
**TRANSLATION IDEOLOGY AND MEANING SHIFTS IN
MINANGKABAU RANTAU DEN PAJAUH USING GOOGLE
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ABSTRACT

This study examines translation ideology and cultural meaning shifts in the Minangkabau song Rantau Den Pajauh translated into English using Google Translate. The study used a qualitative descriptive method with 20 lyric lines as the primary data. Each source line was compared with its English output and classified using Molina and Hurtado Albir's translation technique framework, cultural meaning shift analysis, and Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization. The findings show that literal translation is the most frequent technique, appearing in 7 of 20 lines. Adaptation appears in 5 lines, while modulation and equivalence each appear in 4 lines. The analysis also shows that culturally specific expressions such as rantau, uda, harato, anak dagang, kasiyah, and cinto undergo cultural reduction, semantic simplification, and partial weakening of metaphorical meaning. Ideologically, the translation tends toward domestication because Google Translate generally converts Minangkabau cultural expressions into more familiar English expressions. The study concludes that Google Translate can produce readable translations, but it still requires human post-editing to preserve cultural meanings in literary and regional song translation

Keyword : Translation, cultural meaning shift, translation ideology, Minangkabau song lyric, google translate

INTRODUCTION

Translation is an important medium for transferring meaning, information, and culture between different languages and societies. In literary translation, translation does not only involve linguistic equivalence. It also requires attention to cultural values, emotional expression, and contextual meanings embedded in the source text. Bassnett (1990) explains that translation is closely related to cultural communication, while Baker (2018) emphasizes

that meaning in translation depends on context, pragmatics, and textual function. Therefore, translation should be understood as both a linguistic and cultural process.

Song translation is more complex than ordinary prose translation because song lyrics contain rhythm, figurative language, emotional tone, and cultural symbolism. Low (2017) argues that song translation requires careful balance between sense, naturalness, rhythm, and performability. Franzon (2008) also explains that song translation involves strategic choices because a song contains lyrics, music, and potential performance. Susam-Saraeva (2008) further shows that music and translation are connected to cultural circulation, identity, and audience reception. In this context, translating regional songs requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity.

Culture-specific items create a major challenge in translation because their meanings are tied to particular cultural systems. Roza et al. (2024) show that cultural nuance requires careful interpretation in translation practices, while Yao et al. (2024) emphasize that culture-specific items often lack direct equivalents in the target culture. In Minangkabau lyrics, terms such as *rantau*, *uda*, *harato*, *anak dagang*, *kasiah*, and *cinto* do not function merely as ordinary words. They carry cultural meanings related to migration, kinship, social obligation, affection, and emotional endurance. When these expressions are translated into general English terms, the target text may be readable but culturally reduced.

Translation ideology also influences how source-culture meanings are represented in the target text. Venuti (2018) distinguishes between domestication and foreignization. Domestication moves the text toward the norms and expectations of target readers, while foreignization preserves the foreignness of the source culture. Muallim et al. (2023) and Sujarwati and Bengkulu (2021) show that ideology can shape the way cultural and textual meanings are represented in translated texts. In song translation, this ideological issue becomes important because lyrics often express identity, intimacy, and collective cultural memory.

Recent studies on Indonesian song translation show that translation techniques and ideology play an important role in shaping meaning. Anwar (2020) discusses translation strategies in song translation and emphasizes the need to preserve communicative meaning. Ayu et al. (2023), Wijaya (2024), and Simbolon et al. (2025) identify translation techniques and ideological tendencies in Indonesian song translation and show that translation choices affect meaning delivery. Mukminin and Putra (2025) specifically analyze the Minangkabau song *Taragak Pulang* and find that translation techniques, methods, and ideology affect how

Minangkabau cultural expressions are transferred into English. These studies confirm that song translation is a useful site for examining meaning transfer and cultural representation.

The rapid development of machine translation has transformed translation practices by providing fast and accessible translation outputs. Google Translate is one of the most widely used machine translation tools. However, machine translation systems still face difficulties in translating cultural and literary texts. Mentari et al. (2024) found that machine translation may produce acceptable grammatical output but still fail to transfer cultural meaning and illocutionary nuance accurately. Yao et al. (2024) also argue that culture-specific items remain difficult for machine translation because many of them lack direct equivalents in the target culture.

This problem becomes more relevant in the case of Minangkabau because regional languages often have limited digital resources. Koto and Koto (2020) explain that computational resources for Minangkabau remain limited, including resources for machine translation. Tan and Zhu (2024) also indicate that low-resource Indonesian languages, including Minangkabau, need more specialized machine translation development. These limitations may affect how Google Translate processes culturally embedded regional expressions.

Despite the growing number of studies on song translation, fewer studies have examined Google Translate's handling of culturally embedded Minangkabau song lyrics. Previous research has discussed song translation techniques, ideology, and cultural nuance in human translation contexts, but the machine translation of Minangkabau regional song lyrics remains underexplored. Therefore, this study analyzes the translation of *Rantau Den Pajauah* by focusing on translation techniques, cultural meaning shifts, and ideological tendencies. This study is expected to contribute to translation studies by showing how machine translation processes regional song lyrics and how cultural meanings are transformed in the translation process.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the translation of the Minangkabau song *Rantau Den Pajauah*. This approach was selected because the study focuses on meaning, cultural context, and translation phenomena rather than experimental measurement. The data consisted of 20 original Minangkabau lyric lines as the source language and their English translations generated by Google Translate as the target language.

No human participants were involved because the study analyzed textual data produced by a machine translation system.

The data collection process involved four steps. First, the original Minangkabau lyrics were collected and checked for textual consistency. Second, each lyric line was entered into Google Translate to obtain the English target text. Third, the source and target texts were arranged line by line. Fourth, each pair was examined to identify translation techniques, cultural meaning shifts, and ideological tendencies.

The data analysis used three theoretical frameworks. First, translation techniques were classified using Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2022) framework. This study focused on four techniques found in the data: literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and equivalence. Second, cultural meaning shift analysis was used to examine how cultural expressions were preserved, reduced, generalized, or transformed in the target text. This analysis was supported by Roza et al. (2024) and Yao et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of cultural nuance and culture-specific items in translation analysis. Third, Venuti's (2018) concepts of domestication and foreignization were applied to interpret the ideological tendency of the translation. Each line was assigned one dominant technique based on the most salient translation procedure. Some lines may contain overlapping procedures, but the frequency table reports the dominant technique for each line to make the classification verifiable and systematic.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the data systematically before moving to interpretation. The analysis begins with the complete source and target texts, followed by the frequency of translation techniques, the cultural meanings of key Minangkabau expressions, and the line-by-line analysis of all 20 lyric lines.

Table 1: Minangkabau Lyrics and Google Translate Output

Line	Source Language (Minangkabau)	Target Language (English Translation)
1	<i>Dek harato mangko den jauh</i>	Because of wealth, I go far away
2	<i>Nak taraso tawang den tampuah</i>	To feel the vast empty space I traverse
3	<i>Hujan paneh nan denai hadang</i>	Through rain and heat I withstand
4	<i>Coitu nasib si anak dagang</i>	Such is the fate of a wanderer
5	<i>Uda sayang tolong dangakan</i>	My dear, please listen to me
6	<i>Lah suratan ditangguang badan</i>	It is the fate that this body must bear
7	<i>Matohari nan denai hadang</i>	Even the blazing sun I face
8	<i>Kandak rang tuo tak mungkin den lawan</i>	I cannot go against my parents' wishes

9	<i>Babiduak mangko badayuang</i>	To have a boat, one must row
10	<i>Nak jaleh jo tapian</i>	To see the shore clearly
11	<i>Den duduak baok bamanuang</i>	I sit here in deep contemplation
12	<i>Nak jaleh jo parasaian</i>	To understand this suffering
13	<i>Usah uda jadikan baban</i>	Do not make this a burden, my dear
14	<i>Alah jodoh jo suratan</i>	For it is already our destiny
15	<i>Aia mato lai den tahan</i>	I try to hold back my tears
16	<i>Kasih ka uda tak ka mungkin hilang</i>	My love for you will never fade
17	<i>Jauh, jauh rantau denai pajauh</i>	Far, far away I will go into the distance
18	<i>Jalang, jalang indak ka denai jalang</i>	I will not visit, I will not return
19	<i>Pulang, pulang lah uda denai sayang</i>	Come home, come home my dear
20	<i>Maafkanlah cinto nan lah tajalin</i>	Forgive the love that was once woven

Frequency of Translation Techniques

The frequency count was made by assigning one dominant technique to each lyric line. This step is important because the claim about the dominant technique must be supported by verifiable numerical evidence. Table 2 shows that literal translation is the most frequent technique, appearing in 7 of 20 lines of the data.

Table 2: Frequency of Translation Techniques in the 20 Lyric Lines

Translation Technique	Lyric Lines	Frequency
Literal translation	1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 18	7
Adaptation	4, 5, 13, 17, 19	5
Modulation	2, 8, 12, 16	4
Equivalence	3, 9, 15, 20	4
Total	1-20	20

The frequency table shows that Google Translate relies most heavily on literal translation. This tendency makes the translation easy to follow at the lexical level, but it does not always preserve the cultural meaning of Minangkabau expressions. Adaptation appears in lines containing culturally marked terms such as *uda*, *anak dagang*, and *rantau*. Modulation appears when Google Translate changes the perspective or narrows the emotional meaning of the source expression. Equivalence appears when the target line successfully conveys the communicative meaning and imagery of the source text. This pattern supports Molina and Hurtado Albir's view that technique classification must be examined at the micro-textual level (Molina, 2022).

Cultural Meanings of Key Minangkabau Expressions

Before analyzing meaning shifts, the cultural meanings of key Minangkabau expressions need to be clarified. Without this step, the degree of cultural loss in translation cannot be evaluated accurately. The cultural explanation follows the principle that culture-

specific items should be interpreted in relation to the source culture before their target-language rendering is evaluated (Baker, 2018; Roza et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2024).

Table 3: Cultural Meanings of Key Minangkabau Expressions

Expression	Cultural Meaning in Context
<i>Rantau</i>	A place outside the homeland or <i>nagari</i> . In Minangkabau culture, <i>rantau</i> is associated with <i>merantau</i> , migration, self-reliance, maturity, economic struggle, and social responsibility to the family.
<i>Uda</i>	An address term for an older brother, an older male, or a beloved male figure. In the lyric, it signals affection, intimacy, respect, and Minangkabau relational identity.
<i>Harato</i>	Wealth, property, or economic resources. In this lyric, <i>harato</i> does not only mean money. It also suggests livelihood, family obligation, and the economic reason for leaving home.
<i>anak dagang</i>	A person who lives away from home to seek livelihood and experience. It implies vulnerability, endurance, loneliness, and the social identity of a migrant, not merely a free wanderer.
<i>Kasih</i>	Affection, care, and emotional attachment. It suggests loyalty and emotional sacrifice more strongly than the general English word love.
<i>Cinto</i>	Love or romantic attachment. In the lyric, it also carries emotional memory and relational responsibility.
<i>Suratan</i>	Destiny or life script. It reflects acceptance of fate and emotional resignation.
<i>Parasaian</i>	Suffering, feeling, or inner emotional burden. The word covers psychological experience, not only physical pain.

Line-by-Line Analysis of Translation Techniques, Meaning Shifts, and Ideology

Table 4 analyzes all 20 lyric lines. This table addresses the need for complete data coverage. It shows that the translation is not evaluated selectively. Representative examples are discussed after the table, but every line is classified and interpreted in the table.

Table 4: Line-by-Line Analysis of Translation Techniques, Meaning Shifts, and Ideological Tendencies

Line	Source Language	Target Language	Dominant Technique	Meaning Shift	Ideology
1	<i>Dek mangko jauh harato den</i>	Because of wealth, I go far away	Literal translation	<i>Harato</i> is reduced to material wealth. The social obligation behind migration becomes less visible.	Domestication
2	<i>Nak tawang tampuah taraso den</i>	To feel the vast empty space I traverse	Modulation	<i>Tawang</i> shifts from emotional emptiness to physical space. The metaphor becomes more descriptive.	Domestication
3	<i>Hujan nan hadang paneh denai</i>	Through rain and heat I withstand	Equivalence	The hardship metaphor is preserved. The English line still conveys endurance.	Balanced
4	<i>Coitu nasib anak dagang si</i>	Such is the fate of a wanderer	Adaptation	<i>Anak dagang</i> is generalized as	Domestication

5	<i>Uda sayang tolong dangakan</i>	My dear, please listen to me	Adaptation	wanderer. The migrant identity and social struggle are weakened. <i>Uda</i> is replaced by my dear. Emotional closeness remains, but Minangkabau kinship identity disappears.	Domestication
6	<i>Lah suratn ditungguang badan</i>	It is the fate that this body must bear	Literal translation	<i>Suratan</i> is translated as fate. The meaning is understandable, but the local tone of resignation is softened.	Domestication
7	<i>Matohari nan denai hadang</i>	Even the blazing sun I face	Literal translation	The image of facing the sun is retained. The metaphor of hardship remains partly visible.	Balanced
8	<i>Kandak rang tuo tak mungkin den lawan</i>	I cannot go against my parents' wishes	Modulation	The line shifts from parental will to the speaker's inability to resist. Filial obedience is clearer, but cultural obligation is simplified.	Domestication
9	<i>Babiduak mangko badayuang</i>	To have a boat, one must row	Equivalence	The proverbial meaning of effort and responsibility is preserved well.	Balanced
10	<i>Nak jaleh jo tapian</i>	To see the shore clearly	Literal translation	The shore image is transferred directly with minimal shift.	Balanced
11	<i>Den duduak baik bamanuang</i>	I sit here in deep contemplation	Literal translation	The action and reflective mood are transferred. <i>Baok bamanuang</i> is made more formal as deep contemplation.	Domestication
12	<i>Nak jaleh jo parasaian</i>	To understand this suffering	Modulation	<i>Parasaian</i> is narrowed into suffering. The broader emotional and psychological scope is reduced.	Domestication
13	<i>Usah uda jadikan baban</i>	Do not make this a burden, my dear	Adaptation	<i>Uda</i> is again rendered as my dear. The affectionate meaning remains, but the cultural address term is erased.	Domestication
14	<i>Alah jodoh jo suratn</i>	For it is already our destiny	Literal translation	<i>Jodoh</i> and <i>suratan</i> are rendered as destiny. The fatalistic meaning is maintained, but local nuance is reduced.	Domestication

15	<i>Aia mato lai den tahan</i>	I try to hold back my tears	Equivalence	The emotional meaning is transferred clearly and naturally.	Balanced
16	<i>Kasih ka uda tak ka mungkin hilang</i>	My love for you will never fade	Modulation	<i>Kasih</i> becomes love. The translation is natural, but it simplifies loyalty, sacrifice, and cultural affection.	Domestication
17	<i>Jauh, rantau jauh denai pajauh</i>	Far, far away I will go into the distance	Adaptation	<i>Rantau</i> is rendered as distance. The cultural idea of merantau disappears.	Domestication
18	<i>Jalang, indak ka denai jalang</i>	I will not visit, I will not return	Literal translation	The repeated refusal to visit or return is transferred directly. Emotional finality is clear.	Balanced
19	<i>Pulang, pulang lah uda denai sayang</i>	Come home, come home my dear	Adaptation	<i>Uda</i> is replaced with my dear. The appeal remains emotional but loses Minangkabau address identity.	Domestication
20	<i>Maafkanlah cinto nan lah tajalin</i>	Forgive the love that was once woven	Equivalence	The metaphor of woven love is preserved. The translation keeps the image of emotional bonds.	Balanced

Dominant Translation Techniques

The dominant technique is literal translation, which occurs in 7 lines of the data. This technique appears when Google Translate transfers the source expression through direct lexical correspondence. For example, *Dek harato mangko den jauh* is translated as Because of wealth, I go far away. At the lexical level, the translation is understandable. However, the word *harato* is treated as a simple economic term. In the cultural context of the lyric, *harato* also refers to livelihood, responsibility, and the economic motivation that pushes someone to leave the homeland. Therefore, the literal rendering reduces the cultural layer of the line.

Adaptation appears in 5 lines of the data. This technique is visible in the translation of *uda* into my dear and *anak dagang* into wanderer. These translations make the lines accessible to English readers, but they also remove Minangkabau cultural identity. *Uda* is not only a general affectionate expression. It is a culturally marked address term that reflects intimacy and respect. Similarly, *anak dagang* does not simply mean wanderer. It refers to a person who lives away from home and carries the emotional burden of migration.

Modulation appears in 4 lines of the data. This technique occurs when the translation changes the semantic perspective of the source expression. For instance, *Nak taraso tawang den tampuah* becomes To feel the vast empty space I traverse. The source expression *tawang* suggests inner emptiness and emotional loneliness. The translation changes this into a more physical description of space. As a result, the emotional intensity becomes weaker.

Equivalence also appears in 4 lines of the data. This technique appears when Google Translate successfully transfers the communicative meaning and imagery of the source text. For example, *Hujan paneh nan denai hadang* is translated as Through rain and heat I withstand. The English line preserves the metaphor of endurance. Another example is *Maafkanlah cinto nan lah tajalin*, translated as Forgive the love that was once woven. Although the cultural depth of *cinto* is softened, the metaphor of a woven emotional bond remains visible.

Cultural Meaning Shifts

The cultural meaning shifts occur mainly through cultural reduction, semantic simplification, and metaphorical weakening. Cultural reduction appears when culturally specific expressions are replaced with general English expressions. The clearest examples are *rantau*, *uda*, and *anak dagang*. *Rantau* is translated as distance, *uda* as my dear, and *anak dagang* as wanderer. These choices help target readers understand the surface message, but they reduce the Minangkabau cultural identity embedded in the source text. This finding is consistent with Yao et al., who argue that culture-specific items are difficult for machine translation because they often lack direct target-culture equivalents (Yao et al., 2024).

Semantic simplification occurs when a word with layered cultural meaning is translated into a narrower English word. *Harato* is translated as wealth, *kasiah* as love, and *parasaian* as suffering. These translations are not completely wrong, but they simplify the social and emotional dimensions of the source expressions. *Harato* in this lyric relates to livelihood and family responsibility. *Kasiah* implies affection, loyalty, and sacrifice. *Parasaian* contains a wider sense of inner burden than suffering alone.

Metaphorical weakening appears when a poetic or emotional image becomes less intense in the target text. The line *Nak taraso tawang den tampuah* becomes To feel the vast empty space I traverse. The English line retains the image of emptiness, but it presents the feeling as a physical space rather than an inner emotional condition. In contrast, the final line,

Forgive the love that was once woven, shows partial preservation because the metaphor of *tajalin* or woven remains in the target text.

Ideological Tendencies

The translation shows a dominant domestication tendency. This tendency is evident in the repeated replacement of Minangkabau cultural terms with familiar English expressions. For example, *uda* becomes *my dear*, *anak dagang* becomes *wanderer*, and *rantau* becomes *distance*. These choices make the target text more fluent and accessible, but they reduce the visibility of Minangkabau culture. In Venuti's terms, the translation moves the source text toward the target reader rather than bringing the target reader closer to the source culture (Venuti L, 2018).

It is important to note that in machine translation, domestication should not be understood as a conscious ideological decision made by a human translator. Instead, it is an ideological tendency inferred from the output. Google Translate appears to prioritize fluency, familiarity, and general semantic accessibility. Therefore, culturally marked items are often normalized into common English expressions. This output-based domestication differs from human translation because a human translator can deliberately choose borrowing, glossing, or cultural annotation to preserve source-cultural identity.

Discussion

The findings show that Google Translate tends to produce domesticated translations because the system is built to create outputs that sound natural in the target language. This matches what Venuti (1995) described as domestication, where a translation is adjusted to fit the target culture rather than keeping the original cultural feel. This can be seen in how culture-specific words are replaced with more common English expressions. The system does not explain what *rantau*, *uda*, or *anak dagang* mean culturally. Instead, it picks English words that sound familiar, like *my dear* and *wanderer*. This is why the translation is easy to read but loses much of its cultural meaning. The problem goes beyond style. It shows that machine translation struggles with cultural concepts that are not well represented in its training data, which Koehn and Knowles (2017) also pointed out in their research on neural machine translation.

The cultural meaning is lost mainly in three ways: cultural reduction, semantic simplification, and metaphorical weakening. Cultural reduction happens when culturally

specific words are replaced with general English words. The clearest examples are *rantau*, *uda*, and *anak dagang*. *Rantau* becomes *distance*, *uda* becomes *my dear*, and *anak dagang* becomes *wanderer*. These choices still carry the basic message, but they strip away the Minangkabau identity behind the words. This matches what Yao et al. (2024) found, that culture-specific items are hard for machine translation because they usually have no direct equivalent in the target language. Vanmassenhove et al. (2021) also found that machine translation tends to erase cultural markers and produce more generic output compared to human translators. Mukherjee and Nath (2023) added that even when a machine translation gets the words right, it often still misses the cultural meaning behind them.

Semantic simplification happens when a word with deep cultural meaning is translated into a simpler English word. *Harato* becomes *wealth*, *kasiah* becomes *love*, and *parasaian* becomes *suffering*. These translations are not wrong, but they miss the fuller meaning. *Harato* in this song is about livelihood and family responsibility, not just general wealth. *Kasiah* carries feelings of loyalty and sacrifice within a family relationship. *Parasaian* is more about carrying a heavy inner burden over time, not just suffering in the moment. Newmark (1988) explained that this kind of translation often loses the social and cultural dimensions of the original text. Al-Masri (2004) also found that meaning loss in literary translation often comes from focusing too much on the surface meaning and ignoring the cultural background.

Metaphorical weakening happens when a poetic image in the source text becomes less emotionally powerful in the translation. The line *Nak taraso tawang den tampuah* becomes *To feel the vast empty space I traverse*. The English version still has the image of emptiness, but it sounds more like a physical description than an emotional one, which weakens the feeling of the original. Kim et al. (2023) pointed out that songs carry meaning on multiple levels at once, including emotion, rhythm, and cultural reference, and machine translation usually only handles the literal meaning. On the other hand, the line *Forgive the love that was once woven* does keep part of the original metaphor because the word *tajalin* (woven) has a close enough English equivalent. Rahimi and Riasati (2022) note that this kind of partial preservation in machine translation usually happens by accident when the source image happens to match something familiar in English, not because the system truly understood the cultural meaning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study analyzed Google Translate's translation of 20 lyric lines from the Minangkabau song *Rantau Den Pajauah* and found that literal translation was the most

common technique (7 lines), followed by adaptation (5 lines), and modulation and equivalence at 4 lines each. Culturally loaded terms such as *rantau*, *uda*, *harato*, *anak dagang*, *kasih*, and *cinto* lost their local meanings because Google Translate replaced them with more general English equivalents. The translation as a whole leans toward domestication, which improves readability but weakens cultural specificity. This shows that machine translation of regional literary texts still needs human post-editing, particularly to decide whether cultural terms should be kept, explained, or adapted. Future studies should expand the corpus to other regional songs, compare Google Translate with other machine translation systems, and include human translation data and reader responses. Machine translation developers also need to improve cultural sensitivity for regional languages so that local identities are not erased in the translation process.

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