

Negotiating Gender Representation through Translation in Indonesian–English Bilingual Museum Texts

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

- Museums actively shape social meaning through the narratives they present. In multilingual contexts, translation choices can influence whose stories are visible.
- Indonesian is largely gender-neutral, while English grammatically encodes gender. When translating museum texts, translators must make gendered choices that can increase or reduce the visibility of women.
- This study analyzes Indonesian–English bilingual captions from the Sangiran Early Man Site (Krikilan Museum complex, Central Java, Indonesia).
- **Aim:** To identify the translation strategies used for gender markers and to examine how these strategies affect the representation of women in institutional narratives.



Sangiran Early Man Site, Central Java, Indonesia

METHOD



Data Source

25 bilingual (Indonesian–English) caption pairs from permanent exhibitions at the Krikilan Museum complex, Sangiran Early Man Site.



Theoretical Framework

Feminist Translation Theory (Simon, 1996; Von Flotow, 1997)
Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995)



Analysis Focus

Gender markers and the strategies used in their translation from Indonesian to English.

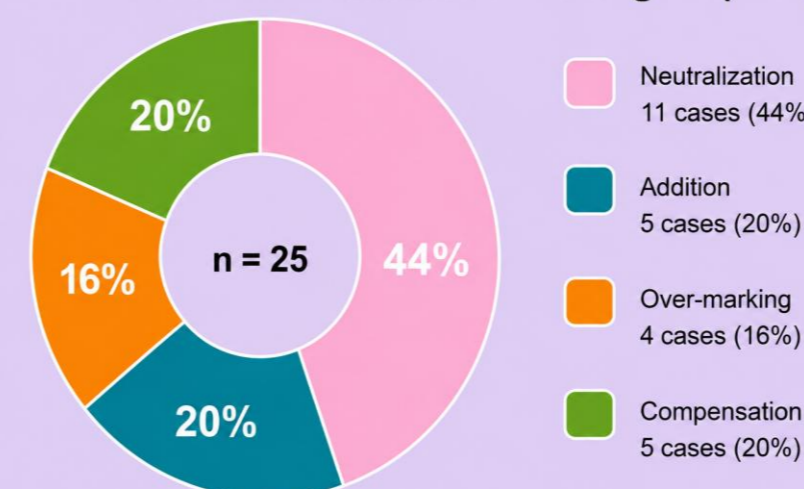


Translation Strategies

Neutralization, Addition, Over-marking, Compensation

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Overview of Translation Strategies (n = 25)



Key Finding

Neutralization is the dominant strategy (44%), mainly through rendering gender-neutral Indonesian nouns such as *manusia* and *individu* as English generic masculine forms (e.g. “man”, “early man”), which reduces women’s visibility in target texts.

EXAMPLE OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Strategy	Description	Example (Indonesian → English)	Effect on Women’s Representation
Neutralization (44%)	Gender-neutral Indonesian terms rendered as generic masculine or non-specific English terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manusia purba hidup berkelompok → early man lived in groups individu tersebut → the individual 	Reduces women’s visibility by using masculine or non-specific references.
Addition (20%)	Gender-specific terms added in English where Indonesian is unmarked.	alat milik manusia purba → tools used by early humans, including women	Increases visibility of women by explicitly including them in the narrative.
Over-marking (16%)	Gender identity foregrounded more explicitly than in the source text.	pemimpin suku → male leader of the tribe	Can highlight gender but risks reinforcing stereotypes and patriarchal norms.
Compensation (20%)	Gender meaning lost in one part is recovered elsewhere in the text.	mereka membuat alat dari batu ... → they (men and women) made tools from stone ...	Recovers women’s presence and balances the narrative.

DISCUSSION

- The Indonesian–English translation asymmetry requires translators to make gender-constitutive choices.
- Neutralization, when uncritical, perpetuates androcentric narratives and erases women’s contributions in prehistoric communities. Strategic use of addition and compensation can strengthen gender-inclusive representation.
- Over-marking should be applied cautiously to avoid stereotyping.

CONCLUSION

- Translation in museum texts is not neutral. It actively shapes who is visible in the stories we tell.
- Gender-aware translation practices are essential to promote inclusive, equitable, and accurate representation in multilingual heritage institutions.

IMPLICATIONS

- Museums should adopt gender-aware translation guidelines.
- Translators need training in feminist translation and gender sensitivity.
- Institutional review of bilingual texts can improve translation quality and public accessibility.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

Expand the corpus to other Indonesian museums and explore visitor reception of gender representation in bilingual museum texts.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Longman.
Simon, S. (1996). *Translating Women*. St. Jerome.
Von Flotow, L. (1997). *Translating Women*. University of Ottawa Press.