

Techniques in Translating English Metaphors in One Direction's Songs Lyrics into Indonesian

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Abstract

This study investigates the techniques used in translating English metaphors into Indonesian in the song lyrics of One Direction, a British-Irish pop band known for incorporating emotionally expressive and figurative language into their music. Metaphors in song lyrics serve not only as stylistic devices but also as powerful vehicles for conveying complex emotions and conceptual ideas. Translating such metaphors presents unique challenges, especially when figurative expressions are deeply embedded in the source culture or lack direct equivalents in the target language. Drawing on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework of translation techniques, this research aims to identify metaphorical expressions and analyze how they are rendered into Indonesian by examining selected tracks from One Direction's albums. The findings indicate that the most frequently used translation technique is Literal Translation, particularly when metaphors are conceptually universal or culturally shared, so it requires little or no changes at all. Modulation is employed when the metaphor must be restructured in terms of syntax or cognitive framing to maintain clarity and naturalness in the target language. Adaptation is applied when culture-specific metaphors are encountered, requiring substitution with equivalent imagery that resonates more effectively with the Indonesian audience. These techniques reveal the translator's critical role in maintaining both semantic meaning and stylistic intent, especially in song lyrics where emotional resonance and rhythm are essential. The study underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity, creative flexibility, and contextual awareness in the translation of figurative language in musical texts. Through an in-depth analysis of selected metaphorical lines, this research contributes to the field of metaphor and audiovisual translation by offering insights into how popular song lyrics can be preserved, transformed, and meaningfully interpreted across languages and cultures.

Keywords: metaphor, translation technique, song lyrics

Introduction

Metaphors are essential tools for expressing abstract ideas through more tangible language, playing a vital role not only in literature but also in everyday communication. As proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not just decorative linguistic features—they shape how people perceive and understand the world. In artistic texts such as song lyrics, metaphors are commonly used to convey emotions, create vivid imagery, and enhance the lyrical and emotional impact of the song.

In pop music, including songs by the British-Irish band One Direction, metaphorical expressions are frequently employed to articulate feelings of love, heartbreak, and youthful longing. These figurative expressions connect deeply with audiences, making the lyrics more relatable and expressive. However, translating such metaphors from English into Indonesian

The 4th Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature (ALLURE)

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Online ISSN: 2807-8926

involves more than just converting words; it requires the translator to navigate cultural differences, maintain poetic tone, and preserve emotional nuance—all within the constraints of lyrical structure.

Translation Studies has developed several frameworks for analyzing how metaphors can be rendered effectively across languages. Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy of translation techniques is one such model, with Literal Translation, Modulation, and Adaptation being especially relevant for metaphor translation. These strategies allow translators to either retain the original metaphor, restructure it for clarity, or replace it with a culturally appropriate equivalent.

Despite the widespread consumption of Western pop songs in Indonesia, little scholarly attention has been given to how metaphorical content is handled in translation. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing metaphor translations in selected One Direction songs. It focuses on identifying the types of translation techniques used, determining the dominant strategies, and evaluating their effectiveness in conveying meaning and emotion. By doing so, the study contributes to a broader understanding of metaphor translation in music and offers insights into the cultural and linguistic dynamics of translating figurative language for Indonesian audiences.

Literature Review

This section presents an overview of key concepts and previous research relevant to the current study, focusing on two main areas: Sociolinguistics and Metaphor. These perspectives provide the theoretical foundation for analyzing how metaphorical expressions function in song lyrics and how they are translated into Indonesian.

Concept Of Metaphor

Metaphor is a fundamental aspect of language and cognition, allowing people to understand and express abstract concepts through more concrete and familiar experiences. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not merely decorative elements of language but serve as essential cognitive tools that shape human perception, thought, and communication. Their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) asserts that our everyday language is deeply metaphorical, influencing how individuals construct reality. For example, the metaphor "Time is money" reflects a cultural conceptualization of time as a finite and valuable resource.

According to Lakoff (2008), metaphors are deeply embedded in thought processes rather than being mere stylistic choices. His findings suggest that metaphorical expressions in song lyrics reflect the cognitive processes underlying human emotions. This perspective is crucial for translation, as it highlights the need to preserve not just the words of a metaphor but the underlying conceptual framework. Meanwhile, Semino (2008) highlights how metaphors in popular culture, including music, serve as a bridge between abstract emotions and concrete linguistic expressions. She argues that song lyrics often use metaphors to simplify complex emotional experiences, making them more accessible to listeners. This insight reinforces the importance of cultural and contextual awareness when translating metaphorical expressions in music.

By synthesizing these perspectives, it becomes evident that metaphors are integral to the artistic and emotional impact of song lyrics. In translation, the challenge lies in preserving

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Online ISSN: 2807-8926

both the literal and figurative meanings of metaphors while adapting them to fit the linguistic and cultural context of the target audience. The theories discussed above provide valuable insights into how metaphors function in language and music, offering a foundation for understanding the complexities involved in translating metaphorical expressions in song lyrics.

Metaphors can be classified into several categories based on their characteristics and usage. Understanding these types is essential for translation, as different metaphor types may require distinct translation strategies.

1. **Dead Metaphor** – These are metaphors that have become so commonly used that their original figurative meaning is no longer recognized. Examples include "the leg of a table" or "the hands of a clock." While dead metaphors are generally easy to translate, their exact meaning must be preserved to avoid confusion.
2. **Cliché Metaphor** – Overused metaphors that may have lost their originality but still carry strong emotional impact. Examples include "broken heart" or "head over heels in love." Such metaphors are prevalent in song lyrics and often retain their figurative meaning across languages.
3. **Stock Metaphor** – These are commonly used within a specific culture or linguistic community. They may be difficult to translate directly if they are unfamiliar in the target culture.
4. **Adapted Metaphor** – A metaphor that has been slightly modified to fit a new context. Translators may adjust these metaphors to maintain their intended meaning in the target language.
5. **Recent Metaphor** – Newly developed metaphors that reflect current trends and social changes. Examples include "going viral" in the context of the internet. These metaphors may require creative adaptation in translation.
6. **Original Metaphor** – Unique and creative metaphors invented by writers, poets, or songwriters. These are often the most challenging to translate as they do not have direct equivalents in other languages.

In song lyrics, metaphors serve multiple functions. They enhance poetic quality, evoke emotion, and allow complex ideas to be communicated more vividly. One Direction's lyrics, for example, are filled with metaphorical expressions that convey feelings of love, loss, longing, and hope in creative and emotionally powerful ways. These metaphors are central to the listener's connection with the music.

However, translating metaphors from one language to another is often difficult. As Newmark (1988) explains, metaphors are frequently tied to specific cultural references and conceptual systems, making direct translation problematic. Translators must decide whether to keep the metaphor, adapt it, or replace it based on its relevance and clarity in the target language.

The Motion of Translation

According to Susan Bassnett (1980), translation is not merely the process of replacing words from one language to another but involves the transfer of meaning, culture, and context. She emphasizes that translation is a form of rewriting that is influenced by cultural and ideological factors. She argues that no translation can be completely neutral because the translator's choices are affected by their background and perspective. Bassnett also highlights

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the importance of equivalence but critiques the idea that perfect equivalence can always be achieved. Instead, she believes that translation is an act of negotiation between languages and cultures. Furthermore, she considers translation a dynamic process that evolves based on historical and social changes.

According to Amparo Hurtado Albir and Lucía Molina (2002), translation is a complex cognitive process that involves decision-making and problem-solving. They describe translation as an activity that requires linguistic, cultural, and strategic competence to produce a high-quality text. They introduce the concept of translation techniques, which are specific procedures used to solve translation problems at the micro-textual level. These techniques include adaptation, borrowing, modulation, and literal translation, among others. They emphasize that translation is not just about replacing words but about making strategic choices based on context and purpose. They also highlight that translators must consider both linguistic and extralinguistic factors to ensure accuracy and coherence. Finally, they argue that translation is a skill that can be developed through systematic training and practice.

In conclusion, translation is a crucial process that enables communication between different languages and cultures. It is not just about replacing words but about conveying meaning, emotions, and context accurately. A good translation must be clear, natural, and culturally appropriate to ensure that the message is effectively understood by the target audience. Translators play an essential role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, requiring not only language proficiency but also deep cultural awareness and analytical skills.

Moreover, translation is a dynamic process that evolves alongside language development, globalization, and technological advancements. With the rise of machine translation, human translators are still needed to ensure accuracy, nuance, and contextual understanding that machines often fail to capture. Therefore, translation is both an art and a science, requiring creativity, linguistic expertise, and problem-solving skills.

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Online ISSN: 2807-8926

Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the techniques applied in translating English metaphors into Indonesian within song lyrics. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for investigating intricate linguistic elements such as metaphor translation, as it allows for a nuanced exploration of meaning, strategy, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). By emphasizing meaning over quantification, this approach facilitates an in-depth analysis of how metaphors convey emotional depth, cultural relevance, and artistic expression. The descriptive nature of the study enabled the researcher to systematically identify and categorize the types and techniques of metaphor translation without altering the original data. This allowed for a thorough understanding of how figurative language is preserved, adapted, or transformed in the translation process. Additionally, the method offered insight into the subjective decisions made by translators and the cultural considerations that shape those choices—particularly in translating metaphor-rich lyrics from Western pop music for an Indonesian audience. Ultimately, this approach ensured that the findings were both detailed and contextually grounded, capturing the complexities of metaphor translation within a culturally diverse setting.

Finding and Discussion

In this research, the data will be taken from selected songs of One Direction's albums. The finding is about technique in translating English metaphors found in the song lyrics by One Direction's albums. All the data of research findings will be analyzed by using Molina and Albir translation techniques.

1. The selected songs of One Direction's Albums

To make it easier for the reader to follow the findings, the researcher includes a list of songs used in this study. These metaphors were analyzed based on their meanings and the translation techniques applied. The data is presented as follows:

Table 1.1 The selected songs of One Direction's Albums

No	Songs	Album	Lyric
1	What Makes You Beautiful	Up All Night (2011)	1. "Baby You Light Up My World Like Nobody Else".
2	Gotta Be You	Up All Night (2011)	1. "I know I'll fade" 2. "Stop The Tape and Rewind"
3	One Thing	Up All Night (2011)	1. "You're my kryptonite"
4	More Than This	Up All Night (2011)	1. "I might just die inside" 2. "See the light that's shining from the stars above" 3. "I'm blinded, 'cause you are everything I see"
5	Up All Night	Up All Night (2011)	1. "Jump Around Until We See The Sun"
6	I Wish	Up All Night (2011)	1. "I Die A Little"

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Online ISSN: 2807-8926

7	Tell Me A Lie	Up All Night (2011)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Your words cut like knives" 2. "Your eyes are telling a lie"
8	Still The One	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "And now I'm back at your door"
9	C'mon, C'mon	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "My heart is racing"
10	Last First Kiss	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "let me be our last first kiss"
11	Rock Me	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Hit the pedal, heavy metal, show me you care" 2. "Wanna roll back like pressing rewind" 3. "Rock me"
12	Heart Attack	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "You're giving me a heart attack"
13	Over Again	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Hole in the middle of my heart like a polo" 2. "I can make your tears fall down like the showers that are British"
14	Change My Mind	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "As I'm walking towards the door, I'm not sure"
15	Summer Love	Take Me Home (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "You were my summer love" 2. "Feels like snow in September"
16	Story of My Life	Midnight Memories (2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Running after you is like chasing the clouds"
17	You & I	Midnight Memories (2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "We can make it 'til the end"
18	Strong	Four (2014)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "My hands, your hands tied up like two ships"
19	If I Could Fly	Made in the A.M. (2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "I've got scars, even though they can't always be seen" 2. "I can feel your heart inside of mine"

Based on the lyrical data presented above, a variety of translation techniques can be observed, particularly those outlined by Molina and Albir, including literal translation, modulation, and adaptation. These methods were employed to effectively convey the intended meaning, emotional resonance, and figurative aspects of the metaphorical expressions, with a focus on analogical metaphors. The selection of each technique was influenced by factors such as the metaphor's level of familiarity, its cultural significance, and the need to ensure fluency and naturalness in the target language. The findings are presented in the following section.

Table 1.2 The findings of translation technique

No.	Translation Technique	Songs
1.	Adaptation	3,4,10,11,12,13,15, and 16

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2.	Literal	1,2,8,9,18, and 19
3.	Modulation	2,4,5,6,7,11,14,15, and 17

Each technique was chosen based on the type of metaphor and the translator's need to maintain either the emotional impact or cultural relevance of the original expression.

2. Types of Translation Technique used in selected One Direction's song Lyrics

The types of Translation Technique used in selected One Direction's song Lyrics will be shown in the following table.

Table 2.1 The Translation Technique used in selected One Direction's song Lyrics

Translation Technique	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adaptation	10	35.71%
Literal	7	25.00%
Modulation	11	39.29%
Total	28	100%

From the table above shows that analysis of 28 metaphorical expressions in One Direction's song lyrics revealed the use of three main translation techniques based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework: modulation (39.29%), adaptation (35.71%), and literal translation (25.00%).

3. The meaning of the Metaphors

The next formulation of the problem is regarding the meaning of metaphors contained in selected songs of One Direction's albums. The writer takes some examples from the data to be explained as follows:

a. Adaptation

Adaptation is when something to one language culture is expressed in a completely new manner that is familiar to or appropriate for another language culture. So, the adaptation technique does not necessarily change the entire text into an adaptation, because this technique only translates elements of the text, unless all elements in the text are adapted as a whole.

1) You're my kryptonite – One Thing

Taken from the world of superman comics, where kryptonite means a weakening substance. So, what is meant here is someone who is likened to being kryptonite, which means weakness. Therefore the meaning of these lyrics is "kaulah kelemahanku".

2) I might just die inside – More Than This

This lyric doesn't mean that "*aku mungkin akan mati di dalam*" however, this lyric is changed by using adaptation techniques to change the meaning of the song's lyrics to make it easier for readers to understand the meaning of the lyrics. So, this lyric it can be interpreted as "hatiku serasa remuk"

b. Literal

This literal translation technique translates a word or phrase word for word. In using this technique, a translator does not associate his translation with the context. This is in line with what Molina & Albir said that literal translation is a technique that is done by translating word for word and the translator does not associate it with the context

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Online ISSN: 2807-8926

(2002:509).

- 1) Baby, you light up my world like nobody else - What Makes You Beautiful

The lyric *"Baby, you light up my world like nobody else"* from One Direction's song *"What Makes You Beautiful"* is a metaphor that expresses admiration, comparing someone's presence to a light that brightens the speaker's life. The Indonesian translation *"Sayang, kamu menerangi hidupku seperti tidak ada yang lain"* closely follows the original structure and meaning without significant change. This translation uses the literal translation technique, as the metaphor is directly transferred into Indonesian in a way that remains clear and natural. The figurative meaning is preserved, and the sentence structure is kept similar, making it easily understandable for the target audience while maintaining the original emotional tone.

- 2) I know I'll fade - Gotta Be You

The lyric *"I know I'll fade"* from One Direction's song *"Gotta Be You"* uses metaphor to express the feeling of gradually disappearing or being forgotten, often associated with emotional withdrawal or sadness. The Indonesian translation *"Aku tahu aku akan memudar"* maintains both the figurative meaning and sentence structure of the original. This is an example of the literal translation technique, where the metaphor is directly translated word-for-word without adjustment. The phrase *"memudar"* is commonly used in Indonesian to convey emotional fading, making the translation both natural and faithful to the original expression.

c. Modulation

This translation technique is applied by changing the point of view, focus or cognitive category in relation to the SL text. This change in point of view can be at the lexical or structural level. Similar things about modulation were also expressed by Hoed (2006: 12) and Newmark, (1988: 88).

- 1) I die a little – I wish

The lyric *"I die a little"* from the song *"I Wish"* is a metaphor that illustrates emotional pain or heartbreak using the imagery of dying, not in a literal sense, but as a figurative way to express deep sadness. The Indonesian translation *"Aku merasa seakan mati perlahan"* captures this emotional weight through a more descriptive and natural phrasing. This translation uses the modulation technique, as it involves shifting the expression from a brief, idiomatic English metaphor to a more expanded and contextually appropriate form in Indonesian. While the core meaning remains intact, the structure is adjusted to suit the emotional and linguistic expectations of the target audience.

- 2) Your eyes are telling a lie – Tell Me A Lie

The lyric *"Your eyes are telling a lie"* from the song *"Tell Me A Lie"* is a metaphor suggesting that someone's eyes reveal dishonesty, even if their words do not. The expression does not mean that eyes literally speak, but it figuratively describes how emotions or intentions can be perceived through eye contact. In Indonesian, it is translated as *"Matamu menunjukkan sebuah kebohongan"*, which shifts the structure slightly to suit the target language's natural flow. This is an example of modulation, as the perspective is altered from "eyes telling" to "eyes showing," maintaining the original meaning while using a form more commonly understood and natural in Indonesian. The metaphor is preserved, but expressed in a way that aligns better with the cognitive and linguistic norms of the target language.

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Conclusion

This study has examined the translation techniques used in rendering English metaphors into Indonesian in the song lyrics of One Direction. By applying Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, three main techniques were identified: modulation (39.29%), adaptation (35.71%), and literal translation (25.00%). Modulation emerged as the most frequently used method, indicating the translator's effort to shift perspectives and restructure expressions for clarity and naturalness in Indonesian. Adaptation was applied when the original metaphors were deeply rooted in cultural or contextual elements that needed to be localized. Literal translation was used when the metaphorical meaning was conceptually universal and could be preserved without modification.

The findings highlight that metaphor translation in song lyrics involves more than linguistic accuracy—it requires a careful balance between meaning, emotional resonance, and cultural equivalence. The translator's role is crucial in maintaining the stylistic and poetic quality of the source lyrics while ensuring that the metaphors remain impactful and understandable in the target language. Overall, this study contributes to the field of metaphor and audiovisual translation by demonstrating how figurative language can be effectively preserved and adapted across cultures, particularly within the emotionally expressive domain of song lyrics.

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