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Translation Techniques Of Cultural Words Applied In “BUMI MANUSIA” Movie

Ummi Putri Ruziq¹, Jafar Sodiq² and Jafar Nur Hidayat³

^{1,2,3}Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa dan Sastra, Universitas PGRI Semarang,
Jalan Gajah Raya Nomor 40, 50125, Telp (024)8316377

uummi0265@gmail.com

Abstract

The translation of cultural words is uniquely challenging, requiring expertise and deep cross-cultural understanding, as such terms often lack direct equivalents in other languages. This study aims to identify the translation techniques applied by the translator in translating cultural words in the Bumi Manusia movie. The source data used in this research consist of cultural words in Indonesian and English subtitles in the Bumi Manusia movie. The researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method. As a result, the researcher finds that there are 109 cultural words in the Bumi Manusia movie, including terms related to ecology, material culture, social culture, organization, and gestures. The results reveal that the cultural words that appear most frequently in the Bumi Manusia movie are related to social culture, representing 36.4% of the data. Moreover, the translator uses 8 techniques out of the 18 translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir to translate the cultural words found in the movie. These include 44 instances of calque, 36 literal translations, 9 descriptions, 7 amplifications, 5 borrowings, 3 generalizations, 3 reductions, and 2 transpositions. It can be concluded that calque is the most frequently applied technique by the translator, followed by literal translation. The researcher proposes that the reason why the translator uses the calque technique most frequently is to maintain the originality and authenticity of cultural references. This approach aligns with the foreignization ideology as articulated by Lawrence Venuti, emphasizing the preservation of the source culture and encouraging the target audience to engage with its linguistic and cultural nuances.

Keywords: Bumi Manusia, Cultural Words, Translation Technique.

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in daily life, serving as a medium for communication, interaction, and expression. Every country has its own language, leading to a diverse linguistic landscape. In a globalized world, translation becomes essential to bridge communication gaps between speakers of different languages. As a form of cross-cultural communication, translation facilitates understanding by transferring meaning between languages while preserving context and intent. One significant area of translation is literary translation, which includes various forms such as novels, poetry, songs, and films. Among these, film translation is particularly important as it allows audiences from different linguistic backgrounds to engage with cinematic works.

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Translation is the process of converting a source language (SL) into a target language (TL). According to Newmark (1988: 28), translation involves rendering the meaning of a text into another language in a way that reflects the author's intention. Furthermore, Nida and Taber (1982) argued that translation consists of reproducing the closest natural equivalence of the source language message in the target language, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style. This highlights that the main objective of translation is to convey meaning, with style being a secondary concern.

Translating cultural elements within a film presents unique challenges, as certain words and concepts may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Moreno (2012) emphasizes that translation involves not only linguistic conversion but also cultural adaptation to maintain meaning and coherence. Venuti further highlights the necessity of additional contextual information when translating culturally specific terms, as language and culture are deeply interconnected. The translator's job is to deliver the message in a manner that closely mirrors the original meaning of the source language, while also ensuring it flows naturally in the target language.

The most challenging aspects of translation is dealing with cultural terms, also known as culture-bound items. These words or expressions are deeply tied to a specific cultural context and often lack direct equivalents in other languages (Molina & Albir, 2002). Newmark (1988) defines cultural terms as words or expressions referring to concepts, objects, or phenomena unique to a particular culture, making them difficult to translate due to their embedded cultural meanings. To address this challenge, Venuti (1995) introduces the concepts of foreignization and domestication. Foreignization retains the cultural essence of the source text, making the audience aware of its foreign origin, while domestication adapts cultural elements to fit the target audience's familiarity.

Subtitling is a common method used to transfer dialogue from the source language to the target language. According to Gottlieb (1992), subtitling has existed since 1929 and is an essential part of audiovisual translation alongside dubbing and narration. Subtitling plays a crucial role in making films accessible to international audiences. By providing translations of dialogue in written form, subtitles help viewers understand the storyline while preserving the film's original sound and cultural nuances. Subtitling can be defined as a method of translation that entails presenting written text, usually located at the lower portion of the screen, encompassing both the spoken elements depicted visually and the information conveyed audibly in the soundtrack

The researcher has chosen this topic to analyze the translation techniques used in the *Bumi Manusia* movie script, focusing on how cultural terms are rendered in the English translation. The research examines both the Indonesian and English scripts, utilizing Netflix as a source for the translated content. Given the complexities of cultural translation, this study seeks to uncover how the translator navigates the challenge of preserving meaning, especially in a work deeply rooted in Indonesian history and society. By analyzing the techniques used in translating cultural terms, the study aims to determine whether the translation maintains cultural authenticity or adapts terms to enhance accessibility for an international audience.

Based on the statement above, the researcher has chosen to focus on the categorization of cultural terms by using the theory of Newmark (1988) and translation technique is used by translators in the cultural words based on theory Molina and Albir

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(2002), in the movie. By identifying different categories of cultural terms, the study aims to provide a structured analysis of how these terms are handled in translation. Additionally, the research seeks to determine the most frequently used translation techniques, offering insights into the translator's approach to cultural preservation or adaptation.

Literature Review

The researcher uses some similar studies. There is some researcher who has conducted similar research relative to investigate the translation techniques used in the English subtitle of the movie *Bumi Manusia*, reviewing previous studies in the same field will be an advantage to identify the use of translation techniques and explain why and how they are used to translate the Indonesian spoken dialogs into the English subtitle. The first review is a thesis entitled *Translation of Social and Cultural Terms in Bumi Manusia* that conducted by Arshila Andista Mantika and Nurochman (2023). The researcher examined the subtitling strategies applied to social and cultural terms in the *Bumi Manusia* movie. Using Newmark's translation theory and Pedersen's subtitling strategies, the researchers analyzed 166 cultural terms. The findings revealed that the most frequently used techniques were official equivalent and retention, with official equivalent being applied to 37.5% of the terms. However, the researcher only analyzed the social culture terms.

The second review is a thesis entitled *Foreignization in The Translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's 'Bumi Manusia' in 'This Earth of Mankind' by Max Lane* that was conducted by Eka Syafitri (2016). The researcher explored the application of foreignization in the translation of cultural terms from *Bumi Manusia* into *This Earth of Mankind*. The study highlights how foreignization strategies, despite the challenges posed by linguistic and cultural differences, help retain the essence of the original work. The result is, there are three main translation techniques applied: borrowing, calque, and literal translation, with borrowing being the most dominant, applied in 56.8% of cases. The researcher concluded that the use of foreignization strategies helped retain cultural authenticity, allowing readers to experience the essence of Indonesian culture and history. However, the study also noted that such strategies could make the text less accessible to readers unfamiliar with the source culture, presenting a trade-off between cultural preservation and readability.

The third review is a thesis entitled *Subtitling Strategies and the Acceptability of the Utterances Containing Politeness Expressions in the Bumi Manusia Movie* that conducted by Fayruz Maryam (2024). The research focused on analyzing the subtitling strategies used to translate politeness expressions in the movie, employing Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, Cintas and Rемаel's subtitling strategies, and Nababan's translation quality assessment framework. The study identified 43 politeness expressions, categorized into four types: bald on record 19%, positive politeness 30%, negative politeness 42%, and off record 9%. The findings revealed that eight subtitling strategies were applied: calque 30%, explicitation 19%, transposition 14%, compensation 12%, omission 9%, addition 7%, substitution 7%, and loan 2%. Among these, calque was the most commonly used strategy, particularly effective in preserving the original form and meaning of negative politeness expressions. The study concluded that the successful use of subtitling strategies, particularly calque and explicitation, contributed to the overall high acceptability of the subtitles. However, it also noted challenges in translating nuanced politeness expressions while maintaining cultural authenticity.

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Based on related studies that have been proven, this research is more challenging because it identifies and analyzes the use of translation techniques in the English subtitle of an Indonesian literary works with full of cultural terms supported with the contexts which are quite different and not found in the target language.

Research Methodology

The researcher employs qualitative descriptive methods. According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative descriptive approach is one of the most basic forms of qualitative research. It is primarily used to provide a comprehension summary of events, situations, or experiences in a straightforward, detailed manner. Creswell explained the purpose of the descriptive method is to find a detailed explanation and description about the object of the research systematically. Therefore, considering the explanation provided earlier, the researcher determines that a descriptive qualitative method is appropriate for this study. The researcher examines the subtitles to identify the translation techniques employed in the movie.

The data were collected from the *Bumi Manusia* (2019) movie. The dialogues contain cultural terms from Indonesian, Javanese, and Dutch, making the movie a valuable resource for data collection. The researcher applied Newmark's (1988) theory of cultural categories to identify cultural words while also applying Molina and Albir's (2002) theory of translation techniques to analyze the subtitles in the movie. Molina and Albir's (2002) classification consists of 18 translation techniques, including adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation.

The data collection process in this study is designs to analyzing subtitle translation techniques. The researcher employs a structured approach to gather the necessary data from the *Bumi Manusia* movie. First, the researcher streams the *Bumi Manusia* movie on Netflix. While watching the movie with English subtitles, the researcher notes the subtitles. Second, the researcher rewatches the movie in Indonesian and notes the subtitles in the original language. Third, the researcher collects the cultural terms based on Newmark's culture categories in the movie. After collecting the data, the researcher follows a structured approach to analyze it. First, the researcher reviews all the collected data and identifies the translation techniques employed, using the theoretical framework provided by Molina and Albir. Next, the researcher organizes the identified translation techniques into tables, including the frequency and percentage of each technique used. Finally, based on the analysis, the researcher draws conclusions, identifying the translation techniques most frequently applied in the movie. By identifying the most frequently applied translation techniques, the researcher offers insights into the translator's approach to overcoming challenges in translating cultural terms, managing linguistic nuances, and ensuring meaning equivalence between the source and target languages.

Findings And Discussion

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Cultural Terms

The findings from this study, the researcher explains the data analysis and the study result of data analysis taken from the *Bumi Manusia* movie. The researcher indicates cultural terms in the *Bumi Manusia* movie according to Newmark's category of cultural terms, the translation techniques found in *Bumi Manusia* movie, and the most translation techniques used in *Bumi Manusia* movie. According to Newmark (1988), cultural words are divided into five categories: ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, and gestures or habits. There are a total of 109 cultural words that were found in the movie. The table shows the number and percentage of the appearance of each category in the *Bumi Manusia* movie.

Table 1. Category of Cultural Terms in Bumi Manusia Movie

No.	Cultural Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Ecology	15	12.6%
2.	Material Culture	24	20.2%
3.	Social Culture	43	36.4%
4.	Organization	25	21%
5.	Gesture and Habit	2	1.7%
Total		109	100%

As can be seen in Table 4.1, there are 15 data (12.6%) that fell into the category of ecology terms, 24 data (20.2%) that fell into the category of the material culture terms, 43 data (36.4%) that fall into the category of social culture terms, 25 data (21%) are included in the organization terms category, and 2 data (1.7%) are included in the gesture & habit terms category. The categories of social culture and organization are the most dominant terms. The analysis of cultural categories can be described as follows:

Ecology

Ecology consists of words which refer to geographical feature in specific region that can be normally distinguished from other cultural terms, such as flora, fauna, mountains, natural conditions, etc. The following data 1 is an example of the data related to this category:

Data 1:

SL: **Tanah Moyangku**

TL: **My Motherland**

In the source language (SL), "*Tanah Moyangku*" literally means "The land of my ancestors." It conveys a strong connection to ancestral heritage, the physical land, and its significance in cultural and ecological contexts. In the target language (TL), it is translated as "My Motherland." While this maintains the emotional and cultural resonance, the term "Motherland" is a broader and more universal concept, often used in English to signify one's homeland or country, rather than specifically emphasizing ancestral ties.

Material Culture

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Material Culture refers to the physical objects, artifacts, and technological achievements that people create and use within a given society. It encompasses the tangible products of a culture that reflect its values, beliefs, and ways of life. Material culture serves as a lens through which researchers and scholars can understand and interpret the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of a society.

Data 2:

SL: Buat apa sampai sewa **dokar** mewah, Suurhof?

TL: Why rent such a fancy **carriage**, Suurhof?

The term “*dokar*”, a traditional horse-drawn carriage commonly found in Indonesia. In the source language (SL), “*dokar*” refers to an item deeply rooted in Indonesian culture and history. Its presence signifies more than just a mode of transportation; it carries connotations of tradition, social status, and local identity. In the target language (TL), the term is translated as “carriage”, which is a general term understood by the target audience. While this preserves the functional meaning, it loses some of the cultural specificity associated with *dokar*. This translation choice reflects a common strategy in cultural translation: domestication, where a culturally specific term is adapted into a more universally comprehensible one for the audience.

Social Culture

Social culture refers to aspects of a culture that define its social behaviors, customs, traditions, and institutions. These include patterns of daily life, work, and leisure activities that are specific to a particular group or community. Social culture reflects how people interact within their society and the norms that govern these interactions.

Data 3:

SL: Kalau begitu pasti anak **Patih**?

TL: You must be a **governor's** son then?

The term “*Patih*” in the source language (SL). In traditional Javanese society, *Patih* refers to a high-ranking official, often serving as a prime minister or a chief aide to a king in a feudal governance system. The term is deeply embedded in the social and political hierarchy of historical Indonesian culture. In the target language (TL), *Patih* is translated as “governor”, which conveys the idea of a person in a high ranking government position but lacks the historical and cultural specificity of the original term. The translation adopts a domestication strategy to make the concept more familiar to the target audience, who might not be acquainted with the traditional Javanese governance structure.

Organization

Organizations refer to institutions, systems, or structured groups within a society that serve specific purposes, whether they are political, educational, religious, or social. These can include governmental bodies, companies, associations, social clubs, or even informal networks that influence the functioning of a community or society. Understanding the role of organizations in a culture is crucial because they often shape social, economic, and political dynamics.

Data 4:

SL: Kau ini **Indo**, bukan Eropa asli.

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TL: You're a **mixed-blood**, not a pure blood.

In the source language (SL), “*Indo*” refers to a person of mixed European and Indonesian descent, a term deeply tied to colonial era social structures and customs in Indonesia. The term carries historical and cultural significance, reflecting societal perceptions of race, hierarchy, and belonging during colonial times. In the target language (TL), “*Indo*” is translated as “mixed-blood”, which conveys the idea of mixed heritage but introduces a more generic and emotionally charged expression. The choice of “mixed-blood” and “pure blood” emphasizes notions of racial purity, which may carry negative connotations or evoke different cultural sensitivities in the target audience.

Gestures and Habits

Gestures and habits refer to non-verbal communication practices and regular behaviors that are culturally specific. These include physical gestures, body language, and habitual actions that may carry specific meanings within a culture. Since gestures and habits are often deeply rooted in cultural norms and values, they can vary widely across societies and may not have direct equivalents in other cultures.

Data 5:

SL: **Jalan jongkok.**

TL: **Please crouch in respect.**

This sentence exemplifies the translation of a cultural term related to habits, particularly one embedded in traditional practices of respect and etiquette. In the source language (SL), “*Jalan jongkok*” refers to the act of walking in a crouched or squatting position, which is a customary gesture in certain Indonesian cultures to show deference, humility, or respect, especially in the presence of elders or authority figures. In the target language (TL), this is translated as “Please crouch in respect,” which conveys the intended respectful gesture but does not fully capture the specific cultural practice of walking in a crouched position. The translation generalizes the act to make it more understandable to an audience unfamiliar with this habit, using a phrase that focuses on the respect implied rather than the precise action.

Translation Techniques

The research includes 109 data points that have been classified and analyzed. Based on the translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002), the researcher identified eight translation techniques used by the translator to translate the script of Bumi Manusia movie from English to Indonesian. These techniques include literal translation, calque, reduction, borrowing, transposition, amplification, description, and generalization. The table below presents the frequency of each translation technique applied in the translated script of Bumi Manusia movie.

Table 2. Translation Techniques in Bumi Manusia Movie

No.	Translation Technique	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Calque	44	37.29%
2.	Literal Translation	36	30.77%

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	3.		Description		9		7.69%	
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4.	Amplification	7	5.98%
5.	Borrowing	5	4.27%
6.	Generalization	3	2.56%
7.	Reduction	3	2.56%
8.	Transposition	2	1.70%
Total		109	100%

From the table above, there are 8 techniques of translations found in this research. The translator mainly used the calque technique with 44 cultural words. The rest are 36 literal translation, 9 description, 7 amplification, 5 borrowing, 3 generalization, 3 reduction, 2 transposition. The analysis of cultural categories can be described as follows:

Calque

It is a technique in which words or phrases are translated individually or word for word in the target language. This technique was applied 44 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 6:

SL: Dia **bersolek** untukmu, Nyo.

TL: She **dresses up** for you, Nyo.

In the SL, “*bersolek*” is a term in Indonesian that means to beautify oneself, often through makeup or grooming, to appear attractive. The translator applied foreignization ideology in translation. The translator rendered this as “dresses up” in the TL, a phrase that closely aligns with the meaning and context of the original term but adapts it into a commonly used English expression. While “dresses up” does not convey the full cultural nuance of “*bersolek*,” it effectively conveys the idea of getting ready to look attractive.

Literal Translation

This is a technique in which the translator translates words or expressions individually in the target language. Every word in the source language is translated word by word in the target language. However, the translation is adapted to the TL sentence structure. This technique was applied 36 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 7:

SL: **Raden Mas** Mulyo

TL: **Raden Mas** Mulyo

In this case, the title “*Raden Mas*”, which is a traditional Javanese honorific used to denote nobility or high social status, is preserved in its original form in the TL. The translator applies foreignization ideology in translation. This approach keeps the original terms intact, because they are culturally specific and lack direct equivalents in the target language.

Description

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It is a technique that replaces terms or expressions with descriptions of their form. This technique was applied 9 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 8:

SL: Besok siang, **pesta pengangkatan** ramamu menjadi Bupati.

TL: Tomorrow is my **coronation** as regent.

In the SL, “*pesta pengangkatan*” refers to a ceremonial event celebrating someone being officially appointed to a position, in this case as a *Bupati* (a regent or local governor in Indonesia). The translator applies domestication ideology in translation. The TL translates this as “coronation”, which is not a literal equivalent but serves as a descriptive substitute that communicates the essence of the formal and celebratory nature of the event to the target audience.

Amplification

This technique introduces details that are not expressed in the source language. This technique was applied 7 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 9:

SL: Kau, **Sinyo**...

TL: **Sinyo (young man)**, are you...

In the source language (SL), “*Sinyo*” is a term commonly used in colonial era Indonesia to refer to a young European man, often reflecting social hierarchies and cultural interactions of the time. The translator applies domestication ideology in his translation. The translator retains “*Sinyo*” in the TL to preserve its cultural specificity but adds the explanation “(young man)” to clarify its meaning for an audience that might not be familiar with the term.

Borrowing

It is a technique in which the translator obtains words or expressions directly from another language. It can be naturalized to fit the spelling rules in the target language or it can be purely borrowed, which means there are no changes. This technique was applied 5 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 10:

SL: Kau bisa memanggilku **Nyai**.

TL: You can call me **Nyai**.

In the SL, “*Nyai*” is a culturally specific term in Indonesian, often referring to a mistress or concubine during the colonial era, or in some contexts, a woman of significant social standing. The translator applies foreignization ideology in translation. It carries historical and cultural connotations that are difficult to convey with a single equivalent word in the target language. By borrowing “*Nyai*” directly, the translator preserves its cultural and historical specificity.

Generalization

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This is a technique that replaces words with more general terms. It is the opposite of particularization technique. This technique was applied 3 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 11:

SL: Tenggelam dalam pelukan **perempuan pendosa**.

TL: fallen into the arms of **prostitutes**.

In the sentence above, the translator generalized to “*prostitutes*,” which narrows the interpretation to a specific group of women perceived as morally flawed, often implying involvement in socially taboo behaviors and reduces the broader cultural or moral implications of the original term. The translator applies domestication ideology in translation. By using “prostitutes,” the translator broadens the meaning, making it more straightforward and accessible to an English-speaking audience.

Reduction

This is a technique to delete ST information elements in the TL. This technique was applied 3 times in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 12:

SL: Kenapa surat dari **ibu dan ramamu** tak pernah kamu balas?

TL: Why didn't you ever reply to **our** letters?

In the SL, “*ibu*” (mother) and “*ramamu*” (your father) are explicitly mentioned, emphasizing both parents as the senders of the letters. The translator applies domestication ideology in his translation. However, in the TL, the translation condenses this detail into “our letters,” omitting the specific reference to the mother and father. While the core message, that the speaker is asking about unanswered letters remains intact, the cultural nuance and the explicit mention of parental roles are lost.

Transposition

This is a technique that replaces the grammatical categories of the source language into the target language. This technique was applied twice in the translation of Bumi Manusia movie. Example:

Data 13:

SL: **Dasar lidah Jawa**.

TL: **You and your Javanese palate**.

In the SL, “*Dasar lidah Jawa*” refers to a local cultural concept rooted in the Javanese people's taste preferences. The translator applies domestication ideology in his translation. However, the TL restructures it into “You and your Javanese palate,” shifting from a descriptive noun phrase to a second-person expression. This change makes the sentence more conversational and idiomatic in English, aligning it with natural usage in the target language.

In reviewing the translation methods implemented in this study, it is evident that the calque technique was the most frequently applied. This method reflects a strategic choice by the translator, aiming to replicate the structural and phraseological elements of the source

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language. The adoption of calque highlights a commitment to retaining the authenticity of the original text while simultaneously addressing the stylistic nuances and cultural references inherent to the source material.

The findings of this study align with the concept of foreignization, notably articulated by theorist Lawrence Venuti (1995). This translation ideology favors the preservation of the source culture, challenging the reader to confront and engage with linguistic and cultural differences. In doing so, the translator fosters a deeper appreciation of the source text, inviting the target audience into a dialogue with the original cultural context.

However, such an approach also poses potential challenges for readers who may be less familiar with the source language or relevant cultural contexts. For instance, idiomatic expressions and culturally specific terms might necessitate additional clarifications to enhance comprehension. This aspect emphasizes the delicate balance that the translator must achieve: preserving the source text's integrity while ensuring accessibility for the target audience.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the researcher concludes that there are 109 cultural words found in the movie *Bumi Manusia*, including terms related to ecology, material culture, social culture, organization, and gestures. The cultural words that occur most often in the *Bumi Manusia* movie are related to social culture, representing 36.4% of the data. Moreover, the translator uses 8 techniques out of the 18 translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir to translate the cultural words found in the movie. The calque method was found to be the most frequently used, applied to 44 cultural words, which aligns with the foreignization approach as theorized by Lawrence Venuti (1995). This method seeks to preserve the authenticity and cultural essence of the source text by challenging the target audience to engage with its linguistic and cultural intricacies.

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