

THROUGH OUR LENS: EXPLORING CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF *MIRACLE IN CELL NO. 7* KOREAN FILM AND ITS INDONESIAN VERSION

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Abstract

This research enriches the rare discussion of adaptation especially related to representation of local culture in cross-border film adaptations. While many studies focus on narrative and thematic changes, in-depth analysis of how local culture, such as social values, traditions, and Indonesian identity are adapted in the story is still minimal. This research explores how Korean cultural elements in the film *Miracle in Cell No. 7* are adapted into Indonesian culture and are adjusted to Indonesian values in the adaptation version. Using the theory of transstylization by Genette (1997) and the theory of seven cultural elements by Koentjaraningrat (1986), it was found that five cultural elements underwent changes, namely language, religion, knowledge system, living equipment, and livelihood system. This is not only because Korea and Indonesia basically have different culture but also influenced by the different religious landscape. This research contributes to the understanding of how Indonesian local culture is integrated in movie adaptations without changing the core of the original story.

INTRODUCTION

Film adaptations present challenges and opportunities that interest the entertainment industry. In adapted films, comparisons, contrasts and blends between cultures are important because of the global nature of the film's audience, which includes viewers from the country where the film was adapted, the country of the original film, and other countries that also watch the film (Wang et al., 2023). This phenomenon shows how the film industry continues to innovate in exploring existing narratives and presenting them in new and exciting visual formats. As the definition implies, adaptation is usually defined as a process that describes how one or more objects are reconceived or adapted through their engagement or relationship with

one or more other texts or objects (Corrigan, 2017). This means that an adaptation can be a development of a previous work.

Film remake is a global phenomenon in the entertainment industry. In the US, a popular film, *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2024 TV series) uses modern technology to remake an animated series of the same title. In the Indonesian film industry, adaptations or remakes of literary works have also become common. Many successful Indonesian films are adaptations of novels, real-life stories, and films from other countries. The remake process aims to update the story and visual concept and reach a new generation of viewers or different audience types. For example, CNN Indonesia (2023) stated that in 2022, the film *KKN di Desa Penari*, an adaptation of a thread on the X platform was recorded as the highest-grossing film in the history of Indonesian cinema, with over 10 million viewers. This achievement marked a significant milestone as it was the first Indonesian film to reach such a large audience.

Another popular adaptation in Indonesia is *Miracle in Cell No.7*. It is a movie produced by Fineworks/CL Entertainment, the Republic of South Korea. The movie was released in 2013 which tells the story of a deprived family consisting of a father who has mental retardation and a daughter. Their lives continue to experience difficulties until the father experiences a terrible event. Tribun News (2024) states this movie reached 12.8 million viewers in 2013. It was also played in several countries such as India in 2017, the Philippines and Turkey in 2019, and Indonesia and adapted to other versions from different countries including Indonesia, Philippine, India, Arabic, Spain, and Canada (Tarigan, 2022). *Miracle in Cell No.7* Indonesian adaptation was released on September 08, 2022, directed by Hanung Bramantyo. No different from its country of origin, this new version attracted a lot of interest from the audience. The changes when a film is adapted contribute to the high interest of the audience because it will provide a familiar story in different presentations.

This research takes the topic of cultural changes from the original movie *Miracle in Cell No.7* to its Indonesia adaptation. Culture becomes an interesting focus since the two countries have a very different cultural background in spite of the fact that they both are Asian countries. Moreover, movies now also have an influential impact on culture. Movies can be said to be a depiction of the real world that describes the culture and rules that exist in the real life (Sobur, 2020). The Korean film released in 2013 depicts the legal system and social values in South Korea, focusing on solidarity between prisoners and the quest for justice in the face of strict laws. On the other hand, the Indonesian version released in 2022 emphasizes the close family relationships, as well as criticism of injustice in the Indonesian legal system,

highlighting the emotional closeness between father and daughter.

Previous studies have been conducted to analyze the film. Research conducted by Alayya (2023) investigated the changes in sociological aspects in the Indonesian adaptation of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* and the causes of these changes. Other research discussing film adaptation was done by Wang (2022), who tries to make significant compromises between its goals of cultural appropriateness, progressive feminism, and monetary success in the film adaptation of *Mulan*. Saputra (2019) also conducted film adaptation research but focusing on the adaptation strategy shown in the plot of *The Lion King*, mainly through the deletion and addition of scenes that were not previously presented.

Previous research on cultural adaptation in film has often focused on changes in narrative and theme, while studies on the representation of local culture in cross-border adaptations are still rare. In the case of the Korean version of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* and its Indonesian adaptation, there is still no in-depth analysis that explores how Indonesian social values, traditions, and local identity are embodied in the narrative, characters, and setting. Previous studies tend not to explore further the balance between the cultural authenticity of the original story and its adaptation to local culture in the adaptation. The representation of local culture, such as family norms, customary traditions, and the setting of Indonesian life, has not been critically studied. Most studies focus more on changes in the storyline without examining in detail how local cultural elements can add to or even change the meaning of the story in the adapted version. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by analyzing how film adaptations are able to highlight Indonesia's local cultural values without losing the core of the original story.

The theory of transstylization by Genette (1997) and the theory of cultural elements by Koentjaraningrat (1986) are employed in this research. In analyzing the adaptation process, the researchers used Genette's (1997) transstylization theory, in which she mentioned two methods of rewriting adaptation, namely augmentation and reduction. In examining the cultural elements applied in the Korean version of *Miracle in Cell No.7* and the Indonesian version, researchers used the theory of culture by Koentjaraningrat (1986) which mentions seven elements of culture, namely language, knowledge system, social organization, living equipment system and technology, livelihood system, religion, and art.

This research aims to examine how the Korean cultural elements in the film *Miracle in Cell No. 7* are adapted into Indonesian culture and values. This research can also provide an understanding of how the film adaptation adjusted the elements of the story such as

characters and theme. Thus, this research is not only expected to contribute to the study of adaptation but also explores cultural studies which can be seen in the films being discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural

Culture is a representation of a way of life for a particular community that represents their distinctiveness or identity (Newmark, 1988). Culture affects many aspects of life. Among them are shaping behavior, norms, and values in a society. This is certainly inseparable from the role of culture itself which is very important in shaping a person's personal identity to know himself and interact with the surrounding environment. Koentjaraningrat (1986) identified seven universal elements in human culture that are found in every society, although their form and application vary according to the local context. The elements are:

Language System

This language element includes spoken, written, and other symbols used in social communication. An example is the use of the adapting country's official language and local languages such as Indonesian, Javanese, Sundanese, or Bugis.

Knowledge System

This includes the knowledge people have about the environment, technology and how to deal with the challenges of daily life. One example of knowledge system is local knowledge related to traditional agriculture and surrounding nature, such as climate, plants, and animals.

Social organization

Social organization is a community organization that regulates relationships between individuals and groups, including kinship, social stratification, and local government. This includes but not limited to patrilineal or matrilineal kinship systems and village organizational structures in a certain area.

Living Equipment and Technology System

This system includes tools, techniques, and technology used to support human activities in daily life. Tools farmers use in Korea may be different from tools used by Indonesian farmers. Modern technology used by a certain society can be included in this category as well.

Livelihood System

This covers the way people fulfill their needs through economic activities, such as farming, trading, or industry. Demographic aspect can be a factor that influences how people in the area earn a living. When the area is surrounded by sea, most people are likely relying

on the resources the shore and the sea provide. On the contrary, people living in an area with fertile soils often choose farming as their primary occupation. This might include activities like planting, harvesting, or even diversifying into related fields such as horticulture, livestock farming, or agro-industry.

Religious System

The religious system includes beliefs, spiritual values, rituals and religious practices that serve as moral guidelines in people's lives. Religion often shapes the values, norms, and daily practices of a community. For example, religious teachings might influence how people decide to prepare their meals, habits, dress codes, even moral frameworks. Additionally, religion can play a role in governance, with some nations incorporating religious principles into their laws and policies.

Art System

The arts system is an aesthetic expression that reflects the creativity and cultural values of a society. Arts include visual arts, performing arts, music, dance and literature. Korean traditional dance is different from Indonesian in many aspects like music, movement, meaning of the dance, and attributes. They usually carry the local wisdom and believes.

These seven elements interact with each other and form a complete cultural system. For example, the religious system can influence the arts through religious rituals, while the technological system supports the livelihood system. These elements provide a comprehensive view of how humans organize their lives and help understand the diversity and dynamism of cultures around the world.

Culture is not only changing social structures, but also shaping collective and individual identities in an evolving and changing society. This is characterized by advances in information technology that have fundamentally changed the way we communicate and interact socially. With the advent of social media, instant messaging and other online platforms, communication has become faster, easier and more widespread. However, along with this, new norms have also emerged. The cultural impact of such changes involves individual and collective adaptation to the changes. This often leads to conflict between traditional and modern values. These values can affect individual behavior and social dynamics between individuals and groups.

Cultural Shift

A cultural shift is a significant change in the values, beliefs, behaviors, and habits of a society or group over time. It often involves a transformation in the way people think and

behave. Major cultural changes often occur in response to the forces of modernity, along with the advancement of technology, economic system, and shifts in social structures. Modernization theorists, from Karl Marx to Daniel Bell, have argued that economic development brings pervasive cultural changes (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Compared to the past, the role of technology, especially communication, in shaping social and cultural relationships has diminished, and individuals now have more control over their own lives (Giddens, 1990).

Adaptation

Adapting a movie to reflect the culture of a specific area or country can influence the community's way of life. By incorporating the habits, traditions, and unique aspects of the local culture into the film, it creates a compelling and relatable story. This cultural representation becomes a key attraction, drawing audiences to watch the adapted film. This practice has been growing since its occurrence in 1927 (Beja, 1979). Adaptation from film to film is gaining more popularity since the adaptation comes in various versions, from live action to animation and vice versa, and from one country to many others.

Changes are evidently following the adaptation process, even when the adaptor is the same person or the same production house. This is not only because of the script's rewriting, which has caused changes in language style and other elements, but various reasons are underlying this different process. Genette (1997) calls it transstylization, which is the rewriting of a work to create a transposition or change in position. He further reveals two methods in transstylization, namely augmentation and reduction. Augmentation refers to addition, the expansion of elements from the source work to the adapted work to suit the theme and work of the adaptation. The later, on the other hand, means subtraction or summarization, where elements are removed because they are unnecessary and less relevant.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research discusses the analysis of cultural application between the Korean version of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* into the Indonesian version. This study uses qualitative descriptive method in which the researchers explain descriptively the cultural elements presented in both versions of the film and analyze the changes. In qualitative descriptive, information is conveyed using clear and simple language, emphasizing the factual details of a case (Sandelowski, 2000). Therefore, this method is best used for this research because it allows the researcher to explore and elaborate the finding and the analysis in comprehensive way.

This research uses the Korean and Indonesian versions of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* as primary data sources, selected for their comparative cultural and narrative aspects. Supporting references such as books, academic articles, and journals were used to strengthen the theoretical framework. The researchers acted as the primary instruments for collecting and analyzing data systematically, supported by tools like earphones for clear dialogue, a laptop for data recording, and an electronic dictionary for understanding cultural and linguistic terms. The technique of collecting the data for this research involved watching the film multiple times to fully understand the storyline and adaptation, recording important scenes or taking screenshots as main data, and classifying systematically based on relevance to the research objectives.

In qualitative research, trustworthiness in a study is a crucial aspect that ensures the validity of the data found. According to Connelly (2016), trustworthiness refers to the level of trust in the data, interpretations, and methods used to ensure the quality of the research. There are four main criteria used to assess the trustworthiness of a study, the first is credibility, which is triangulating data, then transferability, which is providing an explanation of the Indonesian and Korean cultural contexts that influence film adaptations. Dependability is done to document the process of data analysis and collection. Confirmability is to ensure that the data collected is accurate. As an example of the application of trustworthiness in research, the study of the adaptation of the film *Miracle in Cell No. 7* from the Korean version to the Indonesian version can be analyzed. This study examines the changes in cultural aspects that occurred in the adaptation and the causes of these changes. By applying this trustworthiness criterion, research on the film adaptation of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* can produce reliable findings.

Data Analysis Technique

This research uses Spradley's (2016) analysis technique which consists of four stages. The four stages of Spradley's analysis include domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural themes to complete the analysis. In the first phase, domain analysis, we classified what is data and what is not data in the Korean and Indonesian versions of movie *Miracle in Cell No.7*. In the second phase, taxonomy, we applied Koentjaraningrat's theory of cultural elements. Koentjaraningrat divided human culture into several cultural elements, namely language, knowledge, social system, living tools and technology, livelihood, religion, and art. The cultural elements in the adaptation is revealed using this classification. In the third stage, componential, researchers use Genette's theory (1997) explaining the methods of rewriting from adaptation in a literary work. Genette's theory explains the methods of rewriting from adaptation, namely

augmentation and reduction. This stage reveals how the cultural elements in *Miracle in Cell No. 7* Korean film were adapted and localized into its Indonesian version. The last stage is cultural theme analysis. At this stage, we provide conclusions on the dominant data in this study

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Language System

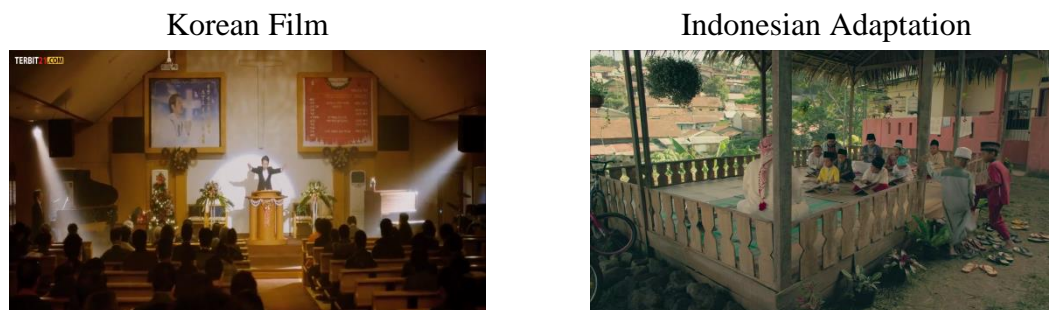
Language is the most vital tool and the key for someone to build a communication. However, when looking into a language system, it does not only show how people use it for communication but also show cultural nuances which is carried within the language. Therefore, language system is something that is different for each country even when some countries use language from the same family. There are differences in American English, British English, and Australian English, let alone countries with different language family. *Miracle in Cell No. 7* original version is from Korea, which language is far different from Indonesia. Thus, the language system presented in the Indonesian adaptation of the film underwent localization using Bahasa Indonesia as the main language of the county.

The changes in language system in the Korean and Indonesian versions of the film are evident. In addition to the language used for daily communication, names as part of language that carry cultural aspects are also localized. The characters' names in the original version use Korean names which usually consist of two or three words with one syllable each. Yong-Goo (the disabled father) and Ye-Seung (the daughter) are two leading characters in the story (CNN Indonesia, 2023). Meanwhile, the main characters' name in the Indonesian version are Dodo Rozak (the father) and Ika Kartika (the daughter). Rozak and Ika are two common names in Indonesia, which lead to closeness in the sense this film sends to its Indonesian audiences. This name localization is implemented to all characters presented in the movie, including the best friends of the father in prison, like So Yang-Ho, Sin Bong-sik, Man-Bum, and Jang Min-hwan. The Indonesian names used for these supporting characters are Japra, Atmo, Zaki, Asrul, and Yunus, all of which bring cultural sense (Sandi, n.d). Rozak and Yunus are typical Indonesian names which carry religious sense, taken from Arabic words. This is in accordance with the religious believes most Indonesian adhere, which is Islam. Meanwhile, Japra and Atmo carry more traditional sense. This two names are typical ethnic name Asrul, who is presented visually as a half-Indonesian character got nickname "Bule" which carries cultural meaning referring to a person who is half Indonesian half foreigner.

Religious system

Table 1.

Religious activity in *Miracle in Cell No. 7* Korea n and Indonesian Version



Religion is a sacred thing, containing teachings and knowledge that is believed by its adherents. In *Miracle in Cell No. 7* religious elements are shown that symbolize the beliefs of most people in the region. The Korean version of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* can be seen from the picture displaying their religious belief system in Christianity. In the picture, it can be seen that the place setting is done in a church with the characters doing praying activities. While the Indonesian version of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* displays their religious belief system in Islam. The picture can be seen from the Al-Qur'an reading activities carried out by the characters. The adaptation carried out by the Indonesian version is adjusted to the majority of Indonesian people who adhere to Islam. This will be a form of localization carried out in the film adaptation.

In addition, in the scene when the character shows the place setting in the cell, there are also changes in religious elements that are adjusted to the beliefs in their respective regions. This can be seen in the Korean version showing the scene when they are doing the choir in the cell. This activity is considered identical to the religious elements of Christians. Meanwhile, the Indonesian version shows a scene when they are doing *shalawat* while in the cell. This is of course very identical to the belief system in Indonesia, which is predominantly Muslim. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2020), Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, with 229.62 million people, or about 87.2% of the total population of 269.6 million. This shows that Muslims are the largest religious group in Indonesia, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the overall population. For this reason, the change is a form of localization of the film adaptation that makes changes according to the country that is the target of the film.

Knowledge System

Table 2.

Different climate in Miracle in Cell No. 7 Korean film and its Indonesian Version

Korean Film



Indonesian adaptation



Knowledge system is an element of culture related to human knowledge about various elements in their lives. The elements in question are also found in knowledge about the surrounding nature, such as climate, plants, and animals. In the movie *Miracle in Cell No. 7*, both the Indonesian version and the Korean version show differences in climate. The Korean version shows snow falling in Korea. While the Indonesian adaptation version does not show snow falling. This is because Korea does have a subtropical climate and snow season. While Indonesia is a tropical country so there is no snow season. With the season, it shows that with additional elements in a scene can make the atmosphere of joy and emotion because it has succeeded in expressing justice can be clearly depicted, so that the meaning in an additional element can add to the impression of romanticization in the scene. Then a meaning is conveyed clearly. This is a form of localization carried out in film adaptations in order to be accepted.

Living Equipment

Table 3.

Poverty in Miracle in Cell No. 7 Korean Film and its Indonesian Version

Korean Film



Indonesian Adaptation



The system of living equipment and technology is the most important thing in a person's life order, which in a country has differences in the system of living equipment and

technology. This can be seen in the Korean version of *Miracle in Cell No.7* which experienced localization in the Indonesian version. The Korean version shows a residence for poor people with a small and narrow settlement. Then there is a localization in the Indonesian version, namely the residence is on the edge of the train tracks. Large cities are densely populated and the unavailability of land makes many low-income people choose to occupy vacant lands such as on the edge of train tracks (Utari et al., 2024). That way it depicts poor and deprived people where they have a place to live on the edge of the train tracks. An adaptation to the work is done so that it can be accepted by the target community and adapted to the conditions in an area.

In addition, the school uniforms used. In the Korean version, it tends to use casual clothes for school, this can be seen in a child who goes to school wearing casual clothes. Then there is a localization in the Indonesian version where the school uniform uses red and white clothes commonly used by students in Indonesia. The school also describes many elementary school students who use the same uniform, which is red and white. This can be seen in the scene when a child is at his school wearing the same red and white uniform commonly used by students in elementary school. A change in the scene contained in this uniform is done of course in order to get acceptance tailored to the culture of uniforms when schools in Indonesia.

Livelihood System

Table 4.
*Commoners' job in *Miracle in Cell No. 7* Korean Film and its Indonesian Version*

Korean Film	Indonesian Adaptation
	

Livelihood refers to the way a person makes a living and maintains the ability to live sustainably. In the Korean version, the protagonist works as a parking lot attendant, an occupation often associated with life in urban Korea, especially in the context of low-income jobs that reflect perseverance and struggle in the often competitive and fast-paced urban environment. While not the most common profession, parking attendants are a visible and recognized part of the Korean urban workforce, often associated with the simple lifestyle and

challenges of life in the big city. While the Indonesian version: The main character works as a balloonist, a profession that is more recognizable and easily encountered in Indonesia, especially in the context of activities involving children and a cheerful atmosphere. Although the professions depicted are different, the essence of the struggle to make a living and survive remains the core of the story that maintains the value of hard work. In the Korean version, parking attendants represent the struggle through hard work in a big city, while in the Indonesian version, balloon vendors reflect creativity to survive. This was done to adapt to the country's culture.

DISCUSSION

From some of the data above, there are several cultural elements that are not shown or do not experience localization, namely social organizations and arts. Social organization is an association of a group of people who create a new organization as a custom. In neither the Korean version nor the Indonesian version is there any social organization formed in the community. For arts, it is about artistic activities that occur in society, such as visual arts, music, and literary arts. Neither the Korean version nor the Indonesian version shows any artistic activities in the community.

However, there are cases of story addition, where there are cultural elements that do not exist in the Korean version but are added to the Indonesian version. In addition, there are also story reductions, where cultural elements that exist in the Korean version are removed in the Indonesian version. According to Genette (1997), adaptation is a rewrite that can experience augmentation and reduction.

Augmentation according to Genette is the process of adding detail, elaboration, or adding narrative. There is one example of a knowledge system that occurs, the culture of friendly neighbors (Indonesia). This culture is an important aspect of daily life in Indonesian society that will establish close relationships in society. This is evidenced by a scene that shows a grandmother who is a neighbor, bringing food to dodo and tika. In addition, there is the character of Willy Wibisono, the father of Melati Wibisono who dies in the movie, who is the chairman of a party in Indonesia. The presence of this character adds a layer of detail to the story, as national parties are an important aspect of everyday life in Indonesian society that will forge close social ties.

Another augmentation in this adaptation is in the living equipment and technology, where the scene explains the social class, namely the use of bicycles as vehicles that have low social status in Indonesia. The scene is located in the main character of a father who has a low

social status using a bicycle to work and go to a place. Whereas in the original movie, the scene of using a bicycle does not exist.

In the Indonesian version there is augmentation in the art. This is shown in the scene where Kartika asks Japra to read a storybook entitled *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah*. *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah* is an Indonesian folktale. This was added in the movie to show that folklore books are often used for reading practice or just fairy tales for children.

Reduction according to Genette is the process of simplifying, condensing, or shortening. There are examples of walking culture in Korea which is an important part of daily behavior that is included in the Knowledge system and is influenced by various cultural, economic, and geographical factors. Walking culture is also supported by good infrastructure, awareness of health and the environment, as well as influences from lifestyle and popular media. As evidenced by the scene of Yonggu and Yesung walking around looking at Sailor Moon bags in the shop on foot.

While both films have similar storylines, there are some differences in the details. These differences fall under the category of Living equipment & technology. There are significant differences in the electronic prison facilities shown in the two films, reflecting the influence of cultural factors and context. For example, in the Korean version, prison cells are equipped with facilities such as televisions and fans. This can be seen in the scene when Bongshik tries to locate the mobile phone signal smuggled by Yesung.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, this study concludes that there are cultural shifts between the Korean version of the movie *Miracle in Cell no.7* and the Indonesian version. Some scenes in the Korean version are shifted and replaced in the Indonesian version in order to create a movie that is in accordance with Indonesia's socio-cultural norms and values. This creates cultural differences that include five cultural elements according to Koentjoroningrat. First, there are differences in localized language from Korean to Indonesian. Second, there are differences in the religious system, where scenes of reading the Qur'an are added in the Indonesian version while scenes of praying in church are shown in the Korean version. Third, there are differences in the knowledge system, such as differences in climate. Fourth, there are differences in the system of living equipment and technology, as seen from the difference in the location of houses for the poor in both countries. Finally, there are differences in livelihood systems in both versions. Social System and art system is not really explored in the adaptation.

The obvious shift in the five cultural elements in the two films are necessary to allow the Indonesian viewers to get more sense of closeness with situations presented in the film adaptation. Adapting cultural elements ensures that the audience feels a sense of recognition and belonging. For example, using local traditions, languages, or settings makes the storyline more accessible and relatable. Indonesian viewers are more likely to empathize with characters and situations that reflect their own cultural experiences. These shifts are not mere localization but a thoughtful effort to bridge cultural gaps, ensuring the adaptation speaks directly to the hearts of Indonesian viewers. This approach strengthens their emotional investment in the narrative while maintaining the essence of the original film.

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