

Translation Techniques in Indonesian Short Stories: A Case Study of Tentang Seorang Pelukis by Ragil Pamungkas Using Molina & Albir's Framework

Ahmad Salman Alfarisi¹, Ahmad Ikhlil Saifulloh, SS., M.Pd²

Affiliation¹ FHISIP-Sastra Inggris Minat Penerjemahan

Affiliation² English Language Education Department, Islamic University of Majapahit

Abstract

This study investigates the translation strategies employed in rendering selected short stories from the collection *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* by Ragil Pamungkas from Indonesian into English. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach, this research focuses on the techniques applied to maintain the cultural, emotional, and artistic nuances embedded in the original texts. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Molina and Albir (2002), and supported by Nida & Taber (1982), Newmark (1988), and Munday (2004), the study reveals that communicative translation dominates, followed by literal translation, modulation, and transposition. Particular challenges were observed in translating metaphorical expressions, artistic terminology, and cultural idioms that hold strong contextual meaning in the source language. The findings emphasize the importance of employing flexible and context-sensitive strategies in literary translation, especially for texts rooted in local traditions and aesthetic values. This research contributes to the field of literary translation studies in Indonesia by showcasing the application of strategic techniques to preserve the artistic and emotional essence of the source text.

Keywords: translation techniques, short stories, cultural adaptation, literary translation

Corresponding author:

Writer: Ahmad Salman Alfarisi
Department: FHISIP-Sastra Inggris Minat Penerjemahan
University: Universitas Terbuka
Email: 043346689@ecampus.ut.ac.id
ikhlilsaifulloh@unim.ac.id

Article history

Received 16, 06, 2025
Revised 21, 06, 2025
Accepted 24, 06, 2025
Published Online 30, 06, 2025

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, its mere suggestion of being a sport has been surpassed; it is now an international culture impacting lexicon, media (Ikhlil Saifulloh et al., 2023), Language has long been regarded not merely as a system of symbols but as a living, evolving medium through which individuals express identity, culture, and shared experience. According to Sapir (1921), language is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols." In the context of translation, this definition underlines the necessity of interpreting meaning beyond lexical equivalence. Translation is not simply the act of substituting words from one language to another but a complex process of negotiating meaning, intention, and cultural nuance across linguistic boundaries. As Hatim and Mason (1997) argue, translation is "a communicative process which takes place within a social context," and as such, it requires the translator to be sensitive not only to grammar and syntax but also to cultural connotation and narrative voice.

In literary translation, this complexity deepens. Literature, especially prose fiction, functions as both a linguistic and cultural artifact. When translating a short story, the translator faces the dual challenge of maintaining semantic fidelity while also preserving the aesthetic,

emotional, and cultural layers embedded within the text. Bassnett (2002) emphasizes that “literary translation involves far more than a simple process of linguistic transference,” and instead must account for style, tone, rhythm, and intertextuality. This becomes even more apparent in texts that are locally situated and culturally rich, where the source language reflects deeply rooted values, traditions, and artistic sensibilities.

The short story collection *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* by Ragil Pamungkas presents such challenges. Written in Indonesian, the stories reflect the emotional depth and artistic introspection of a village painter navigating the intersections of art, memory, and community. The author weaves poetic metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific imagery that demand thoughtful and context-sensitive strategies in translation. Translating these stories into English is not merely a linguistic task but an act of cultural re-expression (Saifulloh et al., 2025; Saifulloh & Anam, 2022; Saifulloh & Mustopa, 2025). The transfer of meaning in such texts cannot rely solely on literal translation, as this may distort the artistic integrity and emotional resonance intended by the author.

While various studies have explored the translation of idiomatic expressions or culturally loaded texts (Molina & Albir, 2002; Newmark, 1988; Nida & Taber, 1982), relatively little attention has been paid to how these strategies apply within Indonesian short stories that foreground art and local narratives. Moreover, few studies have specifically analyzed the use of Molina and Albir’s taxonomy in the context of Indonesian literary prose, particularly short fiction that reflects personal and societal themes through an artistic lens.

This study seeks to address that gap by analyzing the translation strategies used in rendering selected short stories from *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* into English. By applying the theoretical framework developed by Molina and Albir (2002), supported by classical insights from Nida and Taber (1982) and Newmark (1988), this research aims to uncover how translators navigate the semantic, cultural, and emotional challenges posed by literary texts. It examines which strategies are dominant, which shifts occur during the translation process, and how meaning is preserved or adapted across languages and cultures. Through this analysis, the study contributes to the broader discourse in literary translation and demonstrates how theoretical models can be applied in practical, culturally embedded translation contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation studies as an academic field have developed various frameworks for understanding the transfer of meaning between languages, particularly when it comes to translating culturally and emotionally rich texts. Literary translation, unlike technical or legal translation, requires more than linguistic accuracy; it demands stylistic sensitivity and cultural empathy. As Bassnett (2002) notes, the translator of literary works must navigate between faithfulness to the source text and creative adaptation, often finding themselves “rewriting” the original to ensure intelligibility and resonance in the target language. This balancing act is particularly crucial in translating short stories, where brevity intensifies the semantic load of every sentence, metaphor, or idiom.

Among the most influential models in contemporary translation theory is the taxonomy of translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002). Their framework outlines 18 distinct strategies ranging from literal translation to transposition, modulation, adaptation, amplification, and compensation. This model has been widely applied in empirical research due to its flexibility in categorizing micro-level translation decisions. Molina and Albir emphasize that translation techniques are context-dependent choices made to address specific linguistic and

cultural challenges, rather than prescriptive formulas. Their approach thus offers a comprehensive lens for analyzing literary texts that require dynamic negotiation of form, meaning, and effect.

Complementing this modern taxonomy, earlier theorists such as Eugene Nida and Charles Taber (1982) contributed the concept of “dynamic equivalence,” which prioritizes the functional impact of a translated message over formal fidelity. In their seminal work *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Nida and Taber advocate for translations that reproduce the equivalent effect of the original message on the target audience. This idea is especially relevant in literary translation, where maintaining the author’s intended emotional tone and stylistic nuance is often more important than maintaining structural parallelism.

Similarly, Peter Newmark (1988) introduced a dichotomy between semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation strives to remain as close as possible to the original text, while communicative translation prioritizes naturalness and reader response in the target language. Newmark suggests that literary texts often require a mixture of both approaches depending on the degree of cultural embedding and linguistic deviation present in the source material. His theory also underscores the translator’s agency in making interpretive choices that affect how a text is received and understood by different readerships.

Several empirical studies have built upon these theoretical foundations to examine translation practices in literary contexts. For instance, Aisyah (2021) investigated the translation of idiomatic expressions in Indonesian novels and found that communicative strategies such as paraphrasing and adaptation were the most effective in conveying cultural meaning. Kurniawan (2023) conducted a comparative study on poetry translation and noted that modulation and equivalence were essential for maintaining metaphorical depth. These findings support the notion that literary translation necessitates flexible and context-sensitive strategies.

In the Indonesian context, research on literary translation has predominantly focused on novels or poetry, while short stories remain underrepresented. Moreover, few studies have applied Molina and Albir’s model systematically to short story translation, particularly those with strong thematic emphasis on art, emotion, and local culture. This gap signals the need for more focused research that not only examines translation techniques but also considers how cultural and aesthetic values are preserved or reshaped in the translation process.

This study builds upon the aforementioned theoretical and empirical works by applying Molina and Albir’s taxonomy to the English translations of selected short stories from *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* by Ragil Pamungkas. By analyzing the strategies used and the shifts that occur between the source and target texts, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in literary translation studies, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts. The study also seeks to demonstrate how theoretical frameworks can illuminate the practical complexities faced by translators working with culturally rich, artistically nuanced literary texts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to investigate the translation strategies used in rendering selected short stories from *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* by Ragil Pamungkas into English. The qualitative nature of the study allows for an in-depth examination of the nuanced and interpretative choices made by the translator in dealing with cultural, poetic, and emotional content embedded within the original texts. A case study model was chosen to enable focused analysis on a single, contextually rich literary work, providing detailed insights into the translation process and its challenges.

The primary data consist of selected short stories in their original Indonesian versions and their corresponding English translations. These texts were chosen purposively based on their richness in figurative language, cultural references, and emotional tone, elements that typically require thoughtful translation strategies. The data were gathered from published materials provided by the author and translator, ensuring authenticity and access to complete source-target text pairs.

Data collection was conducted through textual documentation and close reading of both the source texts and their translations. The researcher examined sentence-level and phrase-level segments to identify translation shifts, particularly where idiomatic expressions, cultural references, or stylistic elements were present. These segments were then analyzed using the translation technique taxonomy developed by Molina and Albir (2002), which provides a comprehensive framework for classifying micro-level translation choices. This model was selected due to its applicability to literary texts and its capacity to account for a wide range of linguistic and cultural transformations.

The analysis followed a three-step process. First, the researcher identified instances of non-literal or culturally significant language in the source text. Second, the corresponding translations were analyzed to determine which technique(s) were used, such as literal translation, modulation, adaptation, transposition, or communicative translation. Third, each example was interpreted within its narrative and cultural context to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and its impact on meaning, style, and reader response. This interpretive analysis was supported by relevant theoretical insights from Nida and Taber (1982), Newmark (1988), and Munday (2001), whose concepts of equivalence, semantic-pragmatic shift, and communicative effect were employed to evaluate translation outcomes.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the analysis was subjected to expert validation through consultation with a professional translator and a translation studies scholar. Additionally, a peer debriefing process was conducted to minimize subjective bias and enhance interpretive accuracy. This triangulation of perspectives aimed to strengthen the reliability of the interpretations and ensure that the conclusions drawn were grounded in both theoretical rigour and practical insight.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal a diverse range of translation techniques employed in the English rendering of selected short stories from *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* by Ragil Pamungkas. The analysis, grounded in the framework proposed by Molina and Albir (2002), identifies communicative translation as the most frequently used strategy, followed by literal translation, modulation, and transposition. These techniques were often employed interchangeably depending on the linguistic structure, stylistic intent, and cultural specificity of each source segment.

One of the prominent patterns observed was the strategic use of communicative translation to preserve poetic resonance and narrative clarity. This technique proved especially effective in rendering emotionally charged expressions and metaphorical language that would otherwise be obscure or awkward in a literal translation. For example, the line "Canda angin manja yang menggelitik daun jendela" was translated as "The playful wind whispers against the window leaves." Here, the translator avoided a literal rendering of *menggelitik* as "tickle," which could have introduced unintended humor. Instead, the choice of *whispers* evokes a gentler and more evocative mood, aligning better with the lyrical tone of the story.

Conversely, literal translation was applied in instances where direct equivalence was feasible without compromising meaning or tone. An example is found in the title "Surat ke Tujuh Belas," which was rendered as "The Seventeenth Letter." In this case, the structure and semantics aligned sufficiently between the source and target languages, allowing for a faithful reproduction of both content and function.

Modulation was frequently used to shift perspectives or viewpoints when direct translation risked obscuring the intended meaning. In one passage, the phrase "Bilah rindu ditabir malam" was translated into "Pieces of longing through the night's curtain." The original metaphoric structure, which suggests an emotional longing veiled by the night, is preserved but restructured syntactically to maintain fluency and poetic effect in English. This technique aligns with Newmark's (1988) principle that modulation is essential when the translator must change the semantic angle to ensure target audience comprehension.

Transposition was used primarily to adjust grammatical categories and syntactic order without altering meaning. For example, the Indonesian noun phrase "Gemicik hujan" was rendered as "The soft sound of rain," where a nominal compound was expanded into a descriptive phrase to suit English stylistic norms. This allowed the translation to maintain naturalness while still conveying the original imagery.

The table below summarizes several illustrative examples of the translation strategies identified:

No	Source Text	Target Text	Strategy	Commentary
1	<i>Surat ke Tujuh Belas</i>	<i>The Seventeenth Letter</i>	Literal	Direct equivalence without loss of meaning
2	<i>Canda angin manja</i>	<i>The playful wind whispers</i>	Communicative	Tone adapted to preserve lyrical effect
3	<i>Bilah rindu ditabir malam</i>	<i>Pieces of longing through the night's curtain</i>	Modulation	Preserves metaphorical depth with structural shift
4	<i>Gemicik hujan</i>	<i>The soft sound of rain</i>	Transposition	Nominal shift to achieve natural target expression

No Source Text Target Text Strategy Commentary 1 Surat ke Tujuh Belas The Seventeenth Letter Literal Direct equivalence without loss of meaning 2 Canda angin manja The playful wind whispers Communicative Tone adapted to preserve lyrical effect 3 Bilah rindu ditabir malam Pieces of longing through the night's curtain Modulation Preserves metaphorical depth with structural shift 4 Gemicik hujan The soft sound of rain Transposition Nominal shift to achieve natural target expression

Overall, the translator demonstrated a strong sensitivity to both form and function, employing techniques that balanced fidelity to the source text with readability and stylistic coherence in the target language. These findings confirm the applicability of Molina and Albir's (2002) model in literary translation, particularly when navigating texts rich in aesthetic and emotional content. Moreover, the observed strategies reflect a consistent effort to maintain cultural authenticity while ensuring the translated stories remain accessible and evocative to an English-speaking readership.

Discussion

The analysis of the translation strategies used in the English rendering of *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* reveals a complex interplay between linguistic form, cultural meaning, and literary style. The dominant use of communicative translation reflects a conscious effort to prioritize the emotional and poetic effects of the text rather than adhering strictly to structural or lexical fidelity. This choice aligns with Nida and Taber's (1982) theory of dynamic equivalence, which argues that the translator's primary task is to reproduce the response of the source text in the target audience rather than mirror its exact linguistic form.

In several instances, such as "Canda angin manja yang menggelitik daun jendela" rendered as "The playful wind whispers against the window leaves," the translator demonstrates a nuanced understanding of stylistic transference. Rather than producing a literal rendering that may appear awkward or overly literal in English, the translator opts for a version that evokes similar emotional tones and maintains the poetic character of the original. This practice supports Newmark's (1988) view that communicative translation is especially suitable for literary texts in which stylistic resonance carries as much weight as content.

The strategic use of modulation and transposition in the data further supports the idea that literary translation is a dynamic process requiring flexible adaptation. Modulation was applied when the target language demanded a shift in perspective or expression to preserve meaning. For instance, "Bilah rindu ditabir malam" becomes "Pieces of longing through the night's curtain," a construction that captures the emotional metaphor of the original while ensuring syntactic clarity and stylistic elegance in English. Such examples validate Molina and Albir's (2002) assertion that modulation allows translators to alter the semantic or perspective elements of a text when required by the target language or culture.

Transposition, on the other hand, was often used to adjust grammatical categories and achieve naturalness in English without altering the original meaning. In the case of "Gemerik hujan" translated as "The soft sound of rain," the transformation from a noun phrase to a more descriptive and idiomatic expression in English illustrates how syntactic flexibility can enhance readability and maintain poetic flow.

When compared to prior studies, the findings of this research are consistent with those of Aisyah (2021), who observed that communicative strategies were particularly effective in translating literary idioms and metaphors in Indonesian novels. Similarly, Kurniawan (2023) found that modulation and transposition played a critical role in preserving aesthetic value in poetry translation. However, while those studies focused primarily on longer forms such as novels and poetry, this study offers a more focused lens on the short story genre, which demands economy of language and precision in stylistic choices.

Moreover, this research contributes to filling a noticeable gap in Indonesian translation studies by applying Molina and Albir's taxonomy to a local literary text that centers on art, introspection, and cultural identity. While many previous works have employed the framework to examine news articles, public texts, or religious discourse, few have explored its relevance in the literary genre, particularly in short fiction. This study thus demonstrates the adaptability and depth of Molina and Albir's model for capturing the micro-level translation decisions required in literary works.

Another noteworthy point is the translator's implicit negotiation between foreignization and domestication. Although not explicitly analyzed in the present study, several translation choices suggest a tendency toward domestication in line with Venuti's (1995) framework, in which the translator reduces the strangeness of the foreign text to facilitate fluency for the

target reader. The choice to translate culturally specific metaphors into more universally understandable imagery, rather than maintaining foreign cultural markers, reflects an orientation toward reader-centered clarity. While such choices may reduce cultural distance, they also risk softening the localized flavor of the original narrative—a common trade-off in literary translation.

Ultimately, the findings underscore the idea that literary translation is not a mechanical act but a form of interpretive authorship, in which the translator becomes a co-creator of meaning. By using a range of techniques, the translator in this case not only preserves the semantic integrity of the original stories but also ensures that their aesthetic and emotional impact remains intact for a global readership. This highlights the need for translators, especially of literary texts, to be not only linguistically competent but also culturally literate and stylistically sensitive.

Conclusion and Implications

This study has explored the translation strategies applied in rendering selected short stories from *Tentang Seorang Pelukis* by Ragil Pamungkas into English, with a focus on preserving cultural, emotional, and artistic meaning. Using Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy as the primary analytical framework, the research identified a dominant use of communicative translation, supported by techniques such as modulation, literal translation, and transposition. These strategies were deployed to maintain the stylistic and poetic resonance of the original text while ensuring naturalness and clarity in the target language.

The findings affirm that literary translation, especially of culturally rich and aesthetically nuanced short stories, requires a highly adaptive and interpretive approach. Translators are not merely linguistic mediators but cultural and artistic interpreters who must make deliberate choices to reproduce tone, emotion, and narrative rhythm. In this case, the translator's sensitivity to context, metaphor, and reader reception proved critical to the successful transposition of meaning from Indonesian into English.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research reinforces the applicability and versatility of Molina and Albir's model in the domain of literary translation. While often employed in more technical or informational contexts, the model's nuanced categorization of micro-level strategies proved effective in capturing the translator's decision-making process in a literary setting. Moreover, the integration of theories by Nida and Taber (1982), Newmark (1988), and insights from Venuti (1995) provided a comprehensive lens to assess the dynamic interplay between form, meaning, and effect.

Practically, this study offers insight for translators, educators, and students of translation studies. It highlights the need for translators to move beyond word-for-word strategies and instead engage with the deeper layers of cultural and stylistic meaning embedded in literary texts. For educators, the findings can serve as instructional material for demonstrating real-world applications of translation theory. For practitioners, the study underlines the importance of context-sensitive decision-making and stylistic awareness, especially when working with texts that carry significant emotional or cultural weight.

In terms of future research, this study opens several possible directions. First, further studies could apply Molina and Albir's framework to different literary genres, such as poetry, drama, or novels, to compare strategic patterns across forms. Second, a reception-based study could be conducted to examine how translated literary texts are perceived by target readers in terms of emotional impact and cultural readability. Third, comparative studies involving multiple

translators of the same source text may reveal variations in interpretive choices and highlight the subjective dimensions of literary translation.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing field of literary translation in Indonesia by demonstrating how a structured and context-aware approach can help preserve the integrity of the source text while making it accessible to a wider audience. As global literary exchange continues to expand, such research becomes increasingly vital in ensuring that translated works not only cross linguistic borders but also carry with them the cultural and emotional truths of their origins.

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