



## Rendering historical and sociocultural references through subtitles: The case of English-Indonesian translation in Netflix's *History 101*

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### ABSTRACT

In today's global circulation of audiovisual media, translating cultural references poses a significant challenge—particularly in documentary genres that aim to educate diverse audiences. *History 101*, a Netflix documentary series, features dense historical and cultural content that demands careful linguistic and cultural adaptation in its subtitled version. This study investigates the types of cultural references and the subtitling strategies used to translate them into Indonesian. Drawing on Cintas and Remael's (2021) taxonomy—widely applied in audiovisual translation research—the study adopts a descriptive case study design. The analysis identifies a high concentration of ethnographic references, followed by socio-political and geographical categories. These references include elements such as daily life objects, institutions, and place names. To render these into the target language, the subtitler applies a range of strategies, with loan translation being the most frequently used. Literal translation, calque, explication, substitution, and transposition are also observed, reflecting a tendency to strike a balance between linguistic accuracy and accessibility for the target audience. Overall, the findings underscore the richness of the documentary's cultural content and the complexity of subtitling such materials. The frequent use of ethnographic references and loan translation suggests an effort to preserve cultural specificity while ensuring comprehension for Indonesian viewers.



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## INTRODUCTION

Recent technological developments have profoundly reshaped how people access and engage with information, particularly through audiovisual content. While traditional broadcast media such as television once dominated media consumption, digital streaming platforms now offer more personalized and on-demand access to diverse forms of entertainment and education (Escribano, Cintas, & Massidda, 2021; Nielsen, 2022; Kaur, H. & Ashfaq, R., 2023). This shift has not only changed viewing habits but also intensified the interplay between language, culture, and media. Audiovisual media have become central to global communication, learning, and cultural exchange, necessitating more sophisticated methods of linguistic and cultural adaptation (Khodaie & Sadeghpour, 2015; Gambier, 2013; Jeljeli et. al., 2022; Mirriahi et. al., 2018).

Within this media ecosystem, audiovisual translation (AVT) has emerged as the key field in translation studies. AVT, consisting of three primary modes of AVT: dubbing, voice-over, and subtitling, concerns the transfer of verbal and non-verbal elements in multimedia formats such as films, television shows, and online videos (Cintas & Remael, 2021; Chaume, 2013; Centus, 2025). Subtitling, in particular, plays a pivotal role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps for global audiences. It involves rendering spoken language into written form, often across languages, while adhering to spatial and temporal constraints (Diaz Cintas & Szarkowska, 2020; O'Connell, 2016; and Valdeón, 2022). As a result, subtitlers must condense meanings, adapt culturally specific content, and synchronize text with audio and visuals (Baltic Media, 2025; Abdelaal, 2019; Hagström, H., & Pedersen, 2023; Bolanos-Garcia-Escribano, 2023). These shifts may result in discrepancies between the spoken and written forms, potentially altering the audience's interpretation of the scene. To compensate for these limitations, it is generally assumed that viewers – especially those from multicultural or multilingual backgrounds – either rely on their own cultural knowledge or draw meaning from contextual cues embedded in the audiovisual content (Guillot, 2016; Abdelaal & Al Sarhani, 2021; Suzanne, 2023). These demands underscore the complexity of AVT and highlight the critical role subtitlers play in making media content accessible and meaningful to international audiences (Carmichael, Reid, & Karpicke, 2018).

Among the most pressing challenges of AVT is the translation of cultural references. These may include food, customs, institutional terms, or proper names that are familiar to source-language audiences but may be unfamiliar to viewers from other cultural backgrounds (Cintas & Remael, 2021; El-Farahaty & Alwazna, 2024; Alaa & Al Sawi, 2023). These elements – whether embedded in language, imagery, or allusion – convey important aspects of a society's values, history, and identity. Without effective

translation strategies, such references risk becoming obscure or misinterpreted by audiences unfamiliar with the source culture (Alfaify & Ramos Pinto, 2021). This challenge becomes even more pronounced in documentary genres, where cultural references often play an informative role, enriching the viewer's understanding of social and historical contexts.

The present study investigates how cultural references are translated from English into Indonesian subtitles in the Netflix documentary series *History 101*. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) What type of cultural references appear in *History 101*? and (2) How are these cultural references rendered into Indonesian subtitles? These questions are explored through the lens of Cintas & Remael's (2021) taxonomy, which offers a comprehensive classification system for both cultural references and subtitling strategies in audiovisual texts.

This research is motivated by two key considerations: the importance of *History 101* as a globally circulated, educational documentary series, and the increasing relevance of English-to-Indonesian in a multilingual country where English-language media are widely consumed. As an episodic series covering diverse topics—from historical context and scientific breakthroughs to sociopolitical phenomena—*History 101* contains a high density of culturally embedded content that must be made comprehensible to Indonesian audiences through subtitling. The challenge lies in translating not only the literal meaning but also the historical and sociocultural resonance of the original references, a task that requires strategic and culturally informed decision-making by the subtitle (Fărcașiu, 2024).

To guide this analysis, this study draws on Cintas & Remael's (2021) taxonomy of cultural references, which distinguishes between two major categories: real-world references and intertextual references. Real-world references include: (1) geographical references, such as physical locations, natural phenomena, and endemic species; (2) ethnographic references, covering elements like food, clothing, occupations, art, media, weights and measure, and personal or brand names; and (3) socio-political references, encompassing governance system, administrative divisions, institutions, public roles, and military structures. The second category, intertextual cultural references, refers to textual allusions to prior works, including quotations, parodies, and stylistic imitations from literature, film, music, or history. These may be overt—explicitly naming the source—or covert, relying on subtle cues or stylistic resonance.

For subtitling strategies, the same framework identifies nine methods: loan, literal translation, calque, explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation, and omission. These strategies reflect the range of choices available to subtitlers based on linguistic, cultural, and technical constraints. They require the subtitler to negotiate between fidelity

to the source text and accessibility for the target viewer (Alfaify & Ramos Pinto, 2021).

Prior studies have contributed valuable insights into the translation of culture-bound elements in audiovisual media, yet they present certain limitations. Fitriani, Hasibin, and Inayah (2022) analyzed culture-specific items and their subtitling strategies in the documentary film *The Mark of Majapahit Empire*, using Newmark's cultural categories and Pedersen's subtitling strategies. They identified 118 culture-specific items and found that retention and calque were dominant strategies. However, this study is confined to a single documentary film and focuses on historical references with relatively localized cultural contexts.

Similarly, Leksananda and Manusu (2023) explored the translation of cultural words in the cinematic subtitling of *The Dictator*. Their analysis relied on Newmark's (1988) classification, emphasizing transference and literal translation as the most common procedures. This study provided a valuable comparison of source and target texts, but did not fully address the diversity of cultural references found in serial formats or analyze the broader implications for audience reception.

The third study, conducted by Alharahsheh, Moindjie, and Lin (2023), examined cultural references in the Arabic-English translation of the film *The Queue*, identifying 350 instances and categorizing them using Newmark's model. While this study used a more extensive dataset, it focused on translation techniques rooted in Vinay and Darbelnet's framework, which does not fully reflect the complexities of audiovisual translation, particularly in subtitling.

These studies reveal three main research gaps: in content focus, media form, and theoretical framework. First, in terms of content, earlier studies investigated different types of culture-related expressions — namely, culture-specific items, cultural words, and cultural references — without explicitly differentiating and synthesizing these categories. The current study builds on this diversity by adopting a more unified analytical lens, using Cintas and Remael's (2021) taxonomy to categorize and interpret cultural references systematically. Second, prior research primarily investigated standalone documentary films of cinematic subtitling, overlooking the layered narrative and thematic continuity in documentary series. Unlike films with self-contained plots, series like *History 101* require subtitlers to maintain consistency and coherence across episodes with different thematic content. Lastly, the earlier studies employ classical models such as Newmark's and Vinay and Darbelnet's, which are not fully tailored to the multimodal and technical constraints of subtitling. By adopting Cintas and Remael's framework, designed specifically for audiovisual texts, this study provides a more nuanced and genre-appropriate analysis.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research uses a qualitative design to gather rich, contextual data. As noted by Leavy (2017) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), this work centers on shared experiences within a social group and on the meanings that emerge from everyday interactions. The method is flexible and open, allowing data to take various forms, including spoken interviews, field notes, and written documents (Lim, 2024). Following Kumar (2022), the project adopts a descriptive case-study format, treating Indonesian subtitles of the *History 101* documentary series as a telling example that illuminates other instances in the same domain.

A descriptive case study constitutes a detailed examination of a single instance, such as a program, event, or person, embedded within its real-world setting, allowing researchers to grasp what makes that case distinctive (Yin, 2018). In this type of method, researchers collect rich evidence over a sustained period through various tools, including interviews, direct observations, and analysis of written materials, thereby constructing a balanced portrait from multiple angles. The goal is to portray the case's characteristics, processes, and outcomes in full detail rather than to intervene or steer the situation being studied. By focusing on a representative case, the findings may shed light on comparable cases and on broader trends within that category.

This research draws its primary evidence from Indonesian subtitles generated by Netflix for the *History 101* documentary series. The episodes under scrutiny are *Oil and the Middle East*, *Bottled Water*, *Dating Apps*, *Robots*, *GPS*, *Credit Cards*, *The Space Race*, and *Plastics*. Purposive sampling guides the selection, focusing on episodes and dialogues that contain a high frequency of cultural references for closer analysis.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

#### ***Data Collection Instruments***

This research draws its primary data from Indonesian subtitles of the Netflix documentary series *History 101*, with a focus on eight episodes. The episodes were selected through purposive sampling following a preliminary screening process in which each episode was reviewed to identify those containing a relatively high number of potential cultural references based on initial observation of historically and culturally dense content. Data collection relied on textual analysis of both English source subtitles and their Indonesian translations to identify and classify cultural references, guided by Cintas and Remael's (2021) taxonomy. The identified references were then organized using a spreadsheet-based coding scheme that categorized each item by type of cultural references and subtitling strategies. This coding framework

enabled cross-episode comparisons and pattern recognition. To support accurate categorization and interpretation, resources such as *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) were consulted. While this study did not involve multiple raters, consistency in identification and classification was ensured through repeated verification of items across multiple rounds of analysis.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedures in this study involved a structured textual analysis conducted in three stages: selection, identification, and categorization. In the first stage, episodes of *History 101* were pre-screened to identify those containing a high density of historical and sociocultural content. During the identification stage, researchers closely examined the English and Indonesian subtitles, marking occurrences of cultural references, which were then copied into a spreadsheet for systematic documentation. In the final stage, cultural references were classified using a coding scheme based on Cintas and Remael's typology: cultural references were categorized into ethnographic, geographical, and socio-political types, and corresponding subtitling strategies were labeled accordingly. This structured approach enabled the recognition of patterns and frequency analysis across the dataset.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis was carried out in three main stages: classification, analysis, and interpretation. The classification and analysis were conducted by the primary researcher and cross-checked by a peer with expertise in translation studies to ensure consistency and coding reliability. During the analysis stage, the researchers examined patterns in the distribution of cultural references and the strategies applied across the chosen episodes. Supporting resources, such as the *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), were utilized to clarify semantic nuances and ensure the accuracy of classification. In the final stage, the findings were interpreted to conclude the dominant types of cultural references and subtitling strategies, as well as the representation of historical and sociocultural content. Broader implications for audiovisual translation and cultural mediation in educational documentaries are also discussed.

## **FINDINGS**

This research used Netflix's documentary series, *History 101*, as the data source because it consists of various cultural references. The research investigated the types of cultural references and the subtitling strategies, drawing on Cintas & Remael's theories (2021). The result of this research showed that there are 180 cultural references found within the series. The

types of cultural references found in the series were: geographical references (20 data) comprising: geographical references to certain phenomena, to physical with general location, and to physical with unique locations; ethnographic references (131 data) comprising references to food and drinks, to objects from daily life, to work, to art, media and culture, to weights and measures, and to brand names and personal names; and socio-political references (29 data) comprising references to institutions and functions, to socio-cultural life, to military institutions and objects, and to personal names and institutional names. The cultural references were translated by using 6 out of 9 subtitling strategies. The strategies employed were loan (106), literal translation (27), calque (10), explication (7), substitution (26), and transposition (7).

**Table 1. The frequency of types of cultural references**

Types of Cultura References	Number	Percentage
Geographical references	20	11.1%
Ethnographic references	131	72.8%
Socio-political references	29	16.1%

**Table 2. The frequency of types of translation strategies**

Translation Strategies	Number	Percentage
Loan	106	58.9%
Literal translation	26	15%
Explication	6	3.9%
Substitution	26	14.4%
Transposition	7	3.9%
Calque	9	5.6%

### Geographical References to Certain Phenomena

SL	TL
After three days in space, the men enter <i>lunar orbit</i> .	Setelah tiga hari di luar angkasa, para astronaut memasuki <i>orbit bulan</i> .

The phrase *After three days in space, the men enter lunar orbit* recalls the moment during Apollo 8 when the crew first flew around the Moon. That December 1968 voyage was a landmark event, for it marked the very first occasion that people circled Earth's nearest neighbor. Astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders passed the two-thousand-mile-wide lunar limb and slid smoothly into the moon's gravitational embrace. Their success not only filled television screens around the world but also cleared the way for Apollo 11, the mission that would finally place a human foot on lunar soil.

*Lunar orbit* falls under what researchers call geographical references to certain phenomena because it denotes a defined astronomical zone tied to the moon, a natural body in space. Here, *lunar orbit* refers to the curved pathway a spacecraft follows while circling the Moon, a trajectory grounded in precise physics and celestial mechanics. Although that path is not on Earth's surface, the label serves the same purpose as a landmark, identifying a distinct region of interest in planetary science. Ultimately, these names demonstrate how people extend familiar geographic concepts, such as orbital arcs, poles, and surfaces, into the vastness of space to make distant phenomena easier to comprehend.

The translation choice seen in the phrase "*orbit bulan*" exemplifies the strategy known as borrowing or, more narrowly, loan translation, a form of calque in which the syntax of the source phrase remains intact while each element receives a word-for-word rendering. Here, '*lunar*' becomes '*bulan*', while '*orbit*' is left unchanged because the English term has already been adopted and naturalized within the Indonesian scientific language. By proceeding in this manner, the translator safeguards both technical accuracy and the formal register expected in academic writing. Rather than substituting a simpler or everyday expression, the scholar delivers the exact scientific concept, thereby demonstrating how global research dialogue shapes and is reflected in the target language lexicon.

### Geographical References to Flora and Fauna

SL	TL
They're also looking at plants, like <i>switchgrass</i> , oilseed, and sugarcane, to produce natural polymers.	Mereka juga melirik tanaman, seperti <i>rumput prairi</i> , biji jarak, dan tebu untuk menghasilkan polimer alami.

In the episode "*Plastics*," the film examines how a heavy reliance on petroleum-based plastics has created severe pollution and waste problems. In response, researchers and entrepreneurs are looking to nature, certain plants, in particular, for cleaner, long-lasting substitutes. This line falls within a segment on bio-based plastics, materials derived from renewable feedstocks rather than fossil fuels. The narrator notes ongoing work with *switchgrass*, oilseed crops, and sugarcane as promising sources of natural polymers for making biodegradable plastic products. If scaled up, these plant-centered alternatives could help alleviate the worldwide plastic emergency by reducing demand for synthetic, non-degradable materials.

The term "*switchgrass*" belongs to the category of geographical references to flora and fauna because it denotes a single species that grows naturally in select areas, chiefly North America. Though it names a living organism, the term also carries strong ties to the ecosystems and landscapes



where that grass thrives. People associate switchgrass with open prairies, and researchers study it for its role in improving soil health and producing renewable fuels. Such terms arise from the blend of local culture, land-use practices, and the unique diversity of that region. Because of this context, a translator must note its ecological roots and scientific uses before finding an equivalent word.

In the present instance, the translator's decision to render *switchgrass* as *rumpu prairi* - literally prairie grass - exemplifies the substitution strategy identified by Cintas and Remael. Substitution consists of replacing a culturally specific or potentially unfamiliar item in the source text with one that is more familiar or functionally equivalent for the target audience. Because Indonesian readers are unlikely to recognize switchgrass and because no widely accepted counterpart exists in Indonesian, the translator opted for *rumpu prairi*, a broader yet contextually accurate label that indicates the plant's grass-like nature and prairie origin. This choice allows the audience to grasp the general idea without botanical training, thereby preserving communicative effectiveness even though some precise taxonomic details are inevitably lost.

### Geographical References to Physical with Unique Location

SL	TL
In November 2005, 23 cars line up in the Mojave Desert for a 132-mile race.	Pada November 2005, 23 mobil berbanjar di Gurun Mojave untuk balapan sejauh 212 km.

In Season 1, Episode 6 of Netflix's documentary series *History 101*, titled *Robots*, the filmmakers point to a key milestone for self-driving car technology: the 2005 DARPA Grand Challenge. Organized by the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, the event brought together 23 robotic vehicles to tackle a 132-mile journey across the Mojave Desert. Unlike the previous year's challenge, where no vehicle completed the course, this second event revealed dramatic improvement. In the end, five vehicles overcame the brutal sand washes and steep canyons, with Stanford University's Stanley finishing first in just under seven hours. The spectacle not only proved that autonomous technology could handle real-world conditions but also injected fresh momentum into research that later shaped future innovations in both military and civilian applications.

The *Mojave Desert* belongs to the category of geographical references to physical features with a unique location, as it occupies a defined and widely recognized area in the southwestern United States, primarily in southeastern California. Rather than a generic term for any dry region, its name acts as a proper noun pinpointing a specific landscape that stands apart from all other

deserts. The region carries ecological, cultural, and even cinematic weight; its harsh scenery and severe climate provide a dramatic backdrop for endurance races and other extreme events. Because its boundaries are fixed, its coordinates permanent, and its cultural presence well established, the *Mojave Desert* serves as a clear marker on the map for a location that any other site cannot replace.

Applying Cintas and Rемаel's framework, its translation into *Gurun Mojave* clearly illustrates transposition, a strategy that shifts a word's grammatical role without changing its core meaning. Transposition involves moving a term from one syntactic category to another while preserving what the reader understands. Here, the English sequence *Mojave Desert*-adjective first, then noun-moves to the Indonesian pattern *Gurun Mojave*-noun first, proper noun second, following local syntax. The proper name *Mojave* stays unchanged, signalling no outright substitution; only the order changes to Indonesia's natural phrasing. By doing so, the translator secures clarity and respects cultural context, allowing the name to sound familiar yet grammatically correct to Indonesian readers.

### Ethnographic References to Objects from Daily Life

SL	TL
Nineteen PET plastic bottles saves enough fiber to make one big <i>T-shirt</i> .	Sembilan belas botol plastik PET menghemat cukup serat untuk membuat satu <i>kaus</i> besar.

In Season 1, Episode 4 of Netflix's series *History 101*, titled "Plastics," the filmmakers explore the mounting crisis of plastic pollution and the world's attempts to recycle and repurpose that material. They explain that recycling campaigns gained momentum in the late 1980s, sparking new ideas about collecting and processing discarded plastics. The film illustrates the impact by stating that salvaging a single plastic bottle preserves enough power to run a 60-watt bulb for about three hours. It continues, saying, Nineteen PET bottles yield enough fiber to produce one large T-shirt, a small fact that packs a big hope. The episode adds that recycling one ton of plastic saves more than 1,000 gallons of gasoline and supports jobs, estimating that over 700,000 people earn a living in the U.S. recycling sector. However, the narrator reminds viewers that, worldwide, only 19.9 percent of plastic waste is currently reused, a sobering statistic that points to how much more work remains in building true sustainability.

The term "*T-shirt*" belongs to the category of ethnographic references to objects from daily life because it refers to a common, culturally embedded article of clothing that is universally recognized, yet originated from a specific cultural context – namely, Western casual fashion. As an everyday object, the

*T-shirt* reflects lifestyle, habits, and consumer culture, making it an ethnographic reference tied to daily human activity. In the translation, the word “*T-shirt*” is rendered as “*kaus*”, which is a locally familiar term in Indonesian that conveys the same basic meaning. According to Cintas & Remael’s framework, this is an example of substitution, where a culturally specific term from the source language is replaced with a functionally equivalent term in the target language that is more accessible or widely understood by the target audience. Although a *T-shirt* could be borrowed directly, *kaus* is more natural and relatable in Indonesian, ensuring that the message is communicated clearly while maintaining cultural relevance.

### Ethnographic References to Work

SL	TL
It’s August 1991, and <i>cosmonaut</i> , Sergei Krikalev, is stranded aboard the space station, Mir, because 250 miles below him, the Soviet Union is collapsing.	Pada Agustus 1991, <i>kosmonaut</i> , Sergei Krikalev, ditelantarkan di stasiun luar angkasa, Mir, karena 402 kilometer di bawahnya, Uni Soviet runtuh.

In the second episode of Season 1, Netflix’s *History 101*, titled *The Space Race*, viewers are taken back to 1991 and the extraordinary journey of Soviet cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev. In contrast, Krikalev lived and worked aboard the Mir space station, his home country was unraveling, with political turmoil that would soon lead to the Soviet Union’s formal collapse. The rapid, unforeseen disintegration of the state left Krikalev in an orbital limbo, stranded above Earth at a moment when the agency that had launched him no longer legally existed. What had begun as a weeks-long expedition stretched into roughly 311 days, a duration that eventually crowned him as one of the last living links between the Soviet space program and future Russian missions. His protracted residence on Mir thus became a powerful symbol of the uncertainty and transition that marked the passage from the Soviet era to the nascent Russian Federation.

The word “*cosmonaut*” is rooted in ethnographic references to work because it pinpoints a role that is deeply embedded in the cultural, historical, and political narrative of the Soviet and post-Soviet space flights. In contrast to the broader Western term *astronaut*, *cosmonaut* carries a national identity forged by state goals, institutional pride, and the unique achievements of the Red space race. Consequently, the title is more than a job label; it stands as a cultural relic that still echoes the enduring legacy of Soviet ambition beyond the atmosphere.

In the present translation, the term “*cosmonaut*” appears unchanged as “*kosmonaut*”, illustrating what Cintas and Remael label a borrowing. Linguistic borrowing takes place when a word enters a new language with

only slight phonetic adjustments, usually because the item is technical or the receiving lexicon offers no exact match. Retaining *kosmonaut* thus safeguards the word's cultural and historical markers, signaling to readers that the individual in question is a Soviet or Russian space traveler, not simply any astronaut.

### Ethnographic References to Art, Media and Culture

SL	TL
Since the 1960s, researchers have been exploring the idea of a robot guided by AI software, who can think for itself, like the politely disobedient HAL 9000 from Stanley Kubrick's <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> .	Sejak tahun 1960an, para peneliti menelaah gagasan soal robot yang dipandu oleh perangkat lunak AI, yang bisa berpikir secara mandiri, seperti pembantah senonoh, HAL 9000, dari film <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> garapan Stanley Kubrick.

Season 1, Episode 6 of Netflix's documentary series *History 101*, entitled "*Robots*," explores the long road from early mechanical devices to today's AI-powered machines. It observes that researchers have investigated, since the 1960s, the possibility of a robot guided by software smart enough to think independently. Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey* illustrated the idea through HAL 9000, an onboard computer whose advanced reasoning finally turns against the crew. That story captured the optimism of its time; many scientists believed human-level intelligence in machines lay just a few decades ahead.

The mention of *2001: A Space Odyssey* falls under Ethnographic References to Art, Media, and Culture because the film, directed by Stanley Kubrick, remains a landmark science-fiction narrative. More than mere entertainment, it serves as a cultural touchstone that reflects and shapes public sentiment about technology, artificial intelligence, and the challenges of reaching outer space. Its enduring influence secures a prominent place in Western cinema and global popular culture, marking it as a vital ethnographic reference in discussions of future-thinking.

In the translation, the title *2001: A Space Odyssey* appears unchanged, a decision that exemplifies the borrowing strategy outlined by Cintas and Remael. Borrowing suits this case because film titles-especially iconic ones-are usually left intact to protect brand identity, instant recognition, and cultural authenticity. Preserving the English title enables viewers to connect the work to its broader cultural and historical context, thereby safeguarding the original connotations and associations that would otherwise fade.

## Ethnographic References to Brand Names and Personal Names

SL	TL
Giant companies like <i>Adidas</i> are moving towards using 100% recyclable plastics in their sneakers.	Perusahaan raksasa seperti <i>Adidas</i> mulai menggunakan plastik yang 100% bisa didaur ulang untuk sepatu mereka.

Season 1, Episode 4 of Netflix's documentary series *History 101*, entitled "*Plastics*", examines the mounting environmental problems caused by plastic pollution and spotlights pioneering strategies large firms are testing to mitigate the damage. The episode notes that Adidas and other major brands aim to produce sneakers from 100 % recyclable plastic, underscoring a broader move within fashion toward sustainable raw materials. The segment thus illustrates how these corporations confront the plastic crisis by creating wholly recyclable goods, a shift intended to shrink their ecological footprint.

*Adidas* falls into the group of ethnographic references to brand names because it is a well-known company that carries substantial cultural, economic, and social weight worldwide. The name stands for more than merchandise; it signals particular values tied to sport, style, and everyday lifestyle, marking it as a key signpost in consumer culture. In translation, the word remains unchanged, illustrating the borrowing strategy explained by Cintas and Remael. Names of this kind are usually left intact to preserve their identity, trademark strength, and worldwide recognition, as any modification could confuse buyers or dilute the brand. By using this strategy, translators maintain the reference's authenticity and make it instantly recognizable to the target audience.

## Ethnographic References to Weights and Measures

SL	TL
You get enough gas to drive a car 280 miles and a large truck 40 miles.	Mobil Anda akan punya cukup bensin untuk menempuh jarak 450 km. Serta truck besar, sejauh 64 km.

The narrator mentioned what a single twenty-five-gallon drum of crude oil could deliver in sound energy. That small amount is enough to carry a loaded, heavy truck forty miles and to move an average car roughly 280 miles.

In this context, the term *mile* clearly denotes distance, a cultural reference to weights and measures. As the Cambridge Dictionary notes, a mile equals 1,760 yards or almost 1.609 kilometers. The measure dates back to ancient Rome, where the phrase *milia passuum* simply meant a thousand paces. Today, English-speaking countries still use miles for road signs, sports,

and everyday conversation, shaping both practical habits and cultural perceptions of distance.

A substitution strategy replaces the word 'mile' with 'kilometer', easing comprehension for readers. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the kilometer as 1,000 meters, a consistent and widely accepted distance unit. In Indonesian practice, *kilometers (km)* serve as the standard measure of distance. Therefore, the subtitling process also converted the original figures; *280 miles* became roughly *450 km*, and *40 miles* changed to about *64 km*. Employing this method helps viewers in the target language grasp the scene's information more quickly.

### Ethnographic References to Food and Drinks

SL	TL
The inspiration comes partly from another valuable liquid, <i>whiskey</i> .	Inspirasi itu sebagian berasal dari cairan lain yang berharga: <i>wiski</i> .

The narrator first recalls how the oil business came to rely on barrels as a measurement unit. That habit originally grew out of the age-old practice of storing whiskey in rounded wooden casks. Because whiskey barrels were already familiar to merchants and seafarers, the same container soon measured oil, linking the two trades.

*Whiskey*, as noted by the Cambridge Dictionary, is a strong, pale-brown spirit traditionally associated with Scotland and Ireland. This word belongs to an ethnographic reference to food and drinks. Distillers use grains such as barley, corn, or rye, depending on local custom. Over the centuries, whiskey-making absorbed distinct techniques and flavors from every culture that adopted it. In English-speaking countries the shared ritual of sipping whiskey took root, carrying a social cachet of its own. This close tie between whiskey and wooden barrels, so deeply ingrained in everyday life, inadvertently shaped oil-measurement practices and reminds us how industry habits can cross lines drawn by geography or commerce.

When *whiskey* is rendered into Indonesian, the language simply borrows the English term rather than crafting a new one. This choice stems from the fact that Indonesian culture does not have a native spirit closely mirroring the taste, production methods, or social role of whiskey. Keeping the original word thus preserves the drink's Scottish and Irish heritage, as well as its broader international story. As a result, Indonesian speakers gain a clearer understanding of the whisky's distinct character and even its surprising connection to measurement standards used in the oil sector.

## Socio-political References to Socio-cultural Life

SL	TL
But, when supreme leader Mao dies in 1976, his <i>autocratic system</i> doesn't die with him.	Namun, meski Pemimpin Tertinggi Mao meninggal pada tahun 1976, <i>sistem autokrasinya</i> tetap hidup.

Season 1, Episode 3 of *History 101*, titled *The Rise of China*, traces China's shift from an isolated, farming-based nation to one of the world's biggest economic engines. The episode notes that after Mao Zedong died in 1976, his rigid system lingered, still tightly directing politics and daily life. Nevertheless, under Deng Xiaoping, the country started sweeping economic overhauls, welcoming market ideas while the Communist Party kept firm political control. This mix of freer markets and hard-line rule paved the way for China's swift industrial boom and its rise as a key global player. The film emphasizes that this one-of-a-kind development model enables China to achieve record growth without adopting the Western democratic format.

The phrase 'autocratic system' belongs to socio-political reference in socio-cultural life because it describes a style of rule woven into the everyday life of any given society. When applied to the governance of Mao Zedong, it does more than name a leadership approach; it points to a set of rules and beliefs that organized China's social hierarchy, managed power relations, and guided cultural output for many years. Such terms, therefore, convey local wisdom about how authority is structured and exercised, marking them as socio-political signifiers. To grasp its meaning, one must know Mao-era China—a place marked by tight central control, absence of political competition, and harsh penalties for opposition. Because similar ideas manifest in various forms worldwide, the word *autocratic* carries meanings deeply rooted in China's unique history and style of government, thereby anchoring it firmly in the cultural sphere.

The translation technique illustrated here is borrowing, or loan translation, because the English phrase 'autocratic system' appears in Indonesian as 'sistem autokrasi' with little change in wording or syntax. By moving the term across almost intact, the translator keeps both the meaning and the original feel of the expression, yet allows it to sit comfortably within Indonesian grammatical rules. *Autokrasi* itself is not part of everyday speech in Indonesia; it belongs more to classrooms and research, which hints that the translator decided to borrow rather than create in order to protect that technical nuance. Such a strategy is common when political, legal, or ideological language lacks a precise counterpart in Indonesian but will be recognized by readers who follow public discourse or higher education. Ultimately, this choice allows the term to travel across cultures while still retaining all the socio-political force it held in the source language.

### Socio-political References to Military Institutions and Objects:

SL	TL
<i>Sputnik 1</i> is basically the size of a beach ball with four antennae sticking out.	<i>Sputnik-1</i> hanya seukuran bola pantai dengan empat antena yang mencuat.

Season 1, Episode 2 of *History 101*, titled "The Space Race," opens with the Soviet Union's October 4, 1957, launch of *Sputnik 1*, the first human-made object to reach orbit. The narrator casually notes that *Sputnik* was roughly the size of a beach ball, measuring about 58 centimeters, 23 inches across, equipped with four long antennas protruding from its shiny aluminum sphere. Although the satellite appeared straightforward, its successful journey around Earth signaled a dramatic turn in the Cold War competition, spurring both superpowers to accelerate research, funding, and public engagement in space science.

*Sputnik-1* is classified as a socio-political reference to military institutions and objects because, beyond its scientific function, it served as a powerful Cold War symbol when the Soviet Union launched it into orbit in 1957. Its ascent opened the space race, a key arena of superpower competition. It stirred military anxiety because the same rocket technology could be used to deliver weapons or observe enemy territory. The very name *Sputnik-1* signals Soviet engineering pride and global ambition. In translation, the term appears as a loanword, unchanged in most languages, showing a borrowing strategy. Keeping the original name allows readers to grasp its historical significance without the confusion that a new translation might create. Thus, the borrowed form preserves both the technical reference and its embedded political story across different languages.

### Socio-political References to Personal Names and Institutional Names

SL	TL
President Eisenhower responded by establishing a new agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.	Presiden Eisenhower menanggapi dengan membentuk lembaga baru, Badan Penerbangan dan Antariksa Nasional.

The second episode of *History 101*, titled "The Space Race," examines the fierce Cold War contest between the United States and the Soviet Union to achieve landmark achievements beyond the planet. The launch of *Sputnik 1* by the Soviet Union in 1957, being the first artificial satellite to orbit Earth, served as a wake-up call for the United States, highlighting the need to advance its own space capabilities. To respond, President Dwight D. Eisenhower formed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958, tasking it with unifying national efforts in research, flight, and exploration beyond the



atmosphere. The decision thus pivoted U.S. policy away from strictly military projects toward a civilian program that promised peaceful discovery and broad scientific inquiry. Although intended to counter immediate fears, NASA's birth also laid the structural and intellectual groundwork from which later historic ventures—such as the Moon landing and robotic planetary missions—would grow.

*President Eisenhower* falls into the group called socio-political, in reference to his personal name, because he was a key historical actor whose choices shaped both U.S. and world policies, especially during the tense Cold War years. As a past commander-in-chief and army general, his name now carries weighty associations with authority, statecraft, and institutional leadership. The translation strategy applied here is borrowing, or loan translation, as the phrase "President Eisenhower" was transferred directly into Indonesian without modification. Translators usually retain the names of famous individuals to preserve the record of history and ensure that readers still recognize the figure. This approach ensures that the socio-political identity and the referential integrity of the figure remain intact for the target audience, allowing readers to connect the translated text with the real-world person and their institutional significance.

### Socio-political References to Institutions and Functions

SL	TL
In September 1960, they form a new and powerful alliance: <i>OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</i> .	Pada September 1960, mereka membentuk aliansi baru dan tangguh: <i>OPEC, Organisasi Negara-Negara Pengekspor Minyak Bumi</i> .

The narrator explained in this part how the decline in influence of former colonial powers such as the United States and Britain in the Middle East region had resulted in the creation of new independent states. The oil-producing countries collaborated to safeguard their oil supplies in response to this shift. With this goal in mind, they founded OPEC, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, is an example of a socio-political cultural reference associated with an institutional term. As per information from [opec.org](http://opec.org), OPEC was established in September 1960 by five oil-producing nations in Baghdad.

The translation of the term "*OPEC*", denoting the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, employed a combination of loan and literal translation strategies. The acronym *OPEC* was retained as is, while the full expression *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries* was translated literally, with each component receiving a direct translation. However,

adjustments were made to the structure to align with the grammatical conventions of the Indonesian language.

## DISCUSSION

This recent work on subtitling techniques for cultural references in Netflix's *History 101* carefully examines how these elements appear in Indonesian subtitles. The analysis uncovered 180 references and applied six of the nine methods proposed by Cintas and Remael (2021): loan, literal translation, calque, explication, substitution, and transposition. Using such a wide range of strategies shows an effort to tailor the documentary's varied cultural messages for Indonesian audiences while respecting the source text. It also highlights differences from previous studies that relied on fewer strategies, hinting at either a maturation of subtitling practice or the distinctive nature of the source material.

When compared with Fitriani, Hasibin, and Inayah's (2022) investigation of culture-specific items in the documentary "*The Mark of Empire Majapahit*", apparent similarities and distinctions emerge. Their study reported a firm reliance on retention and calque strategies, applied across several defined cultural categories. The same findings are also found in the study conducted by Halim et al. (2024) on translation strategies in the Indonesian documentary film *Perempuan Tana Humba*. In their study, using Aixelá's taxonomy, the most widely used subtitling strategy for translating culture-specific items is repetition, which has the same concept as Pederson's retention strategy and Cintas & Remael's loan translation. The present study still uses retention or loan translation but supplements it with substitution and transposition, suggesting a more nuanced approach to translating cultural references in the *History 101* series. Such expansion probably stems from the broader and more varied cultural references than the documentary movie analyzed by Fitriani et al. and Halim et al.

In a different context, Leksananda and Manusu (2023) studied *The Dictator* and noted that material and social cultural references predominated, with transference and literal translation as the most common translation procedures. The current study corroborates the presence of material and social cultures but also identifies additional categories such as ethnographic and socio-political references. It also deploys explication and substitution, strategies which were less emphasized in Leksananda and Manusu's research. This broader range of strategies highlights the complexity involved in translating a documentary series that encompasses a diverse array of cultural contexts.

Alharahsheh, Moindjie, and Lin (2023) examined cultural references in *The Queue* and relied on modulation, literal translation, and equivalence. Their findings indicated that religious, material, and social references were the most

prominent in the text. By contrast, the present study foregrounds socio-political and material references, applying explicitation and substitution instead of modulation. This disparity suggests that varying media formats and contexts require tailored translation strategies to address the distinct challenges each presents.

The broader range of subtitling strategies applied in this study, over what earlier research employed, indicates an advanced approach to analyzing cultural references. Such development may be due to the increasing complexity of contemporary media content, which often comprises a diverse range of cultural elements that require more sophisticated translation strategies. The use of explicitation and substitution, for example, shows a conscious effort to make cultural references more accessible to the target audience while preserving the original meaning.

The identification of various cultural references, including geographical, ethnographic, and socio-political categories, highlights the diverse nature of the content in *History 101*. This variety of cultural elements necessitates a range of subtitling strategies to convey the original message to Indonesian viewers effectively. The current study's findings suggest that subtitling practices have adapted to address the complex and varied nature of documentary content.

By applying techniques such as substitution and explicitation, the current study demonstrates a clear effort to make cultural references more accessible to viewers. This objective echoes Zhu, Ang, and Mansor's (2022) observation that content must be tuned to local cultures so that audiences can relate to what they see. Pedersen (2011) also notes that subtitled cultural references need careful rendering if they are to be recognizable and meaningful to the target viewers. These choices of subtitling strategies signal a rising priority on making subtitles accessible and on keeping viewers engaged.

The current research builds upon some earlier findings, while also uncovering new trends and practices in how cultural references are handled in subtitles. The use of a diverse range of subtitling strategies and the focus on various cultural categories highlight the complexities involved in translating documentary content. These insights advance our understanding of how subtitlers transfer cultural nuance and demonstrate how subtitling practices are evolving to meet the demands of present-day media.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to answer two main questions: (1) what types of cultural references appear in *History 101*, and (2) how these cultural references are rendered into Indonesian. From the analysis, a total of 180 cultural references were identified. These references were grouped into three main categories:

geographic (20 instances), socio-political (29 instances), and ethnographic (131 instances). The large number of ethnographic references, which include elements such as food, drinks, daily life objects, art, and personal and brand names, demonstrates that the documentary series focuses not only on historical facts but also on everyday life and cultural identity. These findings answer the first research question by showing that cultural references in historical documentaries extend beyond events and dates—they reflect broader sociocultural practices.

The second research question focused on the strategies used to translate these references. The study found that six out of nine subtitling strategies from Cintas and Remael's framework were applied. Loan translation was the most frequently used (106 instances), followed by literal translation, substitution, calque, explicitation, and transposition. These strategies show an effort to preserve the original meaning while making the subtitles clear and understandable for Indonesian viewers. The choice of strategies reflects the translator's attempt to maintain cultural accuracy, which is crucial for a documentary aimed at educating and informing a wide audience.

These results have practical and theoretical implications. For translators and subtitlers, the study emphasizes the importance of selecting translation strategies that align with the content's purpose and genre. Since History 101 is an educational documentary, strategies that retain cultural elements from the source language are more suitable than those that simplify or adapt them to the target culture. For platforms like Netflix, the findings suggest the importance of supporting translators with tools such as glossaries, style guides, or access to cultural consultants, to ensure accuracy and consistency. Theoretically, the study demonstrates how Cintas and Remael's model remains relevant and applicable in analyzing subtitles for non-fiction media, especially those rich in cultural and historical content.

For future research, several directions can be considered. One important area is comparative research across different target languages, which can help uncover universal or culture-specific patterns in subtitling. Another is longitudinal studies that examine how subtitling practices change over time and respond to shifts in audience expectations. It would also be helpful to include audience feedback—such as through surveys or comprehension tests—to understand better how subtitles are received and processed. Exploring the role of translators' own cultural backgrounds, the legal and ethical issues they face, and the benchmarks set by specific genres is likewise promising. Among these, the most important focus should be on developing subtitling models that are sensitive to genre and audience needs. Such models could help professional translators and streaming platforms

create subtitles that are accurate, culturally appropriate, and easy to understand for diverse audiences in the global media landscape.

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