



Preserving Cultural Authenticity: The Strategies of Localization in Indonesian Horror Video Game

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Abstract. Video games localization still poses numerous opportunities and challenges in terms of cultural and linguistic. While prior studies were mainly exploratory in nature and provided an overall view of localization experiences, certain changes required when translating Indonesian cultural elements so that they remain culturally relevant. When the cultural aspect can well-preserved, the target audience of the English-speaking countries would be interested in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The primary objective is to address how distinctive cultural references are localized and changed to sustain culture-related practices and folklore. Using qualitative approach to the research, the study focused on types of dialogues, objects, interfaces, and gameplays mechanics by employing a set of localization strategies analysis. Strategies like domestication or foreignization, transcreation, literal translation, and no-translations were obtained. This research suggests that the localization strategy namely transcreation is the most effective approach to preserve the cultural identity while domestication and literal translation strategies improve accessibility. On the other hand, foreignization and no translation localization strategies keep the cultural aspects intact but require additional contextual information for players to understand the content. This study points to the importance of the need for a multifaceted approach in video game localization that balances cultural fidelity with accessibility, providing valuable for further localization initiatives.

Keywords: Video Game Localization, Cultural Adaptation, Video-Game Assets, Localization Strategies, Indonesian Folklore Horror Video Game

1 Introduction

Video game localization is one of fascinating areas of cultural and linguistic translation that has its own specificities. Video games are unique since they can be interactively played and include both text and media that must be translated for different cultures. It is not just a simple conversion of the source text to target text but it requires knowledge of the source and target cultures to maintain the game's identity and playability. The localization process and the challenges are well illustrated by theories like Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization or Costales' (2012) strategies for video game localization. Thus, from researcher's point of view, the localization of culturally saturated video games, including those based on folklore, not only adds value to the target audience but also becomes a means of intercultural communication and exchange, as well as the preservation and adaptation of cultural values, which is both a task and a challenge.

The immediacy of video game localization is demonstrated by the use of localization in different types of games and game consoles. Indonesian folklore-based games such as *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* pose specific localization issues. These games include cultural practices, beliefs, and customs that require proper transformation in order to preserve their original form and make them easily understandable and interesting for English speaking people. The process of localization in such games can be explained by the theories of cultural adaptation and constructivism, which claim that knowledge and meaning are constructed depending on cultural background and experience. This tension between preserving cultural identity and keeping the players interested is the reason why the process of localization should be complex. The fact that these theories complement each other offers a solid foundation for analyzing the various factors that contribute to the localization of culturally diverse content.

Recent studies have investigated multiple aspects of video game localization. For example, Bernal (2006) and Mangiron & O'Hagan (2007) have reviewed the technical and cultural aspects of game localization and stressed the importance of the proper balance between the localization of the original content and the adaptation to the target audience. Di Marco (2007) and Fernández Costales (2012) analyze the strategies of transcreation and the functionalist approach in which the main objective is to preserve the gaming experience across cultures. These studies are useful to understand the approaches and guidelines for game localization, stressing the cultural adaptation process and creativity. However, the nature of the processes and the key issues related to the adaptation of games with a strong focus on the culture of the country and people, for example, based on folklore, remain rather underexplored.

Additionally, the study done by Setyawan, Sajarwa, & Sutrisno (2023) on cultural resistance and negotiation in the localization of *Pamali: The Tied Corpse* also gives a clear indication of the conflict that arises between cultural accuracy and market appeal. The different approaches used in the management of cultural terms and references include imitation, transfer, transcription, expansion, paraphrase and deletion. These findings stress the importance of a proper negotiation process when it comes to adaptation of cultural aspects so that the game can be understood by the international public and at the same time, it remains culturally sensitive.

Wibowo (2021) also elaborates on the challenges of translating video game text assets, particularly on user interface, and the importance of realizing the concepts of equivalent, adapted, borrowed, and naturalized translation in order to attain good quality localization. His research is focused on the need to support the gaming experience while at the same time taking into account issues of space and culture. In his other research, Wibowo et al. (2019)'s on the reconfiguration of localization quality assessment for video games also discusses the ecological and environmental aspects of the localization process. Their study also underlines the necessity of the development of the localization quality assessment that would comprise the environmental factors along with the cultural and functional ones.

Another similar study by Devi & Nababan (2022) discussed the translation strategies of performative speech in *Pamali*, and the challenges of localizing culturally-specific content. Their work focuses on the fact that it is possible to transfer the meaning and

affective load of the source text using such methods as established equivalents, modulation, and paraphrase. This is in addition to the study by Taqi (2022) on speech acts in Pamali emphasizing the importance of dialogues in expressing cultural values.

Thus, this research intends to fill the gap in the literature by examining the adaptations required to maintain Indonesian cultural references in *DreadOut 2* and Pamali while translating them into English. The central research question is: In what way are cultural symbols, traditions and legends localized and incorporated into *DreadOut 2* and Pamali to retain their cultural essence? This paper will focus on the in-game dialogues, artifacts, UI elements, and gameplay mechanics to demonstrate the dynamics and strategies related to this process. In this way, it aims at giving some recommendations for future localizations that would be more culturally suitable and at the same time would have a better reception by the audience.

Specifically, when it comes to the analysis of video game localization, several theories are used to comprehend and explain the process of translating in-game dialogues, artifacts, UI elements, and gameplay mechanics. These assets are not simple to develop because they have to be culturally sensitive while at the same time appealing to the players. In-Game Dialogues are significant since they help in storytelling and portraying the culture of the game. Two of Venuti's (1995) ideas are most useful in this discussion: domestication and foreignization. Sensitization entails the process of making the text more recognizable by the target group, thus improving their comprehension of the text. On the other hand, foreignization keeps the cultural references and thus provides the cultural richness and the true essence of the game. In this regard, Costales' (2012) strategy of transcreation is also noteworthy in this regard. Transcreation is the act of translating dialogues in a creative manner in order to retain the emotional appeal and the cultural significance of the work but at the same time being understandable to the target audience. This strategy is particularly effective for idioms and proverbs, or references that have no direct translation in the target language.

Artifacts in games such as *DreadOut 2* and Pamali are usually a representation of culture and history. Transcreation and literal translation which are among Costales' (2012) localization strategies assist in preserving the cultural significance of these artifacts and at the same time making them understandable to the players. According to Bernal (2006), the context of cultural objects should be maintained in their original state, due to the cultural significance of the artifacts. This way it assists in enlightening the players on the culture of the game and at the same time improving their gaming experience.

The UI Elements which include menus, buttons and icons are very important in the interaction of the player with the game. Di Marco's (2007) theory on functional clarity is crucial in this regard to make the UI elements easily understandable. This is important to ensure that there are no hitches during the gameplay and that the player is not interrupted. Like Costales (2012)'s domestication and foreignization strategies, UI elements are also localized and non-localized to maintain the functionality while portraying cultural identity. Domestication contributes to the understanding of the target audience of the elements of the interface, while foreignization contributes to preserving cultural references that complement the atmosphere of the game.

Gameplay Mechanics are components which directly affect the game and the way the player interacts with it. One of the concepts that can be applied here is that of ludonarrative harmony by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013). This theory stresses the need to synchronize the story and the game mechanics so that they complement each other and enhance the player's experience. Again, Costales' (2012) strategy of transcreation is also important in the process of translating culturally specific gameplay mechanics. Thus, this strategy helps to maintain the essence of the original mechanics while adapting them to the players from different cultures. Transcreation is used to keep the cultural aspects of the gameplay intact which in turn, improves the general experience of the players. Theories that underpin this research are Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization theories that give a background to the decisions made during translation of cultural features. Domestication entails changing the content in a way that the target culture will be able to relate to, while foreignization ensures that the content is presented in a way that is true to the cultural values of the source culture. These strategies are important in video game localization since the atmosphere and cultural differences should be preserved to provide the players with the full immersion.

Another considerable theory is Costales (2012) on the localization strategies of video games. Instead, Costales speaks about the necessity of a multimodal and multidimensional analysis of video games due to the fact that these are the products which are based on the combination of the narrative, visual, and auditory components. In Costales' (2012) theory on video game localization, there is a call for a more sensitive approach to translating games because of the fact that these are not simple and monomodal texts. His framework includes several key strategies: Domestication means that the game is to be modified to fit the target culture and become more familiar to the target population. This can improve the player understanding and engagement because it is in their cultural context. On the other hand, foreignization does not alter the cultural aspects to maintain the game's identity. This approach is more authentic to the source culture for players and may need additional information or clarification. Using some terms, names or expressions in the original language helps to preserve the cultural aspect of the game. This strategy aids in the preservation of the cultural value but may sometimes cause a problem of understanding to the player. Transcreation is an innovative method through which translators transfer the content in a way that the experience of the game in the target culture is not lost. It requires a lot of changes to the text to preserve the emotion and the story, which is why it is effective when used in idiomatic expressions, jokes, and other culturally related things. Literal translation is used in technical or sports games because the terms used have to be precise. This strategy helps to avoid misunderstandings and makes the text more effective, for example, when it is necessary to describe the interface or give instructions. Adherence to the source is especially critical in games that are adapted from other works, books, or history. This loyalty strategy is to maintain the original story and motifs to guarantee that the game adapted to the local market is as close to the original as possible. The issue of how to cope with the loss of meaning in translation is an essential aspect of translation since it is impossible to avoid it, and in this case, it is compensated by other words or cultural references. This loss of meaning and compensation strategy aims to retain the general information and effect while the words may differ. Censorship alters content to ensure

that it is fit for consumption by the target market legal and cultural standards. This strategy may require the removal or editing of material that may be deemed as a taboo in the target culture to make sure the game can be launched and played by the audiences. In Costales' theory, there is an understanding of how cultural adaptation and player understanding are interrelated, and how various approaches are required to solve various problems of video game localization.

In addition, the functionalist approach in translation studies, as advanced by scholars like Nord (1997) is based on the concept of *skopos* or the purpose of the translation and the role that it is expected to play in the target culture. This approach is in line with the objective of video game localization which is to offer similar gameplay experience to the players across different cultures. According to this theory, the research will assess the extent to which the localized versions of *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* accomplish this. This research will employ domestication, foreignization, transcreation, and functionalist approaches to examine *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* localization. Thus, by analyzing the particularities of the cultural references, rituals, and folklore in the games, the study will help to advance the field of video game localization and offer specific recommendations for future research. The cultural aspect will be another major concern since the games will be based on certain cultures, but at the same time, they should be enjoyable for the English-speaking community.

2 Method

This research employed a qualitative research approach to examine the localization processes that were adopted in the games' different assets. The primary focus was on four key assets: in-game dialogues, artifacts, UI elements, and gameplay mechanics. The objectives of the research was to determine how each of these aspects was addressed to preserve cultural integrity while making it comprehensible to an English-speaking audience.

The data for this research was collected from two video games namely *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. These games were chosen because they are filled with Indonesian cultural elements. The data included the in-game dialogues, artifacts, user interface (UI) elements, and gameplay mechanics. The procedure of data collection was the following: Whereby for in-game dialogues, dialogues were chosen on the basis of cultural content, relevance to the story line and incorporation of traditional language and proverbs. The extraction process was to open the game's script files where the cultural references or lines that were crucial to the game were found. In the case of artifacts, the choice is made according to the following parameters: cultural connotations and their contribution to the plot development. These artifacts were described through text and pictures in the game. The UI elements were selected according to their usage and the existence of the text or symbols, which might be unfamiliar to the specific culture. In this case, the emphasis was made on the fact that these elements should be as simple as possible but as culturally relevant as possible as well. The gameplay mechanic elements were examined by pinpointing the tasks and actions associated with cultural activities. These

mechanics were discovered by observing gameplay and player's guides, and selecting rituals and tasks that are meaningful in the culture.

The data analysis process was to sort each piece of data based on the localization strategy used, based on Costales' (2012) classification. Every case was analyzed to identify the main strategy applied, and instances were chosen to explain the usage of these approaches.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

The study sought to analyze the localization processes of the Indonesian video games *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*, specifically regarding the integration of Indonesian culture in the English-language versions. The general results show a complex relationship between various forms of localization that consider cultural identity and playability. This balance is important as it allows to retain the atmosphere of the original game while adapting it for the international audience. The analysis covered four main assets of the video games: in-game dialogues, artifacts, UI elements, and gameplay mechanics. Every asset was further analyzed to determine the extent and types of localization efforts made.

Table 1. Overview of Analyzed Assets and Data Points

Aspect	Description	Data Type
In-Game Dialogues	Lines of dialogue with cultural references or crucial to the plot.	Textual Dialogues
Artifacts	Culturally significant items relevant to gameplay and story.	In-game Objects
UI Elements	User interface components involving text or cultural symbols.	Menus, Icons
Gameplay Mechanics	Actions or rituals tied to specific cultural contexts.	Interactive Actions

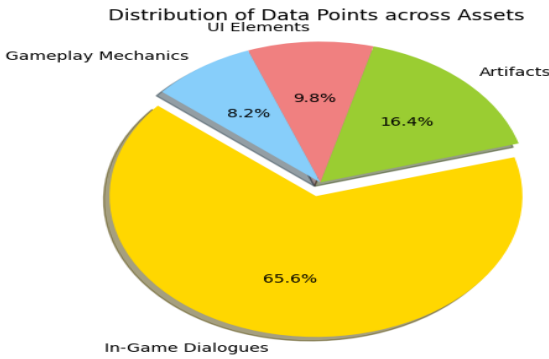


Figure 1. Distribution of Data Points across Assets

Figure 1 presents the distribution of data points analyzed across the four main assets of the games *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*: in-game dialogues, artifacts, UI elements, and gameplay mechanics. This figure illustrates the relative percentage of each factor in the entire data acquisition process, which helps to define the main topics in the study.

The chart is split into four parts. The most dominant type of the chart is in-game dialogues which consist of 200 data points. This demonstrates the focus on the analysis of the plot and cultural messages that are contained in the characters’ actions and words. Artifacts are 50 data points, recording cultural objects in games that are important to the plot and contribute to the game’s appeal. 30 points belong to the UI elements that indicate the concentration on the interface components such as menus, buttons, and icons, which are crucial for the player’s movement and actions. Gameplay mechanics is described by 25 items, showing the breakdown of the interactive actions related to cultural activities and customs, necessary to advance through the game and to remain interested in it.

The pie chart serves the purpose of presenting the multi-faceted approach adopted in the study and it is possible to cover all aspects of the games and analyze the strategies of localization.

Table 2. Localization Strategies Applied to Each Aspect

Aspect	Domestication	Foreignization	Transcreation	Literal Translation	No Translation
In-Game Dialogues	60	20	80	20	20
Artifacts	5	25	5	5	10
UI Elements	12	3	6	9	0
Gameplay Mechanics	7	3	12	0	3
Total	84	51	103	34	33

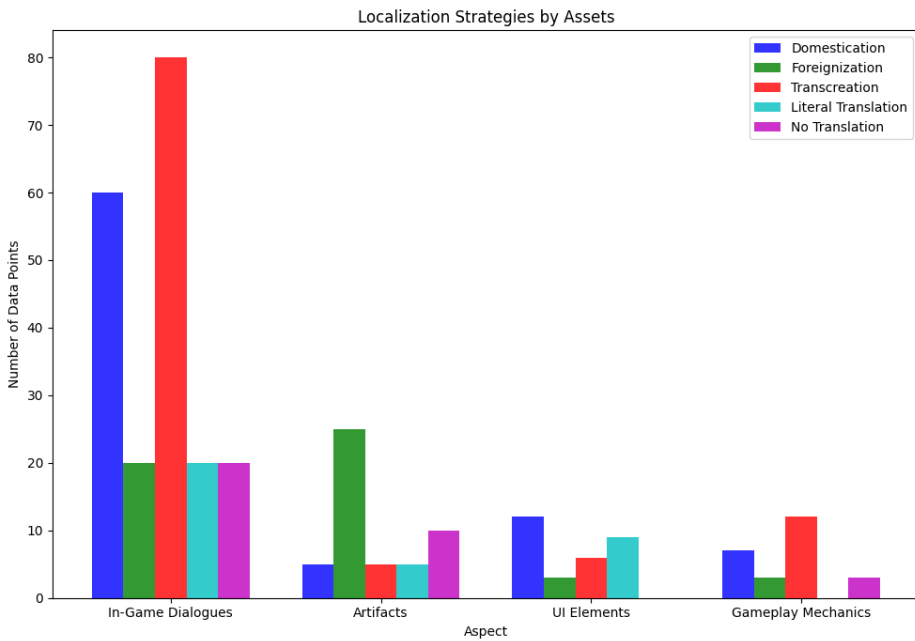


Figure 2. Localization Strategies by Assets

Figure 2 indicates the localization strategy on various assets of the games DreadOut 2 and Pamali. The assets examined are in-game dialogues, artifacts, UI elements, and gameplay mechanics. Among all strategies proposed by Costales (2012), the localization strategies that can be adopted are domestication, foreignization, transcreation, literal translation and no translation.

The bar graph shows the x-axis and the number of times each of the localization strategies featured on the y-axis. For each aspect, many bars are presented, and each of them represents a certain strategy of localization. The graph also analyzes the data from DreadOut 2 and Pamali separately by providing bars within the same category but with different colors.

Of all the aspects, domestication is most often used, especially in the in-game texts and interface, which points to the attempts to adapt the cultural references to the target audience. Foreignization, though used less often, is used mainly in artifacts and gameplay mechanics to preserve the original cultural concepts. Transcreation is the most highlighted strategy among the four, especially in in-game dialogues and gameplay mechanics, which shows how necessary it is to recreate the content while maintaining its effectiveness. Literal translation is used mainly on the UI components to avoid ambiguity and to make them easily understandable. No translation is selective, and the majority of them are applied in artifacts and gameplay mechanics to preserve cultural integrity.

That is why the bar graph is sufficient to show the distribution of localization strategies in relation to the aspects of the game *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*, as well as to demonstrate the balance between cultural representation and players' convenience.

3.2 Data Analysis

1. In-Game Dialogues

When choosing dialogues for the analysis of in-game dialogues in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*, the cultural dialogues, dialogues that are important for the game's plot, and the usage of traditional Indonesian language and idioms were chosen. In the 200 analyzed dialogues, different strategies of localization were used. Here is the breakdown of the strategies identified and the total number of dialogues each strategy was applied to:

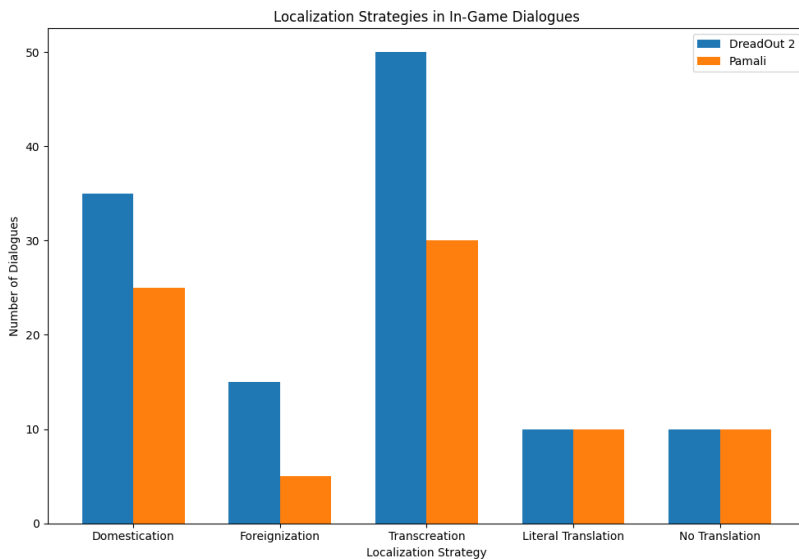


Figure 3. Localization Strategies in In-Game Dialogue

In this paper, the graph in figure 3 is used to show the distribution of the localization strategies used on in-game dialogues in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The graph highlights the frequency of each strategy: As for the translation techniques, they include domestication, foreignization, transcreation, literal translation, and no translation.

The horizontal axis of the bar chart contains the various localization strategies, while the vertical axis shows the number of dialogues that the particular strategy was used on. The bars are also differentiated by color to differentiate between the data from *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* to see the difference between the two games easily.

The analysis reveals a moderate usage of domestication in in-game dialogues, where it occurs 35 times in *DreadOut 2* and 25 in *Pamali*. This suggests a high level of concern with the process of translating cultural contents to the level of understanding of the target audience. Foreignization, which is used 15 times in *DreadOut 2* and 5 times in *Pamali*, shows attempts to preserve the cultural references in the dialogues. Transcreation becomes apparent as the most often employed approach, which is further evident from the findings of the current study; 50 instances in *DreadOut 2* and 30 in *Pamali*, which demonstrates the significance of the creative recontextualization of content in order to maintain its emotional and cultural connotations. Literal translation is less frequently used, it was used 10 times in both games, as it suffices to convey the meaning to the players directly. No translation is used in both games to the same extent: both have 10 occurrences; some terms and phrases are kept in their original form in order to enhance the games' authenticity. Thus, this graph underlined the diverse application of localization strategies in the in-game dialogues, demonstrating how different approaches are used to balance cultural fidelity and player accessibility in the localization process for *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*.

a. Domestication

Example 1:

Original Dialogue: "Pakai kemenyan ini nih untuk membersihkan ruangan ini dari energi negatif."

Domesticated Dialogue: "Burn incense to cleanse this room from negative energies."

In *Pamali*, the player needs to perform a cleansing ritual using specific traditional items. This example uses domestication by explaining the term kemenyan (incense) in a way that compares it to a familiar practice in Western culture, enhancing understanding and relatability.

Example 2:

Original Dialogue: "Syukur Alhamdulillah."

Domesticated Dialogue: "Thank God."

In *DreadOut 2*, this example uses domestication by translating the word "Syukur Alhamdulillah" to "Thank God," making it more familiar to the target audience while maintaining the meaning.

b. Foreignization

Example 1:

Original Dialogue: "Seperti padi, semakin berisi semakin merunduk."

Foreignized Dialogue: "Like rice, the fuller it becomes, the more it bows down."

In *DreadOut 2*, a character quotes an old Javanese proverb. This proverb is foreignized by keeping the original metaphor and providing a direct translation that maintains the Indonesian cultural context, enriching the player's experience by exposing them to local wisdom.

Example 2:

Original Dialogue: "Hati-hati di malam hari, *Tuyul* suka nakal."

Foreignized Dialogue: "Be careful at night, the *Tuyul*, *supernatural beings whose appearance is believed to look like a bald child, and tend to have childish behavior*, likes to play tricks."

In *Pamali*, a character refers to a mythical creature. The term *Tuyul*, a specific type of spirit in Indonesian folklore, is retained with a brief explanation, maintaining cultural authenticity while providing minimal guidance to keep the mysterious aura.

c. Transcreation

Example 1:

Original Dialogue: "Dia selalu *ngegas* kalau di jalan, bahaya!"

Transcreated Dialogue: "He always floors it when driving, dangerous!"

In *DreadOut 2*, a character uses a slang term unique to Indonesian youth culture.

The term *ngegas* is transcreated to "floors it," adapting the slang to an English equivalent that conveys the reckless driving behavior in a culturally appropriate manner.

Example 2:

Original Dialogue: "Bagai udang di balik batu."

Transcreated Dialogue: "Like a crab under a rock, always hiding its fate."

In *Pamali*, a character uses a local idiom about fate. The idiom is creatively adapted to fit the cultural understanding of the target audience, translating the essence of being hidden or obscured into a contextually relevant phrase.

d. Literal Translation

Example 1:

Original Dialogue: "Gunakan kamera untuk melihat hantu yang tersembunyi."

Literal Translation: "Use the camera to see hidden ghosts."

In *DreadOut 2*, instructional dialogue about using a camera to reveal ghosts. The instructions are directly translated as they describe straightforward gameplay mechanics, ensuring clarity and ease of understanding for all players.

Example 2:

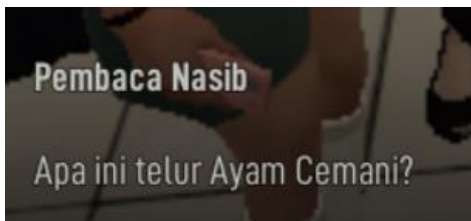
Original Dialogue: "Pergi ke utara untuk mencari kunci."

Literal Translation: "Go north to find the key."

In *Pamali*, directions given to navigate the game's map. This literal translation of navigation instructions ensures that gameplay is not hindered by cultural differences, focusing on clear and actionable directions.

e. No Translation

Example 1:



Original Dialogue: "Apa ini telur Ayam Cemani?"

No Translation: "Isn't it a *Cemani* Chicken egg?"

In *DreadOut 2*, the particular chicken namely Cemani its original name to preserve its cultural and historical significance, accompanied by contextual information elsewhere in the game.

Example 2:

Original Dialogue: "Malam ini adalah malam *Selikuran*, sangat sakral."

No Translation: "Tonight is *Selikuran*, a very sacred night."

In *Pamali*, referring to specific cultural ceremonies. The term *Selikuran* is kept in its original form to maintain authenticity, with an explanatory note to ensure players understand its cultural importance.

In total, 200 in-game dialogues were analyzed, revealing a diverse application of localization strategies. The analysis shows a significant use of tran-

screation, particularly in dialogues crucial to maintaining the cultural and emotional impact of the games. Domestication and foreignization were also prominently used to balance cultural authenticity with accessibility, while literal translation and no translation were applied in specific contexts where either clarity or cultural preservation was prioritized.

2. Artifacts

Artifacts in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* play a crucial role in immersing players into the cultural and mystical elements of the games. These are mostly sacred and carry social connotations and are essential in the advancement of the storyline and the narration of the prelude to the game. Choosing of artifacts was based on the level of cultural reference, cultural significance and their relevance in the game plot. In the 50 under consideration artifacts, localization in its various forms was incorporated. Here is the breakdown of the strategies identified and the total number of artifacts each strategy was applied to:

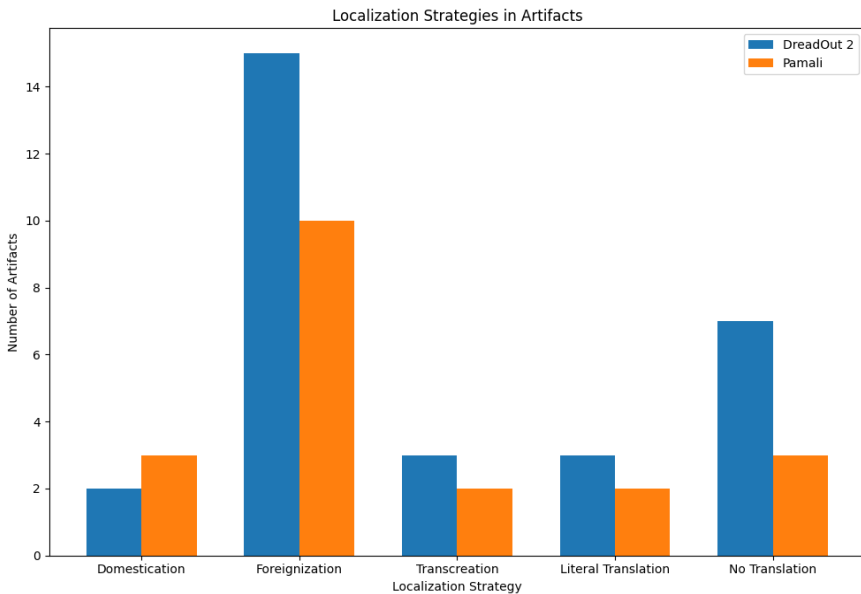


Figure 4. Localization Strategies in Artifacts

Figure 4 shows a bar graph that depicts the total of the localization strategies used on the artifacts in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The graph highlights the frequency of each strategy: Domestication, foreignization, transcreation, literal translation and no translation.

On the horizontal axis of the bar graph, the various forms of localization strategies are identified while on the vertical axis, the number of artifacts on which each of the strategies was used is identified. The bars are painted in different colors to differentiate between data collected from *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* to compare the two games.

Concerning artifacts, the application of Domestication is limited; *DreadOut 2* uses Domestication twice, and *Pamali* uses it three times, suggesting that Domestication is used sparingly to make cultural objects more familiar to the target audience. The most common strategy used is foreignization, which is evident in 15 cases in *DreadOut 2* and 10 in *Pamali*, in a bid to maintain the cultural integrity of the artifacts. Transcreation is used only a few times; *DreadOut 2* has 3 transcreate items and *Pamali* has 2, due to the fact that it is necessary to adapt some items that are critical to Indonesian culture. Literal translation is also employed sparingly; *DreadOut 2* contains three literal translations, and *Pamali* contains two, both in cases where a direct translation is adequate due to the item's nature. The least used translation is 'no translation' which appears 7 times in *DreadOut 2* and 3 times in *Pamali*, where the terms and names of culturally sensitive objects are kept as close to the original as possible.

Overall, the bar graph highlights the predominant use of foreignization in artifacts, demonstrating a strong emphasis on preserving cultural authenticity. The varied application of other strategies illustrates how different approaches are selectively employed to balance cultural preservation and player understanding in the localization of artifacts for *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*.

a. Domestication

Example 1:

Original Description: " Keris Sembada - digunakan dalam ritual untuk mengusir roh jahat."

Domesticated Description: " Sembada Dagger - used in rituals to ward off evil spirits, similar to a protective talisman."

This example uses domestication by explaining the cultural artifact "Keris Sembada" as a "protective talisman," making it more relatable to the target audience. Additionally, the term keris is translated to dagger to make it more familiar to western culture.

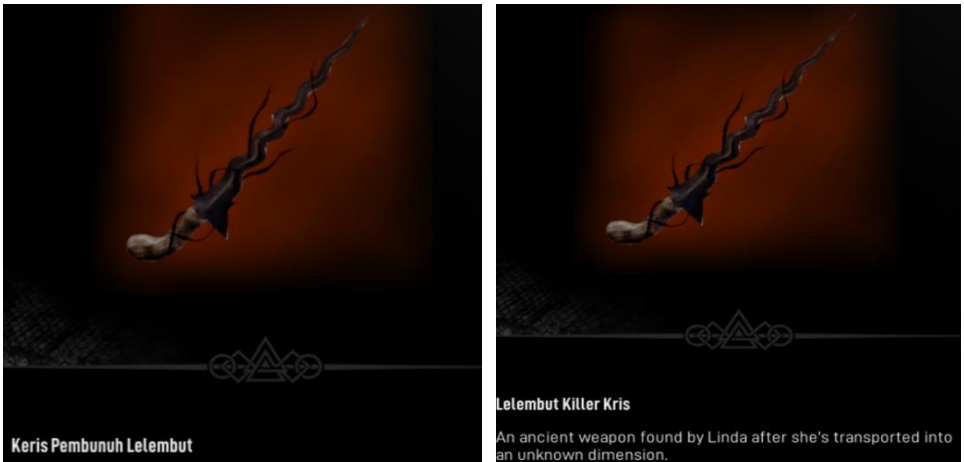
Example 2:

Original Description: "Linda Kelam."

Domesticated Description: "Dark Linda."

One of the ghosts in *DreadOut 2*. This example uses domestication by transferring the core meaning of kelam into obscure, the translator chose to translate it into dark which is more common in English in order to enhance the player understanding.

b. Foreignization

Example 1:

Original Name: "Keris Pembunuh Lelembut"

Foreignized Description: "Lelembut Killer Kris. An ancient weapon found by Linda after she's transported into an unknown dimension."

A traditional knife in *DreadOut 2*. Foreignization retains the original name and provides a brief explanation, preserving the cultural authenticity of the artifact.

Example 2:

Original Name: "Kain *Batik*"

Foreignized Description: "The *Batik* cloth is used in many Indonesian ceremonies, featuring intricate patterns that symbolize various cultural meanings."

A ceremonial cloth in *Pamali*. Keeping the original name and adding context helps maintain cultural integrity while educating the player.

c. Transcreation

Example 1:



Original Description: "Dokter Bengis."

Transcreated Description: "The Gore Surgeon."

An artifact in *DreadOut 2* related to a local legend. Dokter Bengis is not translated into Cruel Doctor which is its literal translation, instead to The Gore surgeon. Transcreation adapts the description to emphasize the mythological aspect, making it intriguing and engaging for a global audience.

Example 2:

Original Description: "Kembang Wijaya Kusuma."

Transcreated Description: "lucky charm flower."

In *Pamali*, the transcreation adapts the cultural reference of "Kembang Wijaya Kusuma" to convey its mystical attributes in a contextually relevant manner.

d. Literal Translation

Example 1:



Original Description: "Kunci Rubanah."

Literal Translation: "Basement Key."

A key item artifact in *DreadOut 2*. Kunci Rubanah is translated directly to basement key. Direct translation ensures that players understand the functional use of the artifact without altering its purpose.

Example 2:

Original Description: "Foto Keluarga"

Literal Translation: " Family Photo."

The direct translation maintains clarity and ensures the player's understanding of the artifact's role in the game without altering its purpose

e. No Translation

Example 1:

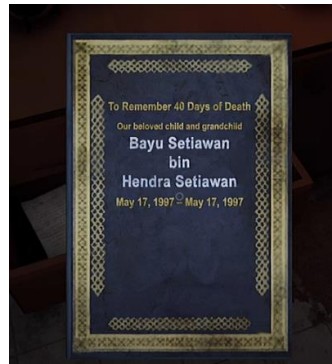
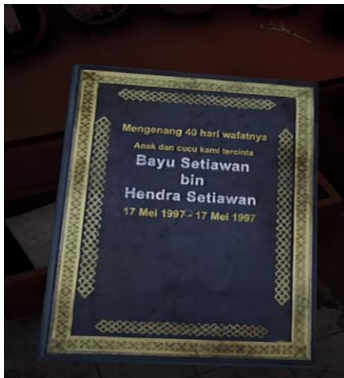
Original Name: "Wayang Kulit"

No Translation: "You have found the *Wayang Kulit*."

An artifact with cultural significance in *DreadOut 2*. The term *Wayang Kulit* is left untranslated to preserve its cultural authenticity and importance, often supplemented with contextual information elsewhere in the game.

Example 2:**Original Name:** "Gamelan"**No Translation:** "The *Gamelan* is used in many traditional ceremonies and performances."

A traditional musical instrument in *Pamali*. By not translating the term *Gamelan*, the game retains its cultural essence and encourages players to engage with the original cultural context.

Example 3:**Original UI Element:** Bayu Setiawan Bin Hendra Setiawan**Target UI Element:** Bayu Setiawan Bin Hendra Setiawan

In *Pamali*, Bayu Setiawan Bin Hendra Setiawan is still preserved in the target language as most of names are not translated. The term "bin" is also not translated as the game tries to defend the cultural nuance which usually written in *yaseen* book.

These examples demonstrate how various forms of localization are implemented on artifacts and how cultural aspects are either incorporated or maintained to provide the best experience and comprehension to the player.

Thus, 50 artifacts were examined, and it has been found that there is a clear predominance of foreignization as a strategy to preserve cultural identity. Domestication and transcreation were employed minimally, being applied, for instance, to make culturally relevant products easily comprehensible. The artifacts' cultural context and meanings were kept intact by using literal translation and no translation.

3. UI Elements

User Menu, button, icon and other interactive components are the part of User Interface (UI) elements in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* that is required to provide the navigation and interaction for the players. These elements may include texts and symbols that have to be localized so that the game could be used in different countries, but at the same time, the design should remain as cultural as possible. The UI elements chosen were the ones that were most crucial to the game play, frequently used and if there was any cultural icon or text that needed to be translated. As it has been identified in the analysis of 30 UI elements, multiple localization approaches were used. Below is the list of the strategies identified and the overall number of UI elements to which each of the strategies was applied

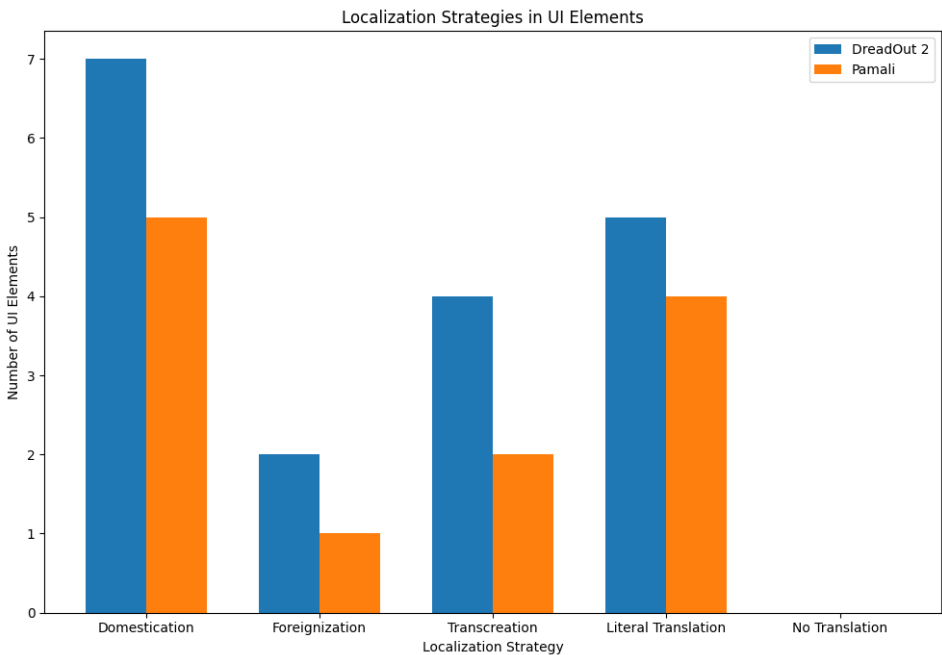


Figure 5. Localization Strategies in UI Elements

The bar graph in Figure 5 aims to show the amount of the actual localization strategies implemented in the UI components of *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The graph highlights the frequency of each strategy: Domestication and foreignization, Transcreation, Literal translation and No Translation.

The names of the various localization strategies are indicated along the x-axis of the bar graph while the y-axis depicts the number of UI elements

that were localized using the various strategies. The bars are differentiated by color for easy comparison between the data gathered from *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*.

Based on the analysis, domestication is most frequently applied in the UI elements with 7 occurrences in *DreadOut 2* and 5 in *Pamali*. This strategy helps to guarantee that the location of menus, buttons, and other interface parts are recognizable and easy to use for the target group. Foreignization is used slightly more sparingly, with only 2 instances in *DreadOut 2* and 1 in *Pamali*, which indicates that there are fewer demands to preserve certain cultural areas in the UI. Transcreation is used in 4 times in *DreadOut 2* and in 2 times in *Pamali*, showing the concept of applying creative translation to the UI components to convey their essence while being functional. They used literal translation frequently in *DreadOut 2* with 5 cases and *Pamali* with 4 cases because literal translation is necessary for UI elements that must be easily understood. No translation is not used in any UI elements, which implies that all the interface elements are clear to the target audience.

Altogether, the given bar graph shows that domestication and literal translation are predominantly applied to the UI elements, underlining the importance of comprehensibility and usefulness of these parts. The cases of transcreation and foreignization show that the balance between the cultural components' preservation and the user interface's naturalness in the localization of *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* can be achieved.

a. Domestication

Example 1:

Original UI Text: "Mulai Permainan"

Domesticated UI Text: "Start Game"

Main menu in *DreadOut 2* featuring traditional interface. The main menu option is traditionally domesticated to "Start Game" to ensure immediate understanding and ease of navigation for English-speaking players.

Example 2:

Original UI Text: "Pengaturan Grafis"

Domesticated UI Text: "Graphics Settings"

This domestication helps players quickly locate and adjust graphical settings, aligning with common terminology in English-language games.

b. Foreignization

Example 1:

Original UI Element: Icon of a *Keris* for the inventory button.

Foreignized UI Element: The icon remains unchanged as a *Keris*.

Traditional iconography used in *DreadOut 2*. By keeping the traditional Keris icon, the game maintains its cultural aesthetic and provides players with a visually unique experience.

Example 2:

Original UI Element: Symbol of a *Wayang* puppet.

Foreignized UI Element: The symbol remains a *Wayang* puppet.

Ritual menu in *Pamali*. Retaining the *Wayang* puppet symbol preserves cultural significance and enriches the thematic atmosphere of the game.

c. Transcreation

Example 1:

Original UI Text: Mainkan karakter

Transcreated UI Text: Choose the Hero

The transcreation here adapts "Mainkan Karakter" to "Choose the Hero," making it more engaging and relevant to the context of the game while preserving the original meaning.

Example 2:

Original UI Text: "Jelajahi Dunia."

Transcreated UI Text: "Explore the World."

The transcreation in this case changes "Jelajahi Dunia" to "Explore the World," adding a sense of adventure and excitement appropriate for the game's tone.

d. Literal Translation

Example 1:

Original UI Text: "Jeda"

Literal Translation: "Pause"

This is the Pause menu in *DreadOut 2*. The direct translation ensures clarity and functionality, this is allowing players to easily navigate the game's pause menu.

Example 2:

Original UI Text: "Simpan Permainan"

Literal Translation: "Save Game"

Save game prompt in *Pamali*. The application of literal translation here maintains the original meaning and provides clear instructions, ensuring usability for the players.

They are the examples that demonstrate the usage of various localization techniques to the UI components in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The usage of domestication, foreignization, transcreation, and literal translation in adapting the games' text guarantees that the UI is easily navigable and understandable while maintaining cultural context. Thus, 30 UI elements were studied, and it is worth noting that domestication was the most focused aspect for increasing ease of use for the target audience. Literal translation was also used often to keep things simple, and transcreation was used to offer a creative solution for culturally bound details. The process of foreignization was less frequently used, being applied only to those aspects where the cultural identity was essential.

4. Gameplay Mechanics

Some of the gameplay mechanics in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* entail aspects that are vital in the actual gameplay of the game. These mechanics can be cultural practices, activities, and actions that have to be adapted for the game so that players of different cultures would find them entertaining and easy to understand. Such mechanics were chosen because of their cultural relevance, their usage rate, and the level of difficulty of the tasks performed.

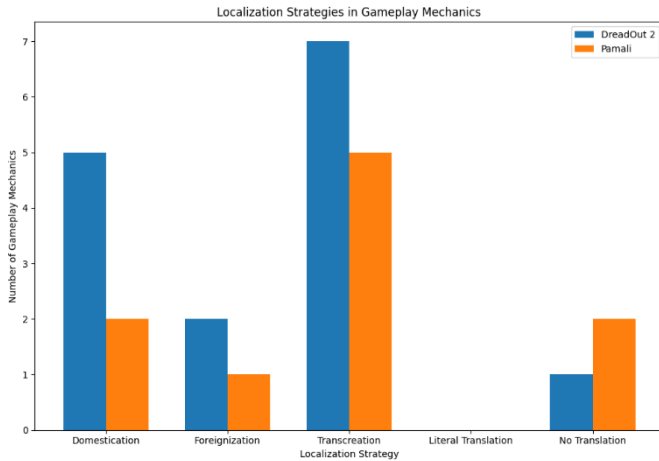


Figure 6. Localization Strategies in Gameplay Mechanics

Different approaches to the game mechanics localization were used in the 25 gameplay mechanics analyzed. Here is the breakdown of the strategies

identified and the total number of mechanics each strategy was applied to: Here is the breakdown of the strategies identified and the total number of mechanics each strategy was applied to:

In figure 6, there is a bar graph that shows the distribution of the localization strategies used in gameplay mechanics in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The graph highlights the frequency of each strategy: Domestication, foreignization, transcreation, literal translation, and no translation are the key strategies of translation.

The names of the different localization strategies are indicated along the x-axis of the bar graph, while the number of mechanics to which a specific strategy was applied corresponds to the value of the y-axis. The bars are also painted in different colors to differentiate between the data of *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* in order to make a comparison between the two.

Cultural domestication is employed in gameplay mechanics to adapt certain culturally foreign actions to the target population, and the instances of its application are as follows: *DreadOut 2* – 5; *Pamali* – 2. Thus, this strategy can also help to guarantee that the gameplay components are recognizable and comprehensible. In *DreadOut 2*, foreignization is applied to 2 gameplay mechanics while in *Pamali*, it's applied to only 1 gameplay mechanic, but the original cultural aspects remain intact and the game delivers cultural experience. The most employed technique is transcreation with 7 occurrences in *DreadOut 2* and 5 in *Pamali* since it is crucial to translate the culturally sensitive gameplay actions in a way that recreates the original essence of the actions. Literal translation is not employed for gameplay mechanics which implies that this approach is less appropriate for the game mechanics that are often more contextual in nature. There is no translation used in 1 case in *DreadOut 2* and 2 cases in *Pamali*, mostly leaving specific terms and actions intact to retain their cultural essence.

In summary, the bar graph shows a general over-usage of Transcreation in gameplay mechanics because of the need to sustain the cultural essence of the game while at the same time keeping the players engaged. Therefore, the application of domestication and foreignization shows that there is a proper equilibrium on how the gameplay mechanics are made easy for the players while at the same time maintaining the cultural aspect of *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* localization.

a. Domestication

Example1:

Original Mechanic: "lakukan ritual dengan menaburkan bunga di makam"

Domesticated Mechanic: "Performing a ritual by sprinkling flowers on grave,

similar to laying flowers at a memorial."

A ritual involving put flowers in grave in *DreadOut 2*. Domestication helps relate the cultural practice to a familiar ritual in Western cultures, enhancing player understanding and engagement.

Example 2:

Original Mechanic: "Siapkan *nasi tumpeng* untuk perayaan."

Domesticated Mechanic: "Prepare a ceremonial rice dish for the celebration, like a festive banquet."

Preparing a traditional meal in *Pamali*. This approach makes the mechanic more accessible by comparing it to a familiar concept, ensuring players understand its significance and how to perform the task.

b. Foreignization

Example

Original Mechanic: "Lakukan tari *Pendet* untuk membuka portal."

Foreignized Mechanic: "Perform the *Pendet* dance to open the portal."

Performing a cultural dance in *Pamali*. Keeping the original name of the dance maintains cultural integrity and educates players about traditional practices.

Example

Original Mechanic: "Menanam kepala kerbau di bawah rumah sebagai bagian dari upacara adat."

Foreignized Mechanic: "Burying a buffalo head under the house as part of a traditional ceremony."

This mechanic is foreignized by keeping the specific cultural ritual intact, providing players with an authentic experience of Indonesian traditions

c. Transcreation

Example 1:

Original Mechanic: "Taburkan air suci di empat penjuru rumah."

Transcreated Mechanic: "Sprinkle holy water in the four corners of the house to cleanse it from negative energy."

Conducting a purification ritual in *DreadOut 2*. Transcreation adapts the cultural ritual into a contextually relevant and understandable task for players, maintaining the spiritual essence while ensuring clarity.

Example 2:

Original Mechanic: "Panggil arwah dengan mantra."

Transcreated Mechanic: "Summon spirits using an incantation, channeling the ancient words to connect with the afterlife."

Summoning spirits in *Pamali*. This approach creatively adapts the original mechanic to convey the mystical atmosphere, making it engaging and comprehensible for players.

d. No Translation

Example:

Original Mechanic: "Ikuti *Selamatan*."

No Translation: "Participate in the *Selamatan* ceremony."

Participating in a traditional ceremony in *Pamali*. Keeping the term *Selamatan* untranslated maintains the cultural context, encouraging its players to learn more about the tradition.

The following examples demonstrate how various forms of localization can be implemented into gameplay mechanics in *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*. The application of domestication, foreignization, transcreation, and no translation guarantees that the gameplay is smooth and enjoyable and the cultural references are not lost.

Thus, 25 gameplay mechanics were investigated, and the most attention was paid to the transcreation that affected culturally related actions and rituals to make the player interested in the game and receive the necessary knowledge. For some mechanics, domestication was applied to ease the familiarity of the target audience, while for other mechanics, foreignization was applied for the reason of retaining the cultural essence. Literal translation was not used thus eliminating the traditional approach that is normally used in most other games. No translation was applied sparingly, in those situations when the cultural background is obvious or when the game's mood should be kept in the frame of the original terms.

3.3 Discussion

Video games that are localized, especially those that are steeped in culture such as *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*, pose certain difficulties. The main issues in this regard are to capture the essence of the culture and at the same time, not to make the game less appealing to the international players. The purpose of this research was to examine how the five localization strategies, which are domestication, foreignization, transcreation, literal translation, and no translation, are used on different forms of assets of the games like dialogues, artifacts, UI components, and game mechanics. It is noteworthy that the results indicate the differentiated use of these strategies, which correspond to certain localization issues.

Indeed, maintaining cultural relevance and at the same time ensuring that the game is easily understandable is one of the biggest challenges in video game localization. Foreignization where terms and cultural references are kept in the original form maintains the cultural richness of the game but can be a drawback if the players do not understand these aspects. For example, words such as *Keris* and *Selamatan* were kept as they are since they are culturally sensitive terms. However, this can lead to confusion among players unfamiliar with Indonesian culture, potentially hindering their engagement and immersion.

Mangiron and O'Hagan (2007) have also stressed on the concerns that cultural relevance should not overshadow the understandability of the game to the players. They note that overforeignization may lead to players' disidentification, a trend identified in this research where only a few dialogues and artifacts were overforeignized. This approach retains cultural sensitivity but needs some more information to be provided to the players.

Another approach that relates to the challenge of making culturally sensitive content more familiar to the audience is domestication. In this study, it was established that domestication was commonly employed in aspects such as the UI and the gameplay to make the players more familiar with the game. For instance, ritual instructions were made domesticated by comparing them to the western equivalents like comparing *kemenyan* (incense) to burning sage. Although useful in improving understanding of the game, domestication may water down the culture of the game and therefore lose its original meaning.

Bernal (2006) also talks about over-domestication of things where cultural meanings are sometimes not understandable. This research affirms this view by establishing that while domestication makes the game easier to play, it may also remove or change some cultural facets, which may reduce the game's realism and its capacity to educate.

Transcreation was identified as a prominent approach in this study, especially in in-game conversations and game play. This approach entails coming up with innovative ways of presenting material in a way that does not alter the experience but makes it easy to grasp and interesting to the intended users. Transcreation was applied in a way to maintain the essence of idiomatic expressions and culturally sensitive rites. For instance, the Indonesian proverb "*Bagai udang di balik batu*" was translated into "Like a crab under a rock" which, though literal, retains the idiomatic sense.

Costales (2012) also stresses that transcreation is a crucial step in order to preserve the emotional and cultural aspects of the game. In this sense, this study supports Costales' theory that transcreation can help to overcome cultural barriers and guarantee that the essence of the game and the experiences that it offers will be preserved.

Literal translation was used less often, only in the cases where the translated text is going to be used as the UI element where it is crucial to keep the meaning as clear and functional as in the source text. This strategy helps to make clear and unambiguous certain instructions and, for example, the menu. For instance, the pause menu option that was translated as "Jeda" was translated literally which was easily understandable. Literal translation is more appropriate for functionalist texts; however, it does not work well with texts that contain cultural connotations as it does not capture the connotative and contextual significance of the message.

Di Marco (2007) opines that literal translation is most appropriate where the content is technical as opposed to a narrative or cultural one. This paper concurs with this view because literal translation is effective in translating UI elements but inadequate for the cultural value of the game.

For terminologies and components that are culturally rooted, no translation was employed, including Wayang Kulit and Jimat. This strategy does not distort the cultural content but is very dependent on the player's desire to open a dictionary and look up the terms. Although this approach is authentic, it hinders the players' comprehension and entertainment.

O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) also explain the disadvantages of not translating culturally specific terms, which are in fact, that the player becomes aware of new cultural concepts. This research affirms that although none of the translations maintains the authenticity, it also presents difficulties in relation to the players' understanding and interaction.

Domestication makes the content culturally close to the audience to help them relate to it. For example, translating "Syukurlah" into "Thank God" in Pamali helps the players to grasp the meaning of relief in the familiar context. While making the dialogue more relatable, this approach might strip the cultural depth of the original dialogue. On the other hand, foreignization such as in "Pocong suka nakal di malam hari" (Pocong likes to play tricks at night) helps in providing players with cultural values of the country, by enlightening them about folklore of the country, this makes the game more culturally diverse.

The artifacts are central in the communication of culture. Examples include renaming 'Keris Sembada' to 'Sembada Dagger' so as to familiarize the players with the artifact by comparing it to a lucky charm. However, foreignization, which keeps such names as "Topeng Barong" and "Patung Loro Blonyo," helps to convey cultural meaning and introduce players to Indonesian art objects. Transcreation modifies the descriptions of the artifacts in a creative manner for instance, the description 'Kembang Wijaya Kusuma' is translated to 'Wijaya Kusuma Flower' in order to retain the cultural relevance of the content while making it appealing to the players. Some of the translations like "Lukisan Lama" to "Old Painting" are very direct and are useful for practicality while no translation can be as useful as "Gamelan" which maintains cultural value.

Interactor elements are used by the players to interact and understand the game. Some of these include; Domestication is the act of making the interface friendly by translating “Mulai Permainan” to “Start Game”. Foreignization keeps cultural terms like “Gamelan” and “Wayang Kulit” that allows the players to learn about Indonesia. Transcreation recreates UI elements in a creative manner, for example, “Pilih Karakter” to “Choose Your Hero” is creative but keeps the essence of the words. Some of the translated words include; Pengaturan which means settings so that players can be able to maneuver within the game. No translation preserves names like ‘Jamu’ in this case, thus preserving cultural relevance and motivating players to interact with the conventional components.

Gameplay mechanics sometimes include elements through which the game is played and which are necessary for the game’s progress. These mechanics are domesticated to make them familiar; for example, “Membakar kemenyan di depan pintu” is translated to “Burning incense at the door” which is compared to using sage in Western practices. Foreignization keeps cultural practices intact, for example, “Menanam kepala kerbau” is translated to “Burying a buffalo head” to give the truest representation. Transcreation creatively translates tasks, for example, “Mengikuti jejak darah” to “Following blood trails,” keeping the Indonesian cultural context and exciting gameplay. Literal translation maintains the clarity, for example, “Mencari jimat di hutan” to “Searching for a talisman in the forest.” No-translation, using terms such as “keris,” strengthens cultural impact on Indonesian rituals, thus improving the player’s immersion.

Balancing the Cultural Authenticity and the Player Accessibility

The question of how far one can go in preserving the cultural integrity of a game while at the same time keeping it accessible to players is one that is easily asked but not easily answered. Domestication helps to make the story more believable but it can also lead to overlooking of cultural differences. Foreignization retains cultural features, and thus the audience needs more information to comprehend the message. Transcreation gives a midway between the two strategies, translating cultural aspects to ensure that they remain relevant and interesting to the target audience. It is clear that literal translation maintains the simplicity and usability of the text, and no translation retains the cultural identity, which contributes to the player’s cultural enlightenment.

The findings illustrate that "DreadOut 2" and "Pamali: All the films in the category “Indonesian Folklore Horror” successfully employ these techniques to navigate between the local and the international markets. The use of each strategy points to the ability of video games to perform cultural functions, where players globally can learn about Indonesia culture. The localization strategy decision influences the degree to which cultural aspects are presented in a game, while still considering the game’s global appeal. The outcomes of this research confirm the hypothesis that the use of the combined approach is required to translate and localize culturally diverse video games. The pattern that can be observed when moving through the analyzed data is that transcreation is the most universal approach which maintains cultural relevance while at the same time being as accessible as possible. As such, domestication and foreignization were applied where it was relevant to either reduce or maintain the cultural references, as they were essential to the game’s story and setting. Only when necessary for functional clarity was the term translated literally; no translation was done on the cultural

beliefs that were considered most important for the game's identity, even if this makes it confusing for the players.

This study also identifies a pattern of strategic application of the localization strategies to solve particular issues in video game localization. The use of these strategies for different games shows that the process of localization is not as simple as it may seem at first glance and that for this reason, it is crucial to adopt an approach that takes into account the need for cultural relevance as well as for players' convenience. With the use of these strategies, the game developers are able to design, develop and deliver games that are informative, entertaining and culturally sensitive, hence the significance of good localization in video games. Therefore, this study also emphasizes the importance of localization in the cultural sensitivity and cultural value appreciation among the global users.

4. Conclusion

Video game localization, especially for culturally intensive games such as *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali*, is an interesting topic due to the various issues that arise in the process. This research sought to establish the measures that were used in the localization of these games while maintaining the Indonesian culture in the English version. The first issues that arose were the conflict between the cultural representation and the possibility of the wide audience's understanding, cultural sensitivity, and preserving the emotional and storytelling nature of the source material. In this study, strategies of domestication, foreignization, transcreation, literal translation, and no translation were investigated by analyzing the textual and visual elements of in-game dialogues, artifacts, user interface elements, and game mechanics. The study shows that to overcome the challenges of culture adaptation, a combination of the identified strategies is appropriate. Transcreation proved to be the most flexible approach, it helped to overcome cultural differences and preserve the emotional and storytelling elements of the ads. Domestication was applied to adapt content for a specific culture in order to improve players' comprehension and involvement. Foreignization and no translation were used for cultural preservation, but in some cases, such as the use of idioms, such strategies needed extra information to be understandable by the players. Literal translation was only applied to the UI elements because simplicity and functionality were crucial in this context, stressing on the clear instructions in the game. This research answered the key problem posed in the introduction: how the elements of culture such as symbols, practices, and legends can be localized and incorporated into *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* while preserving their cultural essence. The application of different localization techniques showed that it is possible to maintain cultural comprehensiveness and players' comprehensibility at the same time. This study revealed that although the cultural aspects have to be maintained, there is equal need for modification for better comprehension and reception.

The consequences of this research are vast for the study of video game localization. This underlines the fact that the solution needs to be approached from both the cultural and functional perspectives of the game. It is therefore important that localization teams have adequate knowledge of the source and target culture in order to be in a position to determine which strategy is suitable to use. The players' feedback can also be used in the further enhancement of the localization process to satisfy the needs of the global

customers. Furthermore, the present research reveals that the video games are capable of being cultural objects, which enables the players to learn and engage the culture. The gentle manner towards the localization process ensures that the games such as *DreadOut 2* and *Pamali* can still be culturally sensitive and yet be attractive to the people all over the world. Both these objectives of cultural portrayal and players' comfort are important in the contemporary world where video games are being played by the inhabitants of different countries.

Thus, the presentation of the best practices of the combination of the identified localization strategies contributes to the enrichment of the existing global knowledge about the difficulties of cultural adaptation in the context of video games. It requires a good localization process that respects the cultural context of the game but at the same time makes the game easily consumable by audiences in different parts of the world. These findings can be useful for game developers, localizers, and cultural consultants and stress the need for cultural appropriateness and the players' interest in the localization process.

Acknowledgments. A third level heading in 9-point font size at the end of the paper is used for general acknowledgments, for example: This study was funded by X (grant number Y).

Disclosure of Interests. It is now necessary to declare any competing interests or to specifically state that the authors have no competing interests. Please place the statement with a third level heading in 9-point font size beneath the (optional) acknowledgments¹, for example: The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article. Or: Author A has received research grants from Company W. Author B has received a speaker honorarium from Company X and owns stock in Company Y. Author C is a member of committee Z.

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