

# THE STRATEGIES DEALING WITH NON-EQUIVALENCE PROBLEM IN THE ENGLISH-INDONESIA VERSION OF SONG LYRIC LEAD THE WAY

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## Abstract

As a feature of translation, the concept of equivalence is a crucial issue which have to be considered by the translator. Equivalence is a term proposed by Baker (1992) for gaining the equal meaning between the source text and the target text. In translating the source text, some non-equivalence problems happen since several source language has unequal meaning with the target language. Objective of the Paper. This paper aims to identify, describe, and explain some problems of non-equivalence problem at word level and strategies dealing with it. Method. By using Baker's theory (1992), the song lyric of both English and Indonesian version entitled Lead the Way (sung by Jhené Aiko) and Kita Bisa (sung by Via Vallen) are analyzed. Findings. The findings show that translation by omission is highly applied in translating the lyric followed by a varied occurrence of other strategies. Conclusion. The variation of the strategies is used in order to make a "singable" song. Finally, this paper provides suggestions that a study of the translation of song lyrics combining translation theory and interpersonal meaning of SFL for giving a better understanding is needed to be done for giving a broader understanding towards the text.

Keywords: Strategies, Non-Equivalence, Word Level, Translation, Lead the Way

## INTRODUCTION

As a means of communication across languages, translation enables people from different language to receive information in the written form (Baker, 2011; Newmark, 1991). Moreover, translation theorists assert that translation of literary text is a difficult task, particularly the translation of text written in the form of poetry (Newmark, 1991; Nida, 1964; Warachananan & Roongrattanakool, 2015).

Song type of written text in the same pattern as poetry (Nida, 1964; Warachananan & Roongrattanakool, 2015). Songs play significant roles in the storytelling as they help audiences to understand the characters' emotions and feelings (Edmondson, 2013). Producing the translated version alike the original one in the target language is the key point of the translation song lyric (Warachananan & Roongrattanakool, 2015). This can only be done through the use of natural grammatical

constructions and appropriate words in the target language (Larson, 1998). In order to be understood and appreciated in the different language, translation cannot be simply done. Many issues emerge related to translation one of which is equivalence.

Equivalence defines the relationship describing the similarity in terms of any or a number of potential qualities existing between two entities (Halverson, 1997). By finding equivalence, translators are able to show the tentative nature of their assertions, invite the readers, as intelligent individuals, to join and decide which translation is accurately render the ideas, concepts and words of original text (Panou, 2013). As the conceptual basis of translation, equivalence occurs when an SL (source language) and TL (target language) texts or items are related to (at least some of) the same relevant features of situation substance (Catford, 1965; House, 1977; Pym, 2007).

Baker (2011) proposes five levels of equivalence: equivalence at word-level, equivalence above-word-level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence. In this paper, the researchers will be emphasized equivalence at word-level

only. In translation, word is the smallest unit of language that can be used by itself (Baker, 2011; Bolinger & Sears, 1981).

The notion of equivalence will automatically rise the notion of non equivalence. Non equivalence is a common problem in translation equivalence. The problem of non-equivalence in translation occurs when there is no suitable counterpart in the target language (Krejčí, 2008) "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Krejčí, 2008. Differences of the grammatical structure of the source language and the target language often result some change that may take the form of adding to the target text information which is not expressed in the source text or omitting information specified in the source text (Baker, 2011). Furthermore, there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code units. The differences between structures, terminology, grammar and lexical forms of languages are the main reasons of non-equivalence (Jakobson, 1959).

Baker (2011) proposes some common types of non-equivalence problem at word level which would be the base of the analysis of this study. Those problem is shown on the table below.

Table 1. Non-equivalence Problems (Based on Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012)

Problems	Explanation
Culture-specific concept	Totally unknown in the target culture (TC) because they reflect a reality specific to the source culture (SC)
The source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language	The SL word may express a concept which is known in the TC but simply not lexicalised, that is not allocated a TL word
The source language word is semantically complex	A single word which consists of a single morpheme can sometimes express a more complex set of meanings than a whole sentence; hence languages automatically develop concise forms for referring to complex concepts if the concepts become important enough to be talked about often

The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning	What one language regards as an important distinction in meaning another language may not perceive as relevant
The target language lacks a superordinate	The target language may have specific words (hyponyms) but no general word (superordinate) to head the semantic field.
The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym)	Languages tend to have general words (superordinates) but lack specific ones (hyponyms), since each language makes only those distinctions in meaning which seem relevant to its particular environment
Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective	Physical perspective has to do with where things or people are in relation to one another or to a place. Perspective may also include the relationship between participants in the discourse (tenor)
Differences in expressive meaning	The TL equivalent is more emotionally loaded than the SL item.
Differences in form	Certain suffixes and prefixes which convey prepositional and other types of meaning in English often have no direct equivalents in other languages.
Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms	When a particular form does have a ready equivalent in the TL, there may be a difference in the frequency with which it is used or the purpose for which it is used.
The use of loan words in the SL	For their prestige value adding an air of sophistication to the text or its subject matter.

In order to deal with the non-equivalence problems above, Baker (2011) also proposes strategies which can be used. Those strategies will be shown in the table below.

Table 2. Strategies to deal with Non-equivalence Problems  
(Based on Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012)

Problems	Explanation
Translation by a more general word (superordinate)	This is one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalence, particularly in the area of propositional meaning
Translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word	this strategy may should rather drastic, but in fact, it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some context
Translation by cultural substitution	This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader, for instance by evoking a similar context in the target culture.

Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation	This strategy is particularly common in dealing with culture-specific items, modern concepts and buzz words
Translation by paraphrase using a related word	This strategy tends to be used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form, and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the source text is significantly higher than would be natural in the target language
Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words	The paraphrase may be based on modifying a superordinate or simply on unpacking the meaning of the source item, particularly if the item in question is semantically complex
Translation by omission	If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question
Translation by illustration	This is a useful option if the word which lacks an equivalent in the target language refers to a physical entity which can be illustrated, particularly if there are restrictions on space and if the text has to remain short, concise and to the point

The framework based on Baker (2011) appears to be the most appropriate to be applied for dealing with non-equivalence. Therefore, the purpose of the current study, therefore is to analyse the strategies to deal with problem of non-equivalence at word level. Though this study analyses non-equivalence at word level, examining song lyric translation from English to Indonesian language needs to be explored further.

## METHODS

Aiming for analyzing the strategies to deal with problem of non-equivalence at word level, this study applies descriptive qualitative studies. By using the qualitative study, it means that the researcher explored

a problem and nurtured a detailed understanding towards a central issue (Creswell, 2012, p. 17)

In this study, the data was obtained from the English version *Lead the Way* (Disney Music VEVO, 2021) sung by Jhené Aiko and the Indonesian version *Kita Bisa* (Disney Music Asia VEVO, 2021) sung by Via Vallen. This song is one of songs in the movie entitled *Raya and The Last Dragon*.

Using recorded song, the data in this study belongs to audiovisual materials as it contains sounds of people recorded (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). The data is obtained for helping the researcher understanding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). By using the audiovisual materials, it is expected that the data will help the researcher

to develop a detailed understanding in this study (Creswell, 2012, p. 206).

There are several steps in doing this research including listening, transcribing, reading, and analyzing. The first step is listening. The researcher listened to both songs several times in order to get the correct words. In doing this step, the researcher did the transcribing by herself. While the researcher listened to the song, she also transcribed the songs. Here, the listening and transcribing steps are done simultaneously.

After the written form of lyrics was ready, the researcher read the texts several times to catch the meaning. By reading the texts, it is expected that the researcher would understand the meaning. Moreover, the researcher also watched the movie

entitled *Raya and The Last Dragon* as the song, both English and Indonesian version, are the official sound track of the film. By watching the movie, it helps the researcher caught the meaning delivered by the song.

The next step is analysis. A number was given for each data. This number did not give any special effect for the data as it only facilitate the researcher in reporting the data later. The analysis step was done by implementing the theory proposed by Baker (2011) and Chifane (2012).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the data analysis, there were several strategies to deal with problems of non-equivalence of translation. The result is summarized on the following table.

Table 3. Frequency of Strategies

No	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Translation by a more general word (super-ordinate)	2	3.8%
2	Translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word	8	15.4%
3	Translation by cultural substitution	6	11.5%
4	Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation	0	0%
5	Translation by paraphrase using a related word	8	15.4%
6	Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words	8	15.4%
7	Translation by omission	20	38.5%
8	Translation by illustration	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>		52	100%

The results of the study maps out that there are six out of eight strategies used on the translation of song lyrics “Lead the Way” and “Kita Bisa”. According to the table above, it can be seen that translation by a more general word (superordinate) is used 2 times (4%); translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word is used 7 times (14%), translation by cultural substitution is used 6 times (12%); translation by paraphrase using a related word were used and translation by paraphrase using unrelated words are used 8 times (16%); and translation by omission is used 19 times (38%). However, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation and translation by illustration are not found on the text. The explanation of each strategy is explained further in the following explanation.

As one of the commonest strategies, translation by a more general word (superordinate) is a translation type in the area of propositional meaning (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012). The example of translation by a more general word found in the study can be seen below.

Data no. 1

**English** : We have a choice  
**version**  
**Indonesian** : Pilih  
**version**

Based on the above example, it can be seen that the word “*choice*” in English version is translated into “*pilih*” in Indonesian version. The word “*choice*” in English version should be translated into “*pilihan*” as it acts as noun. However, the word “*pilih*” in Indonesian version acts as a verb since it can be translated into word “*choose*”. The words “*choice*” and “*pilih*” act different part of speech on the sentence. The other instance of translation by a more general word is explained on the following explanation.

Data no. 2

**English** : to Build or destroy  
**version**  
**Indonesian** : bersatu kita teguh  
**version**

The example above indicates that the word “*to build*” in English version is translated into “*bersatu*” in Indonesian version. The word “*build*” actually means “*to create and develop something over a long period of time*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In this context, the word “*bersatu*” should be translated into “*unite*” which means “*to join together as a group, or to make people join together as a group; to combine*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Therefore, the two words “*build*” and “*bersatu*” have different meaning and nuances. However, the translator prefers to use “*bersatu*” or instead of “*build*”.

The next strategies used by the translator in Indonesian version of the lyrics is translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word. In this strategy, the translator uses more neutral word instead of complicated one (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012). The example of translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word used by the translator in Indonesian version can be seen as follows.

Data no. 6

**English** : ..... it gets better  
**version**  
**Indonesian** : Semua kan lebih baik  
**version**

The instance above shows that the word “*it*” is translated into “*semua*”. In this context, the word “*it*” refers to “*the situation which Raya (the main character) wants to achieve*”. However, in Indonesian version, the word “*it*” is translated into “*semua*” instead of “*itu*” or “*situasi itu*” in order to make a more neutral word. The other example of translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word is explained below.



Data no. 23

**English ver-** : We can start brand new  
**sion**

**Indonesian** : Buat hal baru  
**version**

The example above indicates that the word “*start*” is translated into word “*buat*”. In this context, the word “*start*” means “*to begin doing something*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). The word “*start*” refers to the main character who should forget the past incident and begin their new life. However, in Indonesian version, the word “*buat*” means “*make*” which is different in meaning, but more neutral in Indonesian language.

The next strategy is translation by cultural substitution. In this strategy, the translator replaces a culture-specific item which have a similar impact though the word does not have the same meaning (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012). The example of translation by cultural substitution is shown on the following instances.

Data no. 2

**English** : to Build or destroy  
**version**

**Indonesian** : bersatu kita teguh  
**version**

The example above shows that in Indonesian version, the translator does not translate the word “*to build*” to “*membangun*”. Instead of translating the words one by one, the translator use “*Bersatu kita teguh*” as a cultural substitution toward the word “*build*”. Another example of translation by cultural substitution found in the lyrics is explained on the following data.

Data no. 3

**English** : to Fight or to come  
**version** together

**Indonesian** : Atau tercerai dan run-  
**version** tuh

The instance above indicates that the translator tries to make a cultural substitu-

tion. The word “*fight*” means “*to use physical force to try to defeat another person or group of people*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). It also translated into “*berperang*” in Indonesian language. Here, instead of using “*berperang*”. the translator produces “*bercerai dan runtuh*” for translating “*fight*”.

Based on the data above, it can be inferred that the translator uses translation by cultural substitution for translating “*to Build or destroy, to Fight or to come together*” into “*bersatu kita teguh, Atau tercerai dan runtuh*”. In Indonesian context, the proverb “*Bersatu kita teguh, bercerai kita runtuh*” is popular for encouraging spirit of others (Herningsih et al., 2019). Therefore, instead of translating the words one by one, the translator uses popular and appropriate proverb in Indonesian context to translate the words.

The other strategy found in this study is translation by paraphrase using a related word. In this strategy, the translator replaces a word and change the word using a different form, but the words still relate one to another (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012) The instance of Translation by paraphrase using a related word is shown on the following example.

Data no. 12

**English ver-** : Can never tear us apart  
**sion**

**Indonesian** : Kita takkan terpisah  
**version**

The example above shows that the words “*can*” and “*never*” are translated into “*takkan*”. The word “*can*” is a modal verb which can be translated into “*bisa*” in Indonesian language. Furthermore, the word “*never*” means “*not at any time or not on any occasion*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) or “*tidak pernah*” in Indonesian language . Here, the translator uses translation by paraphrase using a related word strategy by translating the words “*can*” and “*never*” and paraphrases it into “*tak akan*” or “*takkan*” in Indonesian version. Another example of translation by

paraphrase using a related word is shown on the following data.

Data no. 19

**English :** There is never really  
**version** anything to fear  
**Indone-** : Buang semua rasa takut  
**sian ver-** di hati  
**sion**

The example above shows that the words “*anything*” and “*to fear*” are translated into “*semua*” and “*rasa takut*”. The word “*anything*” means “*any event, act or object whatever, or something*”, while the word “*semua*” means “*all*” in English. Moreover, the word “*to fear*” means “*to be worried or frightened that something bad might happen or might have happened*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), but the word “*rasa takut*” means “*fear*”. In this case, the translator uses translation by paraphrase using a related word strategy by translating the words “*anything*” and “*to fear*” and paraphrases it into “*semua*” and “*rasa takut*” in Indonesian version.

Differ with previous strategy, another strategy used in the translation of the lyrics is Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words. In this strategy, the translator replaces a word by modifying the meaning (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012) the instance of translation by paraphrase using unrelated words is shown on the following examples.

Data no. 11

**English :** Whatever brings us to-  
**version** gether  
**Indonesian :** Apapun yang kan ter-  
**version** jadi

The instance above shows that the verse “*Whatever brings us together*” is translated into “*Apapun yang kan terjadi*”. The phrasal verb “*bring us*” means “*to cause people to be friendly with each other*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In contrast, the verse “*Apapun yang kan terjadi*” should be translated literally into “*Whatever happens*”. Instead translating literal-

ly the English version, the translator choose to translate it by paraphrase using unrelated words. Therefore, although the meaning is slightly different, the verse “*Whatever brings us together*” is translated into “*Apapun yang kan terjadi*”. Another example of translation by paraphrase using unrelated words is explained on the following data.

Data no. 13

**English :** We become stronger  
**version** than ever  
**Indonesian :** Kekuatan kita adalah  
**version** saling percaya

The word “*strong(er)*” on the example above is an adjective means “*(more) powerful; having or using great force or control*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). However, the word “*kekua-tan*” is a noun. The word “*kekua-tan*” should be translated into “*strength*” which means “*the quality of being strong*”. Therefore, although the meaning is slightly different, the verse “*We become stronger than ever*” is translated into “*Kekuatan kita adalah saling percaya*”. The word “*stronger*” is translated and paraphrased using unrelated words

The other strategy found in this study is translation by omission. In this strategy, the translator omit translating the word as the information is not vital (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012) The instance of Translation by omission is shown on the following example.

Data no. 1

**English :** We have a choice  
**version**  
**Indonesian :** Pilih  
**version**

Based on the example above, it can be seen that words “*we*”, “*have*”, and “*a*” were omitted on the Indonesian version. The word “*we*” is a pronoun which means “*the word used by a speaker or writer in mentioning himself or herself together with other people*” or “*kita*” in Indonesian language (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).



In addition, the word “*have*” is a verb which means “*to hold or possess something which belongs to oneself or to someone else*” or “*mempunyai*” in Indonesian language (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). The word “*a*” is an indefinite article which means “*sebuah*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

Based on example on *data no.1*, it can be inferred that the translator does not translate “*we*”, “*have*”, and “*a*” and directly produce “*pilih*” in the Indonesian version. The other example of translation by omission found in the lyrics can be seen below.

Data no. 4

**English** : Love is a bridge and  
**version**

**Indonesian** : Dengan cinta  
**version**

Another instance above shows that the words “*is*”, “*a*”, “*bridge*” and “*and*” are omitted on the Indonesian version. The word “*is*” is a “*be*” which can be translated into “*merupakan*” in Indonesia language (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Moreover, the word “*a*” is an indefinite article which means “*sebuah*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

The word “*bridge*” is a noun which means “*a structure carrying a road or railway over a river*” or “*jembatan*” in Indonesian language (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Furthermore, the word “*and*” is a conjunction “*joining two statements, pieces of information etc*” which means “*dan*” in Indonesian language (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Based on example on *data no.4* above, it can be seen that the word which is translated is only word “*love*” that means “*cinta*”, while other words including “*is*”, “*a*”, “*bridge*” and “*and*” are omitted.

Based on the findings depicted on table 3 (see table 3. Frequency of Strategies), it can be inferred that translation by omission was the most frequent translation strategy found in this study. If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text

to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question (Baker, 2011).

As the most frequent translation strategy, there were the omissions of subject pronouns, object pronouns, coordinating conjunctions, adverbs and adjectives, noun or noun phrase, prepositional phrases, and repeated words or phrases. This finding confirms the theory proposed by Warachanan and Roongrattanakool (2015) that in the context of language, translation by omission is common. Although it seems so drastic, in fact it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts (Baker, 2011). Furthermore, omission is required to avoid redundancy and awkwardness and this strategy is particularly applied if the source language tends to be a redundant language (Nida, 1964; Tan, 2010).

Furthermore, there are two strategies which are not found in this study including Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation and Translation by illustration. The former one is a strategy dealing with a culture-specific items, modern concepts and buzz words (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012). When the word is a culture-specific items, the translator tends to use loan word with or without explanation. The later strategy, translation by illustration refers to strategy used by illustrating the word. This strategy is used when the word lacks an equivalent in the target language (Baker, 2011; Chifane, 2012).

The finding confirms the theory proposed by Warachanan and Roongrattanakool (2015) that there are not physical entity or culture-specific found in the lyrics, translation using a loan word and translation by illustration are not proper to be applied.

Furthermore, this study also con-

firms the findings of Onsomboon (2007) that the use of translation by illustration might be rare in general lyrics as it is used to convey the metaphorical senses or symbols. The illustration is needed for conveying the picture in the original text (Onsomboon, 2007). However, in translating a verse in a lyrics, a “singable” target text is more appropriate (Franzon, 2008)

## CONCLUSIONS

Song is type of written text in the same pattern as poetry. In translating song lyrics, it needs equivalence as one features in translation. Translation equivalence is always long to achieve since it depends on the text, the translator, and the receptors. When looking for equivalence at word level, translator may face problems. Therefore, they have to consider the strategies to deal with problems of equivalence at word level.

The result of the study shows the high occurrence of translation by omission in Indonesian version. In contrast, the translator does not implement translation by illustration and translation by using a loan word. Other strategies including translation by a more general word, translation by a more neutral word, translation by cultural substitution, translation by paraphrase using a related word, and translation by paraphrase using unrelated words are found in varied occurrence. This phenomenon happens for making a singable song in the target language.

Since the study only emphasized the translation strategies at word level in song lyrics without considering the musical factors of the songs, there should be a further study which analyses song lyrics by taking the musical factors into consideration. Furthermore, there should be a study of the translation theory and interpersonal meaning of SFL of song lyrics for a better

understanding.

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