A Comparative Analysis of the Original and Translated Lyrics of "What Else Can I Do?" From Disney's *Encanto* 2021

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Abstract*. This research analyzes the translation strategies applied in the Indonesian version of the song* "What Else Can I Do?" *from Disney's animated film* Encanto *(2021). Using Peter Newmark's translation theory, the study compares 26 selected lines from the original English lyrics with their Indonesian translations, focusing on four methods: literal, faithful, free, and communicative translation. The analysis, conducted through a qualitative descriptive approach, reveals that each method was strategically applied depending on the content and context of each line, aiming to maintain meaning, rhythm, and emotional impact. The results highlight the complexity of song translation, particularly the balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural adaptation in audiovisual media.*

Keywords*: Encanto; Indonesian lyrics; Peter Newmark; Song translation; Translation methods*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini menganalisis strategi penerjemahan yang diterapkan dalam versi bahasa Indonesia dari lagu "What Else Can I Do?" dari film animasi Disney, Encanto (2021). Dengan menggunakan teori penerjemahan Peter Newmark, penelitian ini membandingkan 26 baris terpilih dari lirik asli bahasa Inggris dengan terjemahan bahasa Indonesianya, dengan fokus pada empat metode penerjemahan, yaitu penerjemahan harfiah, setia, bebas, dan komunikatif. Analisis yang dilakukan melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif ini mengungkapkan bahwa setiap metode diterapkan secara strategis tergantung pada konten dan konteks setiap baris, yang bertujuan untuk mempertahankan makna, ritme, dan dampak emosional. Hasil penelitian ini menyoroti kompleksitas penerjemahan lagu, khususnya keseimbangan antara keakuratan linguistik dan adaptasi budaya dalam media audiovisual.

Kata kunci: Encanto; Lirik bahasa Indonesia; Metode penerjemahan; Penerjemahan lagu; Peter Newmark

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a crucial aspect of cross-cultural communication, enabling people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to understand one another. In today's global society, the demand for translating texts from one language (Source Language) into another (Target Language) has significantly increased. As Bussmann (1996) explains in the *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, translation broadly refers to the process and result of rendering a text from the source language into the target language. In a narrower sense, it focuses on written texts, distinguishing it from interpretation, which deals with spoken language. More than a mere linguistic tool, translation has become a vital cultural bridge that allows people to access knowledge, entertainment, and literary expression beyond the boundaries of language.

Among the various forms of literary expression, songs hold a unique place due to their emotional, poetic, and musical dimensions. Songs convey not only personal experiences and

imaginative storytelling but also cultural values and moral messages. Awe (2003) describes lyrics as monologues that reflect the songwriter's inner world, while George (2004) emphasizes their potential to portray human life and moral themes. Because of these functions, translating songs presents special challenges that go beyond literal meaning—it requires a sensitivity to emotion, rhythm, and cultural resonance.

Translation theorist Peter Newmark (1988) introduced eight distinct methods of translation, each designed to serve different purposes based on the nature of the text and the needs of the intended audience. These methods provide a structured framework for translators, especially when working with expressive and artistic texts such as song lyrics. The first method, word-for-word translation, involves transferring each word from the source language to the target language in the exact same order, with minimal adjustment. While this approach is rarely used in literary texts, it can be useful for understanding basic structures. Literal translation, on the other hand, still adheres closely to the source text but makes slight grammatical adjustments to produce a more accurate target-language sentence.

Faithful translation attempts to precisely reproduce the contextual meaning of the original, maintaining the nuances and tone even if the result may sound slightly awkward in the target language. Closely related is semantic translation, which also seeks to convey nuanced meaning but allows for more flexibility in style and form to produce a smoother and more aesthetically pleasing result. Adaptation is often used in translating plays, poetry, or songs, where cultural equivalence and emotional resonance are prioritized over literal accuracy. This method involves re-creating the message in a way that makes sense to the target audience while preserving the spirit of the original.

Free translation takes a broader approach by focusing on the content rather than the exact form of the source text. It often results in paraphrased output that may diverge from the original structure but still conveys the intended meaning. Idiomatic translation goes a step further by using natural, culturally familiar expressions in the target language, even if they differ significantly from the source. Lastly, communicative translation aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original did on its audience, ensuring that the tone, mood, and intention are preserved across languages.

Together, these methods offer a versatile toolkit for translators, particularly when dealing with texts that require both accuracy and creativity, such as song lyrics where meaning, rhythm, and emotional impact must be balanced.

In particular, translating cultural elements such as idioms, proverbs, and metaphors presents significant challenges, especially when the source and target cultures differ greatly.

As Arfianti and Widiati (2021) note, these culturally-bound expressions often carry meanings that are deeply rooted in social context, making them difficult to transfer accurately into another language. Translators working into their native language usually find it easier to manage these elements because of their stronger familiarity with cultural nuances and linguistic subtleties. This advantage enables them to produce more natural, culturally relevant translations that resonate with the target audience.

Translating songs adds another layer of complexity. Songs are not only poetic texts but are also performed with music, requiring the translation to match rhythm, melody, and emotional tone. According to Stephenson (2014), song translation is one of the most demanding types of translation because of its tight structural constraints. Franzon (2005) outlines five general options that translators can choose when dealing with song lyrics: (1) leave the song untranslated, (2) translate the lyrics without considering the music, (3) write new lyrics to match the original music, (4) adapt the music to suit the translated lyrics, or (5) adapt the translation to fit the original music. Each option has its own implications depending on the translator's goals and the intended audience experience.

A clear example of this complexity can be found in the song *"What Else Can I Do?"*, performed by Diane Guerrero in Disney's 2021 animated musical film *Encanto*. The film tells the story of the Madrigal family in Colombia, each member gifted with magical powers— except Mirabel, the main character. The song is sung by Isabela, Mirabel's older sister, during a pivotal scene where she breaks free from the pressure to be perfect and embraces her true creative potential. The lyrics reflect a powerful emotional shift and highlight themes of freedom, self-discovery, and personal growth. These qualities make the song not only significant within the film's narrative but also meaningful as a standalone musical piece.

The film and its soundtrack quickly gained popularity worldwide, including in Indonesia. Disney responded to this enthusiasm by releasing official Indonesian-translated versions of the songs through DisneyMusicAsiaVEVO's YouTube channel. These versions made it easier for Indonesian-speaking audiences to connect with the story, themes, and emotional nuances of the songs. In particular, the Indonesian version of *What Else Can I Do?* was praised for its natural phrasing and faithful adaptation of the original meaning while maintaining lyrical flow and musical compatibility. The translated lyrics allowed local audiences to sing along, understand the character's transformation, and feel the emotional impact as deeply as the original intended.

This study aims to analyze the translation methods used in the Indonesian version of *What Else Can I Do?* by applying Peter Newmark's translation theory as the analytical

framework. By comparing the English source text and its Indonesian counterpart, the study explores how meaning, style, and emotion are transferred or transformed in the translation process. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of song translation as both a linguistic and cultural act—highlighting the skillful balance required to make songs resonate across languages and cultures.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This section presents the theoretical foundation and relevant previous studies that support the present research. It includes the core concepts of translation and song translation, along with a review of academic literature related to the application of translation strategies and the complexity involved in translating culturally and emotionally expressive texts such as song lyrics.

Translation is broadly understood as the process of transferring meaning from one language (source language) into another (target language), both in written and spoken form. According to Bussmann (1996) in the Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics, translation refers to the result of rendering a text from one language into another, with a narrower focus specifically on written texts. In line with this, Khodijah (2017) emphasized that translation involves the task of replacing a written message in one language with the equivalent message in another language, while taking into account cultural and linguistic nuances. These definitions form the basis for analyzing how meaning is transferred in literary texts such as song lyrics.

Translation is not only a technical task but also a creative and interpretative process. Haq (2017) views translation as both an art and a skill, requiring translators to make decisions that preserve the meaning, tone, and emotional force of the original message. Similarly, Iordan (2021) states that translation is one of the oldest professions in human history, developed to overcome language barriers that hinder communication. These perspectives highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and linguistic flexibility, especially when translating creative works.

In relation to musical texts, song lyrics are a distinctive literary form that blend poetic language with musical rhythm. As Awe (2003) points out, lyrics function as a form of monologue that conveys the songwriter's personal emotions, experiences, or imagination. The use of figurative language, metaphors, and idioms makes song lyrics challenging to translate without losing meaning or impact. George (2004) adds that lyrics often carry moral or emotional messages and are capable of reflecting everyday human experiences. Therefore,

translating songs involves more than transferring literal meanings; it requires the translator to adapt the text to preserve both its poetic structure and its emotional resonance.

The complexity of song translation has been discussed in numerous studies. Stephenson (2014) argued that song translation is one of the most difficult forms of translation, due to constraints such as rhythm, melody, rhyme, and syllabic structure. Translators must ensure that the translated text fits the musical composition while maintaining the integrity of the original message. In this context, Franzon (2005) proposed five strategies for song translation: (1) leave the song untranslated, (2) translate the lyrics without considering the music, (3) write new lyrics to match the original music, (4) adapt the music to suit the translation, and (5) adapt the translation to fit the music. These strategies underline the range of choices and compromises translators must make when dealing with musical texts.

Furthermore, Arfianti and Widiati (2021) highlight the difficulties in translating cultural elements such as idioms, proverbs, and metaphors. These components often carry specific cultural meanings that are difficult to translate accurately. They also note that translators who work into their native language tend to handle cultural nuances more naturally than those translating into a foreign language. In the context of audiovisual and musical translation, this suggests that naturalness, cultural familiarity, and linguistic adaptation are crucial in achieving a successful translation.

In addition to these theoretical foundations, this study draws on descriptive and comparative methods to explore how the Indonesian translation of the song "What Else Can I Do?" conveys meaning, mood, and cultural context from the original English lyrics. The hypothesis guiding this analysis is not explicitly stated, but it is assumed that the translator applies different strategies—particularly literal, faithful, free, and communicative translation methods—depending on the nature and function of the lyrics. The purpose of this theoretical review is to provide a solid academic basis for interpreting how translation operates in song texts, and how linguistic and cultural elements interact in the translation process.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the translation methods used in the Indonesian version of the song *"What Else Can I Do?"* from the 2021 Disney animated film *Encanto*. The focus is on examining how the original English lyrics (as the source language) were translated into Indonesian (as the target language), with particular attention to the strategies applied to maintain meaning, emotion, and musicality. The data for this research were obtained from the official YouTube channel DisneyMusicAsiaVEVO,

where both the original English version and the official Indonesian translation of the song were published. These two versions provide a reliable source for comparative analysis under consistent production and publication contexts.

The foundation of this study is qualitative textual analysis. As Cresswell (1994) emphasizes, qualitative research is primarily concerned with the processes, meanings, and understandings gained through words or visual materials. In line with this, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) argue that human interpretation is one of the most effective tools in conducting qualitative analysis. Similarly, William and Chesterman (2002) note that the goal of qualitative research is to provide a detailed representation of the subject matter in a way that informs and guides the audience toward a broader range of interpretive possibilities. In this context, the researcher plays a central role in closely interpreting the translated lyrics and assessing the methods applied.

The data were collected through several stages. First, the softcopy versions of both the original English lyrics and the Indonesian translation of *"What Else Can I Do?"* were retrieved from the same official source: DisneyMusicAsiaVEVO on YouTube. These lyrics were then transcribed and arranged into comparable textual formats to facilitate a close, side-by-side examination. Following this, both versions were carefully and intensively read and understood by the researcher to grasp the meaning, emotional tone, and cultural context embedded in the song. This initial comprehension phase was essential to identify the nuances that might influence the translator's choices.

After gaining a comprehensive understanding of both texts, specific lines or segments of the lyrics were selected for analysis. These data points were not chosen at random but were based on their potential to reveal the use of translation strategies—especially in handling figurative language, idioms, and poetic expressions. As Arfianti and Widiati (2021) (jordan) (jordan) point out, translating cultural elements such as idioms, metaphors, and proverbs poses significant challenges, particularly when working across cultures with distinct linguistic and symbolic systems. These elements often carry culturally specific meanings that are difficult to render naturally into another language. Translators working into their native language, as is the case with the Indonesian version of the song, typically manage these challenges more effectively due to their deeper understanding of cultural nuances.

The analysis phase involved several systematic steps. First, the source text (English lyrics) and the target text (Indonesian lyrics) were read comparatively, and each corresponding line was placed in a two-column table. This format allowed for clear visual comparison and helped highlight similarities and differences in meaning, structure, and expression. Next, the

researcher identified the presence of specific translation strategies as outlined by Peter Newmark (1988), including word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. Each instance was categorized accordingly and described in detail based on how and why that method was used.

Understanding the translation also involved an interpretive process that accounted for the relationship between the lyrics and their cultural or emotional resonance. The meaning embedded in both the English and Indonesian versions was examined to see how cultural references, tone, and style were preserved or altered in translation. Attention was given to how closely the translation matched the rhythm and musical flow of the song, which is especially important in lyrical translation.

Finally, the findings of this comparative analysis were compiled into a table consisting of entry numbers, the original (SL) text, the translated (TL) text, and the translation method used. Each entry is followed by a brief explanation that clarifies the translator's likely reasoning and the effectiveness of the method applied. The study concludes by summarizing the overall trends observed in the translation process and offering reflections on best practices for future translators of musical and literary works.

By applying this structured qua litative method, the study aims to contribute a nuanced perspective to the field of translation studies, particularly in the realm of song translation, where linguistic fidelity, cultural adaptation, and musical compatibility must be carefully balanced.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data, the lyrics of the selected song titled *"What Else Can I Do?"* from Disney's animated film *Encanto* (2021) were carefully examined and compared between the source language (English) and the target language (Indonesian), as published on the same YouTube account, DisneyMusicAsiaVEVO. The Indonesian lyrics served as the official translation used in the audiovisual media context. The data were then analyzed using the framework of translation methods proposed by Peter Newmark (1988).

This study specifically focused on four translation methods: free translation, communicative translation, literal translation, and faithful translation. A total of 26 representative lines from the song lyrics were selected to identify which method was applied in each case and how the meaning, style, and impact of the original text were rendered in the target language. These selected methods were chosen because they are particularly relevant in

translating expressive texts such as song lyrics, where both meaning and emotional resonance must be preserved while also considering the constraints of rhythm and naturalness in the target language.

Each line from the English lyrics (SL) and its corresponding Indonesian translation (TL) was examined in order to classify the applied translation method. The analysis was conducted by observing the degree of literalness, cultural adaptation, communicative effect, and fidelity to the original message. The findings are presented in the table below to clearly show how the four selected translation methods have been implemented in different lines of the lyrics.

tabel 1. Compare Translation 1

Source Language (English)	Target Language (Indonesian)	Translation Method
I just made something unexpected	Ku baru buat yang tak terduga	Literal Translation
Something sharp, something new	Yang tajam dan baru	Literal Translation
It's not symmetrical or perfect	Memang bukan hal yang sempurna	Free Translation
But it's beautiful and it's mine	Tapi indah milikku	Faithful Translation
What else can I do?	Tapi indah milikku	Communicative Translation
I grow rows and rows of roses	Selama ini, bunga mawar	Free Translation
I make perfect, practiced poses	Semua gayaku sempurna	Faithful Translation
So much hides behind my smile	Banyak hal di balik senyumku	Literal Translation
What could I do if I just grew what I was feelin' in the moment?	Apa yang kan terjadi jika ku hidup apa adanya?	Free Translation
What could I do if I just knew it didn't need to be perfect?	Apa yang kan terjadi jika hidup tak harus sempurna?	Faithful Translation
It just needed to be? And they'd let me be?	Hidup tidak sempurna, apa adanya	Free Translation
A hurricane of jacarandas	Dan badai pohon jacarandá	Literal Translation
Strangling figs, hanging vines	Pohon ara, tanaman gantung	Faithful Translation
And I push through	Kupanjat tinggi	Free Translation
Can I deliver us a river of sundew?	Hati-hati dengan apa yang kau lihat	Free Translation
Careful, it's carnivorous, a little just won't do	Awas itu bisa membuat celaka	Communicative Translation
I wanna feel the shiver of something new	Kuingin rasakan yang baru	Faithful Translation
I'm so sick of pretty, I want something true, don't you?	Sekarang kuingin yang sesungguhnya, ya kan?	Communicative
What can you do when you are deeply, madly, truly in the moment?	Apa lagi yang dapat kau lakukan saat kau semangat?	Free Translation
What can you do when you know who you wanna be is imperfect?	Ku harus buat apa jika tahu itu tak sempurna?	Faithful Translation
But it's awesome to see how you rise	Tapi itu indah melihatnya tumbuh	Communicative Translation
How far can I rise?	Bisakah kau terus berkembang?	Free Translation

What can you do when you are deeply, madly, truly in the moment?	Apa lagi yang dapat kau lakukan saat kau semangat?	Free Translation
What can you do when you know who you wanna be is imperfect?	Ku harus buat apa jika tahu itu tak sempurna?	Faithful Translation
But I'll still be okay	Tapi ku kan baik saja	Literal Translation
Making waves, changing minds (you've changed mine)	Buat jalan, Ubah pikiran (ubah pikiran)	Free Translation

The analysis of the translated lyrics from *"What Else Can I Do?"* reveals the application of four main translation methods as proposed by Peter Newmark (1988), namely literal translation, faithful translation, free translation, and communicative translation. Each method was chosen based on how the translator approached the meaning, structure, and communicative function of the original English lyrics in relation to the target Indonesian lyrics. The implementation of these methods across the 21 selected data samples is outlined below.

Literal Translation Method

The literal translation method involves maintaining the original grammatical structure and closely following the form of the source language, as long as the translation remains natural and understandable in the target language.

Application in the Data

This method is found in data entries 1, 2, 9, 12, and 25. In these examples, the translator preserved both the syntactic order and the lexical choices of the source text. The English expressions could be transferred almost directly into Indonesian without creating awkward or unnatural phrasing.

Justification for Use

The use of literal translation was appropriate in these cases because the source sentences contained relatively simple structures that were also grammatically acceptable and semantically clear in the target language. This method ensured accuracy while maintaining readability.

Faithful Translation Method

Faithful translation aims to reproduce the exact contextual meaning of the source text while adhering to the intention, tone, and style of the original. Unlike literal translation, it allows for more flexibility in word choice and structure to preserve deeper meaning.

Application in the Data

Faithful translation was applied in data entries 4, 7, 10, 13, 17, 20, and 24. These instances demonstrate that the translator maintained semantic accuracy, even if some lexical items or syntactical patterns were altered for better target language expression.

Justification for Use

This method was chosen to preserve the emotional and metaphorical weight of the lyrics. Although some expressions were compressed or rephrased, the core meaning and tone remained intact. This was especially useful in conveying figurative language and cultural subtleties embedded in the song.

Free Translation Method

Free translation focuses more on conveying the overall message rather than adhering to the exact structure or wording of the source text. It allows the translator creative freedom to modify or restructure the original content to better suit the target audience's language and culture.

Application in the Data

This method was found in data entries 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 19, 22, 23, and 26. The translations in these entries showed considerable rephrasing and, in some cases, reduction or expansion of content to improve clarity and maintain lyrical flow.

Justification for Use

Free translation was used where direct translation might result in confusion or loss of lyrical quality. It was particularly effective for metaphors, idioms, and culturally bound phrases that required adaptation. The method helped maintain the emotional resonance and rhythm of the song, which is critical in musical translation.

Communicative Translation Method

Communicative translation aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original did on its audience. It emphasizes the clarity of the message and its naturalness in the target language.

Application in the Data

Communicative translation was applied in data entries 5, 16, 18, and 21. In these examples, the translator adjusted or omitted non-essential details to focus on the overall communicative goal.

Justification for Use

This method was appropriate for lines where the core message needed to be emphasized rather than the literal wording. By prioritizing audience impact, the translator ensured that the lyrics remained emotionally engaging and culturally relevant, while still faithful to the original message's intent.

The strategic use of these four methods demonstrates the complexity and adaptability required in translating song lyrics, especially when balancing fidelity to the source text with the need for fluency and audience engagement in the target language.

The result show that translating the song *"What Else Can I Do?"* required a careful and strategic use of various translation methods to maintain the balance between fidelity to the source text and fluency in the target language. The translator responded to differences in structure, culture, and style by applying four main methods: literal, faithful, free, and communicative translation.

Free translation was the most commonly used method, reflecting the translator's effort to prioritize natural flow and emotional resonance over strict structural accuracy. This approach allowed significant rewording and restructuring, particularly useful for translating idiomatic or metaphorical lines into culturally relevant expressions that would make sense to Indonesian listeners. In contrast, literal and faithful translations were applied in lines where the structure could be preserved without compromising meaning or rhythm. These methods ensured accuracy while retaining poetic and descriptive clarity. Faithful translation especially helped preserve emotional nuance when the original wording needed slight modification for better rhythmic or stylistic alignment. Communicative translation was employed selectively, aiming to make the message more relatable and impactful for the audience. This method helped

simplify complex language, allowing the translated lyrics to recreate the intended emotional effect without overwhelming the listener.

In summary, the translator did not rely on a single method but used a flexible, adaptive approach. The song's expressive nature required not just a transfer of meaning, but a thoughtful recreation of mood, rhythm, and cultural relevance—reflecting the essence of effective song translation.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the Indonesian translation of *"What Else Can I Do?"* reflects a dynamic and adaptive use of multiple translation methods. The translator did not rely on a single approach but chose between literal, faithful, free, and communicative translation based on the structure, emotional tone, and lyrical function of each line. Free translation appeared most frequently, suggesting an emphasis on naturalness and cultural readability. Meanwhile, faithful and literal methods were used to retain factual or descriptive content, and communicative translation was applied to simplify complex expressions and enhance audience impact. This blend of methods demonstrates the translator's sensitivity not only to linguistic form but also to musical and cultural context. Ultimately, the study illustrates how translation in the realm of music requires both creative interpretation and theoretical grounding to produce a version that is both faithful to the original and resonant for the target audience.

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