



Lexical Equivalence of Bugis–Indonesian–English Vocabulary in Bilingual Dictionaries and Its Implications for English Language Teaching

*¹Ibnu Quraish

¹Universitas Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, email: ibnuquraish4@gmail.com

Abstract This study investigates the translation strategies applied to Bugis vocabulary in Douglas Laskowske's *Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary*, focusing on the use of literal translation and dynamic equivalence. Out of 239 lexical entries analyzed, 148 were translated literally (62%) and 91 through dynamic equivalence (38%). Literal translation proved effective for general vocabulary with clear equivalents, while dynamic equivalence was essential for culturally embedded terms, ceremonies, and social concepts. Interviews with native speakers revealed that literal translations often fail to capture deeper cultural meanings, whereas dynamic strategies preserve symbolic, emotional, and contextual nuances. Teacher interviews further emphasized that learners benefit most when cultural notes, paraphrasing, and critical dictionary use are integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings validate Eugene Nida's theory of equivalence, highlighting the translator's role as a cultural mediator and demonstrating that bilingual dictionaries function not only as linguistic tools but also as cultural bridges. This research contributes to translation studies and language pedagogy by showing that culturally sensitive translation enhances vocabulary learning, fosters intercultural competence, and supports the preservation of Bugis cultural heritage.

Keywords: Bugis vocabulary; translation strategies; dynamic equivalence; bilingual dictionary; English Language Teaching (ELT)

INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing body of research on local culture integration in English Language Teaching (ELT), relatively limited attention has been given to how lexical equivalence of indigenous cultural vocabulary can be utilized as a pedagogical resource in English language learning. Recent ELT research indicates that multilingual and culturally responsive pedagogies enhance learners' engagement and support the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in English learning contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; García & Kleyn, 2023). Similarly, translanguaging-oriented studies have shown that allowing learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoires can facilitate meaning-making and identity negotiation in multilingual classrooms (García & Wei, 2022; Wei, 2021). In addition, research on Global Englishes suggests that English learning should be understood as a culturally situated practice rather than a monolithic system detached from local identities (Rose et al., 2021; Rose & Galloway, 2023).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61277/exel.v2i1.286>

Received, March 10th, 2026

| Revised, June 25th, 2026

| Accepted, June 26th, 2026

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However, most existing studies have primarily focused on cultural representation in textbooks, classroom discourse, and pedagogical practices. There appears to be limited research that specifically examines lexical equivalence as a bridge between indigenous cultural knowledge and English language learning. In particular, studies investigating how culture-specific lexical items from regional languages are translated and repurposed for ELT pedagogy remain scarce. Previous research tends to emphasize macro-level cultural integration, while micro-level linguistic processes such as lexical encoding and translation strategies have received less attention in ELT scholarship (Pennycook, 2021; Widodo, 2022). This gap is particularly evident in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia, where local languages coexist with Indonesian and English but are rarely utilized as structured pedagogical resources in English classrooms.

This gap is pedagogically significant because contemporary ELT frameworks increasingly emphasize intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a core learning objective. ICC-oriented research argues that learners should be able not only to interpret English texts but also to express their own cultural identities in English communication (Byram, 2021; Darvin & Norton, 2021). However, many culture-specific lexical items in local languages do not have direct equivalents in English, which may create challenges for learners when attempting to express indigenous cultural meanings. Recent studies suggest that learners often simplify or reduce culturally rich meanings when translating local concepts into English due to limited lexical and cultural mediation strategies (Lee & Chen, 2022; Li & Xiao, 2023).

The urgency of this study is further reinforced by ongoing sociolinguistic shifts in multilingual societies, including Indonesia. Research shows that the use of local languages among younger generations is declining due to the increasing dominance of national and global languages in education and digital communication contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Wei, 2021). At the same time, ELT continues to expand in importance within global education systems. However, studies have also identified that English teaching materials in many contexts still prioritize Anglo-centric cultural content, with limited integration of local cultural knowledge (Widodo, 2022; Rose et al., 2021). This situation highlights the need for ELT approaches that more systematically integrate learners' linguistic and cultural resources into classroom practice.

Within this context, Bugis cultural vocabulary provides a relevant and underexplored case for analysis. Bugis lexical items encode cultural knowledge related to rituals, social values, and indigenous worldview systems. Many of these terms, such as *mappacci*, *maddoja binni*, and *mappadendang*, are culture-bound and do not have direct lexical equivalents in English. Translation of such items has been widely discussed in translation studies, particularly in relation to equivalence and meaning transfer strategies such as dynamic equivalence and descriptive translation (Baker, 2021; Munday, 2022). However, less attention has been paid to how such translation practices can be pedagogically leveraged in ELT to support vocabulary learning and intercultural awareness.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of translation studies and English Language Teaching perspectives. While previous research has largely examined lexical equivalence from a translation or linguistic perspective, this study extends the discussion into ELT by exploring how Bugis–Indonesian–English lexical representations can function as pedagogical resources for vocabulary learning and intercultural communicative competence development. In addition, this study contributes to ELT literature by positioning bilingual dictionary data as a site for analyzing

culturally embedded vocabulary and its pedagogical potential. Rather than treating translation as a purely linguistic process, this study frames it as a pedagogical bridge between local cultural knowledge and English language learning in multilingual contexts.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design with an embedded quantitative content analysis component to investigate how Bugis culture-specific lexical items are translated into Indonesian and English and how such translations can be interpreted within English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting meaning, translation strategies, and cultural representation embedded in lexical items, which cannot be reduced solely to numerical measurement. In addition, qualitative inquiry has been widely used in recent ELT and translanguaging research to explore how language practices operate in multilingual and culturally embedded classroom and textual contexts (Adiputra et al., 2025; Savski, 2025). The quantitative component is used to complement the qualitative interpretation by providing frequency counts of translation strategies, which allows for a more systematic representation of lexical equivalence patterns.

The object of this study is Douglas Laskowske's Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary, which is considered a rich multilingual corpus containing culturally embedded lexical items. This dictionary is particularly relevant because it documents Bugis vocabulary alongside Indonesian and English equivalents, making it suitable for examining cross-linguistic meaning transfer. Recent studies on multilingual ELT contexts indicate that lexical resources derived from local languages can serve as meaningful input for vocabulary learning and intercultural competence development in English education (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Metboki, 2025). Therefore, the dictionary is not only treated as a linguistic artifact but also as a potential pedagogical resource for ELT.

The data in this study consist of Bugis lexical items, their Indonesian translations, and their English equivalents. The selected lexical items are those that carry strong cultural meaning, including traditional ceremonies, social values, and indigenous concepts that are difficult to translate directly into English. Examples include *mappacci*, *maddoja binni*, *mappadendang*, and *siri'*. These lexical items are treated as units of analysis at the lexical-entry level, following approaches commonly used in translation and ELT-related lexical studies (Husni et al., 2024). The focus on culture-bound vocabulary is justified by recent findings that highlight the importance of integrating culturally rich lexical input into ELT to support learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and vocabulary development (Metboki, 2025; Savski, 2025).

Data collection was conducted through documentation and systematic content analysis. The dictionary was examined thoroughly to identify lexical items that meet the inclusion criteria: (1) culture-specific meaning, (2) absence of direct English equivalence, and (3) relevance to Bugis cultural practices or worldview. Each selected entry was then recorded in a structured data sheet containing the Bugis term, Indonesian translation, English translation, and contextual explanation. This documentation technique aligns with recent ELT studies that employ textual corpora or document-based sources to analyze multilingual and translanguaging practices in educational contexts (Uba et al., 2023; Fernanda & Triyoga, 2025).

The data analysis followed a combined qualitative and quantitative procedure. First, lexical items were analyzed using [Nida's \(1974\)](#) equivalence theory, particularly distinguishing between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Although Nida's framework is foundational, it remains widely applied in recent translation and ELT-related studies for analyzing meaning transfer across languages. Each lexical item was categorized into three groups: formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, or non-equivalence (descriptive translation). Second, the analysis examined how cultural meaning is maintained or shifted in the translation process, particularly in relation to ELT concepts such as vocabulary acquisition and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Recent ELT research emphasizes that vocabulary learning is more effective when learners are exposed to culturally embedded lexical meaning rather than isolated word translation ([Metboki, 2025](#); [Savski, 2025](#)).

After qualitative interpretation, a quantitative frequency count was conducted to calculate the distribution of each translation strategy category. This step allows the study to identify dominant translation patterns and provides empirical support for interpretive findings. The integration of qualitative interpretation and quantitative categorization reflects current trends in ELT research methodology, where mixed-method approaches are increasingly used to analyze multilingual classroom and textual data ([Adiputra et al., 2025](#); [Uba et al., 2023](#)).

Finally, the findings are presented in a structured table consisting of Bugis lexical items, Indonesian meanings, English translations, translation strategy classification, and cultural explanation. This presentation format supports both linguistic interpretation and pedagogical reflection. In line with recent ELT scholarship, the interpretation of findings is explicitly connected to vocabulary teaching, intercultural communicative competence, and translanguaging-informed pedagogy, highlighting how local lexical resources can contribute to English language learning in multilingual contexts ([Savski, 2025](#); [Zainuddin et al., 2024](#)).

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings according to the three research objectives: (1) identifying translation strategies used in Douglas Laskowske's *Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary*, (2) analyzing the distribution of lexical equivalence between literal translation and dynamic equivalence, and (3) interpreting the pedagogical implications for English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in vocabulary learning and intercultural communicative competence.

Identification of Translation Strategies

The first objective focuses on identifying the translation strategies applied in the dictionary. The analysis shows that two primary strategies are consistently used: literal translation (formal equivalence) and dynamic equivalence. Literal translation is applied when Bugis lexical items have direct semantic equivalents in Indonesian and English. These items generally refer to concrete, universal meanings such as natural objects or basic actions. In contrast, dynamic equivalence is used when lexical items are culturally bound and require explanation or descriptive translation to preserve meaning. Examples of both strategies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of Translation Strategies

Bugis Lexeme	Indonesian Translation	English Translation	Translation Strategy	Cultural Nature
anging	angin	wind	Literal	Non-cultural (universal)
bale	ikan	fish	Literal	Non-cultural (basic vocabulary)
mappadendang -		communal rice-pounding harvest ceremony	Dynamic	Culture-specific
siri'	-	honor, shame, social responsibility	Dynamic	Strong cultural value
gegge'	-	grinding teeth due to emotion	Dynamic	Emotional-cultural expression

The table indicates that literal translation is used for basic lexical items, while dynamic equivalence is required for culturally embedded expressions.

Distribution of Lexical Equivalence

The second objective examines the distribution of translation strategies across the dataset of 239 lexical entries. The results show a clear dominance of literal translation over dynamic equivalence.

Table 2. Distribution of Lexical Equivalence

Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Description
Literal Translation	148	62%	Direct lexical equivalence across languages
Dynamic Equivalence	91	38%	Descriptive or functional translation
Total	239	100%	

The findings indicate that while literal translation dominates the dataset, a substantial proportion (38%) of lexical items require dynamic equivalence. This suggests that a significant number of Bugis lexical items contain cultural meanings that cannot be translated through direct equivalence alone.

Further analysis of lexical categories shows variation in strategy use across parts of speech.

Table 3. Lexical Categories by Translation Strategy

Lexical Category	Literal Translation	Dynamic Equivalence	Total
Nouns	84	27	111
Verbs	50	61	111
Adjectives	12	1	13
Adverbs	2	2	4
Total	148	91	239

The data reveal that verbs are more frequently associated with dynamic equivalence, indicating that culturally embedded actions and practices often require interpretive translation rather than direct lexical substitution.

Pedagogical Implications for ELT

The third objective explored how the identified translation strategies could contribute to English Language Teaching. Analysis of interview data revealed four interconnected themes: vocabulary acquisition through literal translation, cultural understanding through dynamic equivalence, management of lexical gaps, and the development of critical dictionary awareness.

Teachers consistently reported that literal translation facilitated vocabulary learning, particularly for beginner learners. Direct lexical correspondence allowed students to establish immediate connections between Bugis, Indonesian, and English vocabulary.

As one participant explained:

“When students learn words such as *anging* and *bale*, they can immediately connect them with *wind* and *fish*. These words are easier to remember because the meanings are direct and concrete.” (T1)

A similar view was expressed by another teacher:

“For beginner learners, direct translation helps them build vocabulary quickly. They do not need long explanations because the concepts already exist in English.” (T3)

These responses suggest that literal translation supports form–meaning mapping, which is a fundamental process in vocabulary acquisition. Direct lexical equivalence enables learners to establish semantic associations efficiently, particularly when dealing with concrete and universally shared concepts.

Nevertheless, teachers emphasized that culture-bound vocabulary requires more than direct translation. Terms such as *siri*, *mappacci*, and *mappadendang* were perceived as particularly challenging because their meanings are deeply embedded in Bugis cultural practices and social values.

One participant noted:

“If I only translate *siri* as self-respect, students will miss the cultural meaning behind it. It also relates to honor, social responsibility, and how people behave in society.” (T2)

Similarly, another teacher explained:

“Students understand *mappadendang* better when they see pictures, videos, or stories about the ceremony. Translation alone is not enough.” (T4)

These findings indicate that dynamic equivalence serves an important pedagogical function by linking vocabulary learning with cultural understanding. Through contextual explanation and cultural elaboration, learners are able to access meanings that extend beyond dictionary definitions.

Another theme emerging from the interviews concerned lexical gaps. Teachers reported that students frequently experience difficulties when attempting to explain local cultural concepts in English because direct equivalents are unavailable.

One teacher explained:

“Students often ask, ‘How do we say this in English?’ Sometimes there is no exact word. I encourage them to explain the meaning rather than search for a perfect translation.” (T5)

Another participant similarly stated:

“Paraphrasing is important. When students cannot find an equivalent word, they learn to describe the concept instead.” (T1)

These responses suggest that descriptive translation and paraphrasing function as important communicative strategies that help learners negotiate meaning across languages. Such practices encourage linguistic flexibility and prepare learners to communicate culturally specific knowledge to international audiences.

The interviews further revealed the importance of critical dictionary use. Teachers argued that learners should not regard dictionary entries as fixed representations of meaning but should evaluate translations according to their cultural and communicative contexts.

As one participant observed:

“Students sometimes think that the first dictionary meaning is always correct. I teach them to look at the context and ask whether the translation really fits the situation.” (T3)

Another teacher added:

“Comparing Bugis, Indonesian, and English meanings helps students realize that language and culture cannot always be translated word for word.” (T2)

These findings indicate that dictionary-based activities can promote translation awareness and intercultural reflection. By critically examining lexical equivalence across languages, learners become more aware of the relationship between language, culture, and meaning.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study examined the translation strategies employed in Douglas Laskowske’s *Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary*, the distribution of lexical equivalence across these strategies, and their pedagogical implications for English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings revealed that literal translation accounted for 62% of the lexical entries, while dynamic equivalence represented 38% of the dataset. This distribution suggests that although many Bugis lexical items have direct semantic correspondences in Indonesian and English, a considerable proportion of the vocabulary is culturally embedded and requires interpretive translation to preserve meaning.

The predominance of literal translation reflects the nature of many lexical items included in the dictionary. Words such as *anging* (wind) and *bale* (fish) refer to concrete and universally recognizable concepts that can be transferred relatively easily across languages. This finding is consistent with Nida and Taber's (1982) concept of formal equivalence, which argues that direct lexical correspondence can be achieved when source and target languages share similar semantic and functional meanings. From an ELT perspective, such lexical items may support vocabulary learning because learners can establish clear form–meaning connections. Previous studies have similarly suggested that direct lexical mapping can facilitate vocabulary acquisition, particularly for beginner learners who rely on familiar conceptual representations to build new linguistic knowledge (Akbar et al., 2023; Herdi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the present study did not directly measure vocabulary learning outcomes; therefore, the pedagogical value of literal translation should be interpreted as a potential rather than a demonstrated instructional benefit.

While literal translation dominated the dataset, the substantial proportion of dynamic equivalence entries highlights the cultural complexity of Bugis vocabulary. Lexical items such as *siri'*, *mappacci*, and *mappadendang* required explanatory translations because their meanings extend beyond denotative reference and are closely connected to social norms, cultural values, and traditional practices. This finding supports Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes preserving communicative meaning rather than maintaining formal linguistic similarity. Similar observations have been reported in translation studies, where culture-bound terms often require descriptive translation, paraphrase, or contextual explanation because direct lexical equivalents are unavailable (Murthy & Ishlahiyah, 2024; Sanesi, 2024; Syafran et al., 2024). Therefore, the present findings suggest that lexical equivalence in indigenous language translation involves cultural mediation as much as linguistic transfer.

The distribution of lexical categories further reinforces this interpretation. Verbs were more frequently translated through dynamic equivalence than literal translation, indicating that culturally specific actions and practices pose greater challenges for direct translation. Many of these verbs describe social activities, rituals, and communal practices that may not exist in English-speaking contexts. This finding aligns with recent translation research suggesting that cultural meanings are often embedded in social actions rather than isolated lexical forms, making direct lexical transfer difficult (Murthy & Ishlahiyah, 2024). Consequently, successful translation requires not only semantic accuracy but also sensitivity to the cultural context in which lexical items are used.

The pedagogical implications of these findings are particularly relevant in contemporary ELT, where increasing attention has been given to intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and culturally responsive teaching. Teachers in the present study reported that literal translation was useful for introducing basic vocabulary, whereas culturally embedded terms required additional explanation, contextualization, and cultural discussion. This observation corresponds with previous research suggesting that local cultural content can make language learning more meaningful because learners are able to connect English with their own sociocultural experiences (Ikhsanudin et al., 2023; Rustam et al., 2025; Vanila et al., 2023). Similarly, Herdi et al. (2023) found that integrating local cultural resources into English instruction helped learners engage more actively with language learning because classroom content reflected familiar cultural realities.

The findings also suggest that dynamic equivalence may contribute to intercultural learning by encouraging learners to explore cultural meanings embedded in language. Teachers emphasized that terms such as *siri* cannot be fully understood through simple lexical substitution because they represent broader social values and ethical principles. This observation resonates with recent studies on intercultural language education, which argue that language learning should involve engagement with cultural perspectives and meaning-making processes rather than the acquisition of linguistic forms alone (Chen, 2022; Gutiérrez-Santiuste & Ritacco-Real, 2023; Liao & Li, 2023). Likewise, Permatasari's (2023) systematic review concluded that intercultural competence develops when learners are provided opportunities to interpret, compare, and explain cultural meanings across linguistic boundaries. Although the present study did not directly assess intercultural competence, the teacher perspectives suggest that culturally rich lexical items may offer opportunities for such learning processes.

Another important finding concerns lexical gaps encountered by learners when expressing local cultural concepts in English. Teachers reported that students frequently struggled to identify direct English equivalents and therefore relied on paraphrasing and descriptive explanation. This finding reflects contemporary understandings of intercultural communication, which emphasize meaning negotiation rather than the transmission of fixed lexical forms (Baker, 2024; Chen, 2022). In multilingual communication contexts, successful communication often depends on the ability to explain culturally situated concepts rather than locate exact translations. The teachers' emphasis on paraphrasing and contextual explanation therefore appears consistent with current perspectives on intercultural communicative competence, where adaptability and meaning-making are considered essential communicative skills (Trang & Phuong, 2023).

The interviews also highlighted the importance of critical dictionary use. Rather than treating dictionary entries as definitive representations of meaning, teachers encouraged learners to evaluate translations according to context and cultural appropriateness. This finding supports recent work in translation pedagogy suggesting that dictionary consultation should be accompanied by critical reflection on meaning, audience, and communicative purpose (Sanesi, 2024; Syafran et al., 2024). Such practices may help learners recognize that translation is not merely a linguistic activity but also a cultural and interpretive process. Furthermore, exposure to multiple representations of meaning across Bugis, Indonesian, and English may encourage learners to develop greater awareness of linguistic diversity and intercultural communication.

Taken together, the findings suggest that lexical equivalence in the *Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary* has relevance beyond translation studies. The identified translation strategies illustrate how cultural meanings are negotiated across languages and how these meanings may be utilized as pedagogical resources in ELT. While the present study does not provide evidence that dictionary-based instruction directly improves language proficiency or intercultural competence, the findings indicate that culturally embedded lexical items can potentially support vocabulary development, translation awareness, and intercultural reflection when incorporated into classroom practices. Future classroom-based studies involving learners and instructional interventions would be necessary to examine these pedagogical possibilities more directly and determine how dictionary-based cultural vocabulary contributes to English language learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the translation strategies employed in Douglas Laskowske's *Bugis–Indonesian–English Dictionary*, focusing on lexical equivalence and its potential implications for English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings revealed that two main translation strategies were used: literal translation and dynamic equivalence. Literal translation was the dominant strategy, accounting for 62% of the analyzed lexical entries, and was primarily applied to vocabulary with direct semantic correspondences across Bugis, Indonesian, and English. In contrast, 38% of the entries employed dynamic equivalence, particularly for culture-specific terms that embody Bugis social values, traditional practices, and indigenous knowledge. These findings suggest that while many lexical items can be transferred through direct lexical correspondence, a substantial proportion of Bugis vocabulary requires explanatory translation to preserve cultural meaning and communicative function. The study therefore highlights the importance of considering both linguistic and cultural dimensions when examining lexical equivalence in multilingual dictionaries.

From an ELT perspective, the findings indicate that culturally embedded vocabulary can serve as a valuable pedagogical resource for supporting vocabulary learning, translation awareness, and intercultural communicative competence. Literal translation may facilitate learners' understanding of basic vocabulary through direct form–meaning mapping, whereas dynamic equivalence provides opportunities for exploring cultural meanings that extend beyond dictionary definitions. Teacher perspectives further suggest that strategies such as contextual explanation, paraphrasing, storytelling, and critical dictionary use can help learners negotiate lexical gaps and communicate local cultural concepts in English more effectively. Although this study was limited to the analysis of dictionary entries and teacher perceptions, it provides preliminary evidence that local-language lexical resources can contribute to culturally responsive ELT practices. Future research may investigate how the integration of Bugis cultural vocabulary into classroom instruction influences learners' vocabulary development, intercultural understanding, and ability to represent local identities through English communication.

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