the subtitles; Subtitle Downloader from Google Extensions to transcribe the subtitle data, both source text and target text; organized data tables to record the sampling number, timecode, source text, target text, cultural specific items or subtitling strategies, and analytical notes for each sampling. These tables were organized based on two classifications of Newmark's (1988) cultural categories and Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies.

The researcher carried out several necessary steps to collect the data. First, the researcher watched the *KPop Demon Hunters* film on Netflix by activating the source text subtitles and taking notes of the cultural specific items appearing in the film. Second, the researcher transcribed the subtitles from the source text (English-Korean) and target text (Indonesian) of the *KPop Demon Hunters* using the tools from Google extensions, Subtitle Downloader. Third, the researcher collected data on cultural specific items that have been found in the subtitles into a table that contains the sampling, timecode, source text (English-Korean), target text (Indonesian), and analytical notes. Fourth, the researcher identified the subtitling strategies applied in the film subtitles. Fifth, the identified subtitling strategies were recorded into a separate table that contains sampling, timecode, source text, target text, and analytical notes. Sixth, the researcher calculated frequency and percentage distribution for subtitling strategies.

The analysis was conducted in several stages to answer the two research questions of this study. In the first stage, the researcher classified cultural specific items appearing in the film based on Newmark's (1988) five cultural categories: Ecology, Material Culture, Social Culture, Social Organization, and Gesture and Habits. The classification was also supported by several factors within the film, such as the setting of each scene, character dialogue, and the film's cultural background. Each data analysis was classified based on its semantics and the cultural connection

each word has. All collected data analysis was recorded in a table that presents the timecode, source text, target text, and the cultural categories for each item.

In the second stage, the researcher identified the subtitling analysis applied to the film's subtitles by comparing the source text and target text. The Indonesian subtitles were identified based on Gottlieb's (1992) 10 subtitling strategies: Expansion, Paraphrase, Transfer, Imitation, Transcription, Dislocation, Condensation, Decimation, Deletion, and Resignation. Identification was also conducted based on how the film's subtitlers translated the source text into its target text. Each data analysis was recorded in a table containing the timecode, source text, target text, and the subtitling strategies applied in each analysis.

Based on the analysis process, frequency and percentage calculations were performed using Microsoft Excel. The subtitling strategies applied in the film's subtitles were entered into Excel data, then the COUNTIF function was used to calculate the frequency of each of the 10 subtitling strategies proposed by Gottlieb. The formula used was =COUNTIF(range, "Subtitling Strategies"). The percentage of each subtitling strategy was calculated using the formula Percentage (%) = (Frequency of Strategy / Total Number of Data) x 100%. The percentage and frequency of each subtitling strategy were then presented in a table containing subtitling strategies, frequency, and percentage to determine which subtitling strategy was most frequently applied in film subtitles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Specific Items

Researchers have identified a total of 38 items classified as cultural specific items according to Newmark's (1988) categorization: Ecology, Material Culture, Social Culture, Social Organization, and Gestures and Habits. The social culture category dominates with 23 items, followed by social organization with 6 items, ecology with 4 items, material culture with 3 items, and gestures and habits with 2 items.

Table 1. The Distribution of Cultural Categories in the Film *KPop Demon Hunters*

No.	Timecode	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)	Cultural Categories
1.	00:00:29.821 – 00:00:33.658	*Huntrix*!	*Huntrix*!	Social Culture
2.	00:01:07.150 – 00:01:12.822	Stealing our souls and channeling strength back to their king, *Gwi-Ma*.	Mencuri jiwa kita dan menyalurkan kekuatannya ke raja mereka, *Gwi-Ma*.	Social Organization
3.	00:01:42.435 – 00:01:43.812	*Honmoon*.	*Honmoon*.	Social Organization
4.	00:02:29.816 – 00:02:30.817	Mira's *my favorite*.	Mira *biasku*.	Social Culture
5.	00:02:30.900 – 00:02:32.777	She's the *visual* and lead dancer.	Dia *visual* dan penari utama.	Social Culture
6.	00:02:30.900 – 00:02:32.777	She's the visual and *lead dancer*.	Dia visual dan *penari utama*.	Social Culture
7.	00:02:37.949 - 00:02:40.577	Who else could wear a sleeping bag to the *Met Gala*?	Siapa berani pakai kantong tidur di *Met Gala*?	Social Culture
8.	00:02:40.660 - 00:02:43.413	She's our *role model*.	Dia panutan kami.	Social Culture
9.	00:02:43.496 - 00:02:46.457	The *rapper* and lyricist.	*Raper* dan penulis lirik.	Social Culture

10.	00:02:43.49 - 00:02:46.457	The rapper and *lyricist*.	Raper dan *penulis lirik.*	Social Culture
11.	00:02:46.541 - 00:02:48.334	She grew up in *America*.	Besar di *Amerika*.	Ecology
12.	00:02:48.418 - 00:02:50.086	Somewhere called *Burbank, USA*.	Di Kota *Burbank, AS*.	Ecology
13.	00:02:50.170 - 00:02:51.921	She's the cutest *maknae.*	Dia *maknae* terimut.	Social Culture
14.	00:02:57.010 - 00:02:58.136	We love *Rumi*!	Kami sayang *Rumi*!	Social Organization
15.	00:02:59.888 - 00:03:02.849	Her mom, a *Sunlight Sister*, died when she was a baby.	Ibunya *Sunlight Sister*, tapi tiada saat dia bayi.	Social Culture
16.	00:03:02.932 - 00:03:05.268	But *Celine* raised her, and built Huntrix around her.	*Celine* merawat dia dan bentuk Huntrix.	Social Organization
17.	00:04:00.281 - 00:04:02.700	Okay, time for our pre-game *ramyeon*!	Waktunya *ramen* sebelum konser!	Material Culture
18.	00:07:15.268 - 00:07:17.937	Fit check for my *napalm era*!	Pakaian cetar siap menghajar!	Social Culture
19.	00:07:44.964 - 00:07:48.092	But when shootin' my words, I go *Rambo*!	Tapi ucapanku bak *Rambo*!	Social Organization
20.	00:12:40.301 - 00:12:44.513	Mmm! I can't wait to eat *kimbap* and stare at the ceiling.	Enggak sabar makan *kimbap* dan menatap plafon.	Material Culture
21.	00:15:05.529 - 00:15:07.907	"*Golden*." It's the story of us.	"*Golden*." Itu kisah kami.	Social Culture
22.	00:21:28.704 - 00:21:29.997	Who are the *Saja Boys*?	Siapa *Saja Boys*?	Social Culture
23.	00:21:49.516 - 00:21:52.811	Rumi *Nim*.	Rumi *Nim*.	Gesture and Habits
24.	00:29:40.612 - 00:29:43.823	It's a dead heat between my handsome co-host and *Baby Saja*.	Tinggal rekanku melawan *Baby Saja*.	Social Organization.
25.	00:30:08.848 - 00:30:13.895	We just wanted to stop by and congratulate our *hoobae*…	Kami cuma mampir dan menyelamati *hoobae*…	Gesture and Habits
26.	00:30:08.848 - 00:30:13.895	on their *debut* and…	yang *debut* dan…	Social Culture
27.	00:34:43.081 - 00:34:45.458	Don't worry, I'm sure "*Soda Pop*" is just a fad.	Tenang, "*Soda Pop*" cuma tren sesaat.	Social Culture
28.	00:34:56.677 - 00:34:58.137	They even have their own *fandom*.	Mereka bahkan punya *fandom*.	Social Culture
29.	00:34:56.803 - 00:35:00.014	Join the *Pride*!	Gabung dengan *Pride*!	Social Culture
30.	00:35:32.338 - 00:35:34.132	The *Idol Awards*.	*Idol Awards.*	Social Culture
31.	00:40:05.736 - 00:40:09.198	I had a single possession to my name. An old *bipa*.	Yang kumiliki hanyalah *bipa* tua.	Social Culture
32.	00:42:31.382 - 00:42:36.178	That's the song! It's a *takedown*!	Itu lagunya! "*Takedown*"!	Social Culture
33.	00:46:32.247 - 00:46:34.249	*Rujinu*! That's genius.	*Rujinu*! Itu genius.	Social Culture
34.	00:46:34.333 - 00:46:36.543	*Zoeystery*. Where did they come up with that?	*Zoeystery*. Where did they come up with that?	Social Culture

35.	00:46:36.627 - 00:46:39.046	Miro-mabby?	Miro-mabby?	Social Culture
36.	01:04:19.730 - 01:04:24.944	…we celebrate with *Itaewon* corn dogs!	…rayakan dengan corn dog *Itaewon*!	Ecology
37.	01:04:19.730 - 01:04:24.944	…we celebrate with Itaewon *corn dogs*!	…rayakan dengan *corn dog* Itaewon!	Material Culture
38.	01:11:45.050 - 01:11:47.261	Midnight, *Namsan Tower*.	Tengah malam, *Namsan Tower*.	Ecology

Ecology

According to Newmark (1988), this specific type of cultural element includes geographical features (place names, city names, street names, mountain names, and various other geographical cultural elements), flora, and fauna. In this study, four elements were identified that fall under the ecological category, specifically those related to place names and city names that appear in the film *KPop Demon Hunters*.

The first finding is "*America*," which appears in the sentence "She grew up in *America*" and is translated as "Besar di *Amerika*" in the subtitles of the film *KPop Demon Hunters*. The second is *Burbank, USA*, the place where one of the main characters, Zoey, grew up. This city is located in Los Angeles County, California, United States. The third is *Itaewon*, a multicultural tourist area situated in the Yongsan-gu district of Seoul, South Korea. This area is one of the most popular tourist destinations in South Korea. And the last is *Namsan Tower*, a tower located at the summit of Namsan Mountain in Seoul, which is also a major tourist attraction in the city.

Material Culture

Material culture includes the names of traditional clothing, traditional houses, traditional modes of transportation or vehicles, and the names of foods and beverages that possess characteristics specific to a particular culture. In the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, three items related to the names of traditional South Korean foods were identified, all of which fit into the category of material culture.

The first finding is *ramyeon*, which appears in the fourth minute of the film *KPop Demon Hunters*. *Ramyeon* is a very popular Korean instant noodle dish. These instant noodles differ from Japanese ramen, which is typically served in restaurants. Korean ramen is easily found in convenience stores. In the Indonesian subtitles, the translator rendered *ramyeon* as *ramen*, a transcription that uses a loanword more commonly known to the audience.

The second finding is the word *kimbap* in the sentence "Mmm! I can't wait to eat *kimbap* and stare at the ceiling," which was translated as "Enggak sabar makan *kimbap* dan menatap plafon." The translator retained the spelling in the Indonesian subtitles. *Kimbap* is a traditional Korean dish consisting of rice rolled with slices of egg, vegetables, meat, fish, or sausage, using a sheet of seaweed. The third finding is *corn dog*. The translator also retained the spelling of this food's name in the Indonesian subtitles. The *corn dog* originally hails from the United States; it consists of a sausage skewered and dipped in cornmeal batter, then deep-fried. *Corn dog* began gaining popularity in Korea after World War II. From there, Koreans adapted the dish with various innovations, such as using wheat flour batter and breadcrumbs, adding mozzarella cheese as a filling, and topping it with sugar and tomato sauce.

Social Culture

The social culture category includes names of occupations unique to that culture, names of typical or traditional musical instruments, and names of cultural specific forms of entertainment. Character names in films are also included in this category. The social culture category is the dominant category among the culturally specific items identified in this study, accounting for 23 items. One interesting finding is the use of the term *maknae* in the sentence "She's the cutest *maknae*." The translator also used a transcription strategy to translate the word *maknae*. *Maknae* is a K-pop term meaning the youngest member. In the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, Zoey is the youngest member of the K-pop girl group, *Huntrix*. Her fans often call her the "cutest *maknae*," meaning Zoey is the cutest youngest member. According to Newmark's (1988) theory of cultural categories, *maknae* falls under the Social Culture category. *Maknae* is classified under the social culture category because it is a social role assigned to the youngest member of a K-pop group. According to linguasia.com, in the K-pop entertainment industry, there are several positions assigned to each member of a group, one of which is the position of maknae, or the youngest member. In the K-pop industry, being the youngest is a special selling point for a K-pop group.

Another finding is *Huntrix*, which appears in the first minute of the film *KPop Demon Hunters*. *Huntrix* falls under the social culture category because it is the name of a girl group in the film, which also represents a preserved aspect of K-pop culture. This is similar to the character concepts of real-life K-pop groups such as BTS, BLACKPINK, ATEEZ, and others. Furthermore, song titles such as *Golden*, *Soda Pop*, and *Takedown* also fall under the social culture category because they are an important part of the K-pop entertainment world. According to mattllakeman.org, K-pop is both a music genre and an industry that produces artists and their works, including music, dance choreography, shows, and merchandise in a structured, top-down manner.

In addition, many other terms have no direct equivalents in Indonesian, such as *debut*, *fandom*, *Idol Awards*, and the shipping culture often practiced by K-pop idol fans. In the film, the practice of shipping culture is evident through the emergence of terms like *Rujinu* (Rumi-Jinu), *Zoeystery* (Zoey-Mystery), and *Miro-mabby* (Mira-Romance-Abby). These three terms are combinations of the names of members from *Huntrix* and *Saja Boys*. All three fall into this category because they are part of a distinctive K-pop culture. According to Magetian & Perbawani (2017), shipping culture is a popular practice within the K-pop fandom where fans pair their idols, either with idols from other groups or within the same group. The findings above indicate that the film *KPop Demon Hunters* is set against the backdrop of the K-pop industry, which extensively utilizes terms and concepts from Korean K-pop culture.

Social Organization

This category includes religious terms, historical terms (customs or traditions), and artistic terms. Some character names in films that have meanings closely related to a particular culture can be included in this category. In this study, five items were identified that can be categorized under social organization, including *Gwi-Ma*, *Honmoon*, *Celine*, *Rumi*, *Rambo*, and *Baby Saja*. The first finding is the character name *Gwi-Ma*, which is a combination of Korean from the word gwishin, where *Gwi* means ghost or spirit, and Mandarin, where *Ma* means demon. The meaning of this name aligns with his role in the film as the king of demons. This name falls under the "social organization" category because its meaning relates to Korean mythology, a demon that destroys pure souls.

Next is *Honmoon*, derived from the combination of two Korean words *Hon*, meaning soul or spirit, and *moon*, meaning door or gate. In the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, *honmoon* is a shield

or protector between the human world and the demon world, created by the demon hunters. The word *honmoon* also falls into this category because it relates to Korean mythology and shamanism. According to koreasociety.org, shamans typically use drums and symbolic weapons during rituals, similar to the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, where Rumi, Mira, and Zoey also sing and wield their own weapons while strengthening the *honmoon*.

Gesture and Habits

This category covers social habits and expressions. Social habits that are unique and exist only in that culture, and not in other cultures. These can take the form of nicknames used exclusively by a particular culture. Two items have been identified as belonging to the gestures and habits category in this study. The first finding is *Rumi-Nim*, which highlights the use of Korean honorifics, specifically the use of *nim* after a person's name. The use of the word *nim* is equivalent to the use of Bapak or Ibu in Indonesian. The use of *nim* after a name indicates politeness in Korean honorifics. The second finding is *hoobae*, which appears in the sentence "We just wanted to stop by and congratulate our *hoobae…*". Still within the context of Korean honorifics, *hoobae* is a term for someone younger or a senior's address to a junior. In the film, *Huntrix* refers to the *Saja Boys* as *hoobae* because *Huntrix* entered the K-pop industry before the *Saja Boys*. This indicates that *Huntrix* is more senior than the *Saja Boys*.

Subtitling Strategies

After analyzing 1,537 subtitle data points from the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, the researchers found that the ten subtitling strategies identified by Gottlieb (1992) were employed in the film's subtitles. The most dominant strategy was Transfer with 847 data (55%), followed by Condensation with 163 data (11%), Imitation with 144 data (9%), Paraphrase with 95 data (6%), Resignation with 84 data points (5%), Dislocation with 62 (4%), Expansion with 56 (4%), Transcription with 31 (2%), Deletion with 29 (2%), and Decimation with 26 (2%).

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Subtitling Strategies in the Film *KPop Demon Hunters*

Subtitling Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Expansion	56	4%
Paraphrase	95	6%
Transfer	847	55%
Imitation	144	9%
Transcription	31	2%
Dislocation	62	4%
Condensation	163	11%
Decimation	26	2%
Deletion	29	2%
Resignation	84	5%
Total	**1.537**	**100%**

Expansion

According to Gottlieb (1992) expansion is used when some original words from the source text require additional explanation because the words are related to cultural nuances that do not have equivalent words in the target text. In this study, the expansion strategy was used on 56 data. The application of this strategy can be seen in the sentence below.

ST: Let's do this.
TT: Ayo kita rilis.

This strategy is used when a subtitler needs to clarify or add a brief explanation to make the source text clearer in the target text. As in the example above, the addition of the word "release" explains what Rumi was planning to do at that time, his decision to release a new album while they were taking a break. The use of the expansion strategy indicates that the subtitler will add a brief explanation to convey the implied message in the source text to the target text.

Paraphrase

In the subtitles for the *KPop Demon Hunters*, the paraphrase strategy was identified in 95 data. This strategy is used when a non-visualized expression from the original language cannot be reconstructed in the same syntactic form as the target language. The language-specific expression from the ST will be paraphrased into the TT with the same meaning but with a changed word form.

ST: That victory is **within your reach.**
TT: Kemenangan itu **sudah di depan mata.**

The example above illustrates the application of the paraphrasing strategy. The phrase "within your reach," which literally means "dalam jangkauanmu," was paraphrased by the subtitler as "right before your eyes." The use of this strategy in the subtitles for the *KPop Demon Hunters* demonstrates that the subtitler strives to create a natural translation that remains consistent with the context of both the film and the target language, particularly when dealing with idioms or English expressions that, if translated literally, often make little sense in the target text.

Transfer

This strategy is the most commonly used by subtitlers for the *KPop Demon Hunters*, accounting for 55% of all subtitles. This strategy refers to a translation strategy that completely and accurately translates the source text into the target text. The expressions from the source text are fully transferred into the target text, which usually occurs in slow-paced dialogue. An example of how this strategy is applied can be seen in this data.

ST: The world will know you as pop stars…
TT: Dunia akan mengenal kalian sebagai bintang pop…

Subtitlers opt for the transfer strategy when the dialogue does not contain cultural specific words or terms unique to K-pop. Transfer is the preferred choice because it is the easiest way to convey the message, as it directly and accurately translates the source text into the target text.

Imitation

The imitation strategy was used quite extensively in the subtitles for the *KPop Demon Hunters*, a total of 144 data of this strategy were identified. Imitation translates the source text identically in the target text, usually related to people's names, place names, proper nouns, or greetings.

ST: *Huntrix*!
TT: *Huntrix*!

The most common example is the use of existing band names in the film, such as "*Huntrix*!" in the example above, which is retained in its original form in the target text. Another example is "…stealing our souls and channeling strength back to their king, *Gwi-Ma*," which is translated as "…mencuri jiwa kita dan menyalurkan kekuatannya ke raja mereka, *Gwi-Ma*." The name of the demon king, *Gwi-Ma*, is retained as in the source text. The same applies to other names that appear in the film, such as *Saja Boys*, *Sunlight Sister*, *Celine*, *Rumi*, *Mira*, *Zoey*, *Jinu*, and the names of other characters in the film.

Transcription

According to Gottlieb (1992) transcription is used when there are unusual terms even in the source text, it is used for nonstandard speech, and for the use of a third language and nonsense language. This strategy was used in 31 instances in the subtitles for the *KPop Demon Hunters*. Transcription was used when Korean terms appeared in the source text and were retained in the target text.

ST: She's the cutest ***maknae***.
TT: Dia ***maknae*** terimut.

According to Gottlieb (1992) this subtitle uses the transcription strategy because the subtitler retained the word maknae in the target text, which is a K-pop term and included in a cultural specific items category. The term *maknae* refers to the youngest member of a group. Transcription strategies are particularly relevant for films that contain many foreign cultural terms in the source text. Subtitlers choose to retain these terms in the subtitles to preserve the strong cultural aspects of K-pop, which are already widely recognized in their original form in Indonesia.

Dislocation

Dislocation strategy was identified 62 times in this study. Dislocation is adopted when the original is some kind of special effect, like a silly song in a cartoon film, where the translation of the expression is more important than the content. It is used for a musical text and for visualized language-specific phenomena.

ST: **Gapjagi wai geurae?** Monjeo geondeuryeo wae?
TT: **Kenapa begini?** Kau yang mulai, malah pergi?

The literal meaning of the source text is "Kenapa kau tiba-tiba seperti itu? Kau duluan. Kenapa?" This translation isn't entirely accurate, but the subtitler successfully conveyed the emotions in the song's lyrics in the target text. The subtitler's reason for using this strategy is to clearly convey the message and emotions in the song, as in the example above, while maintaining the song's energetic tone.

Condensation

The condensation strategy is used quite frequently, with 163 data, and is the second most commonly used strategy after transfer. Condensation refers to when subtitlers create a shorter translation of the source text. This strategy is used when there is a very long dialogue or to eliminate unnecessary utterances.

ST: The first Hunters created a **shield to protect our world,**
TT: Pemburu pertama membuat **pelindung untuk dunia kita,**

In this example, it can be seen that the word "protect" was omitted in the target subtitle, becoming "…pelindung untuk dunia kita." Another example is "Mira's my favorite," which was translated as "Mira biasku." The meaning of "my favorite" was condensed into "biasku," a K-pop term for a favorite idol. The frequent use of the condensation strategy in the subtitles for the *KPop Demon Hunters* indicates that the subtitler faced and overcame the challenge of translating overly long sentences within the limited space of the subtitles.

Decimation

According to Gottlieb (1992) decimation is an extreme form of condensation for discourse speed reasons, which potentially omits important elements. Dalam penelitian ini ditemukan 26 data yang menggunakan strategi ini. An example of the decimation strategy in action is shown below.

ST: Focus is good, but **focusing on one part** leads to ignoring other parts,
TT: Fokus itu bagus, tapi itu bikin mengabaikan hal lain,

The translation of the target text above omits the phrase "focusing on one part leads…," which is actually important for explaining why focusing on that one aspect can lead to negative consequences. This shows that subtitlers sometimes go to extremes in cutting dialogue.

Deletion

Deletion refers to the total elimination of part of a text. This strategy is used when a subtitler omits or does not translate parts of the text deemed unnecessary. This strategy was used 29 times in the subtitles for the *KPop Demon Hunters*.

ST: Nobody can move like Mira.
TT: Paling jago menari.

In the example above, the entire source text was omitted and translated into the target text as "The best dancer." This sentence could actually be translated verbatim or paraphrased briefly as "Tidak ada yang bisa menari sepertinya." This still meets the 40-character limit for the subtitle and remains understandable to the audience.

Resignation

Resignation is used when there is no solution that can be found, and the meaning is inevitably lost. It's used when the subtitlers encounter untranslatable elements and can't find the same effect from the source text to the target text. This strategy was applied to a total of 84 data points.

ST: I got you on my radar. Soon you're gonna be with me My strategy, strategy Will get ya, get ya, baby.
TT: -NO TRANSLATION-

The source text above is the background music from the film. In the film itself, no other dialogue is spoken at that moment. The subtitler chose not to translate the background music in the

subtitles. This decision was likely made because the lyrics are merely background music and do not affect the message conveyed in the film.

Discussion

The research findings reveal a correlation between the cultural specific items category and the use of subtitling strategies in the *KPop Demon Hunters*. The dominance of the Social Culture category, comprising 24 items in the grouping of cultural specific items, reflects the identity of the film *KPop Demon Hunters*, which is set against the backdrop of the K-pop world and the Korean entertainment industry. This also confirms that the film *KPop Demon Hunters* is rich in K-pop cultural terms and Korean cultural content, making it a suitable source of research data.

A relatively high use of the "Resignation" strategy was found in this film. This strategy was frequently applied to the film's background music and some song lyrics featured in *KPop Demon Hunters*. The subtitler chose this strategy because the background music likely had minimal impact on the film's content and message. The lyrics of the song *Takedown* at the end were initially left untranslated as they coincided with the film's credits rolling, but they reappeared once the credits concluded. The translation strategies for cultural specific items in the subtitles of the *KPop Demon Hunters* primarily utilized transcription and imitation. Transcription was used for Korean food names, Korean cultural terms, and K-pop terminology, while imitation was used for the names of characters in the film. This indicates that the subtitler preserved the cultural specific items in the target text.

This study addresses a research gap identified in previous studies. Unlike Puspitasari et al. (2020), who focused on foreignization and domestication, and Asrima & Nur (2023), who focused solely on subtitling strategies, this study combines Newmark's (1988) cultural categories and Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies to provide a clear picture of how Korean cultural elements are transferred into Indonesian subtitles. This study utilizes the *KPop Demon Hunters*, released on June 20, 2025, as a case study exemplar. This film offers a novel subject matter that is pertinent to contemporary developments in the field of translation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the cultural specific items and subtitling strategies found in the subtitles of the *KPop Demon Hunters*. The findings successfully addressed the two research questions mentioned earlier. In response to the first research question, the researcher identified 38 culturally specific items classified according to Newmark's (1988) five cultural categories. Based on the findings, the social culture category dominated with 23 items, followed by the social organization category with 6 items, ecology with 4 items, material culture with 3 items, and gestures and habits with 2 items. Given that the social culture category dominates the categorization of culture-specific items, it is evident that *KPop Demon Hunters*, set against the backdrop of the Korean entertainment industry, features a significant amount of Korean cultural content in the film, as well as numerous K-pop terms that appear throughout. Furthermore, the shipping culture commonly found among K-pop fans is also depicted in this film.

The second research question was successfully answered through the findings of this study on the use of the 10 subtitling strategies identified by Gottlieb (1992) in the subtitles of the film *KPop Demon Hunters.* It was found that the transfer strategy was the most dominant in the subtitles of this film at 55%, followed by the condensation strategy at 11%, imitation at 9%, paraphrase at 6%, resignation at 5%, dislocation at 4%, expansion at 4%, transcription at 2%, deletion at 2%, and decimation at 2%. The use of the imitation and transcription strategies in the subtitles of the K-Pop film Demon Hunters indicates that the subtitler retained many Korean cultural terms, particularly within the K-pop context.

The findings of this study contribute to the field of translation studies by integrating Newmark's (1988) theory of cultural categories and Gottlieb's (1992) theory of subtitling strategies to examine how Korean cultural content is transferred into Indonesian subtitles in the film *KPop Demon Hunters*. This differs from previous studies that used these two theories separately. This study demonstrates that the two theories complement each other, particularly in illustrating how subtitlers translate Korean cultural content that lacks direct equivalents in the target text and how they address various challenges in translating the source text into the target text.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a more in-depth study by examining audience reception of the subtitles created and the audience's familiarity with K-pop terminology. This could reveal whether the subtitling strategies employed, particularly imitation and transcription, which preserve K-pop terms without translation, are appropriate or not. Future research could also examine comparisons with other languages, such as Japanese, Mandarin, and others.

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