

Translation Shifts in Taylor Swift’s Song Lyrics: An Analysis of Their Translation into Indonesian

Ni Komang Sri Diana Wati^{1*}, Made Detriasmata Saientisna², Ni Made Ayu Widiastuti³
¹⁻³English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Udayana, Denpasar, INDONESIA

Abstract

This study aims to identify the types of translation shifts in the Indonesian translations of Taylor Swift’s English song lyrics and to analyse the forms of equivalence applied. The data were collected from three selected songs— “Blank Space,” “Shake It Off,” and “You Belong with Me”—along with their Indonesian translations by digital content writers. A qualitative method with documentation technique was employed. Catford’s (1965) theory of translation shifts, including level and category shifts, and Nida’s (1964) theory of equivalence served as the theoretical framework. Comparative analysis between the source and target texts was conducted to classify translation shifts and assess the equivalence achieved. The study identified a total of 44 translation shifts, with structure shifts being the most frequent, while intra-system shifts were absent. The frequent occurrence of structural and level shifts is attributed to the grammatical differences between English and Indonesian. Dynamic equivalence was more dominant than formal correspondence, indicating that translators prioritized naturalness, clarity, and idiomatic expression, especially for expressive and figurative song lyrics. These findings demonstrate that translation strategies in lyrical texts require careful adaptation of syntax, semantics, and cultural nuances to maintain meaning and aesthetic impact. The study contributes to translation studies by clarifying how translation shifts and equivalence strategies function in creative texts.

Keywords: English-Indonesian translation, equivalence, song lyrics, translation shift

Article History

Received: June 17, 2025

Revised: August 27, 2025

Accepted: August 29, 2025

Published: September 1, 2025

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.35897/eltj.v5i2.1961>

*Correspondence

sriddiana@gmail.com

Citation in APA style: Wati, N. K. S. D., Saientisna, M. D., & Widiastuti, N. M. A. (2025). Translation shifts in Taylor Swift’s song lyrics: An analysis of their translation into Indonesian. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 5(2), 134-146. <https://doi.org/10.35897/eltj.v5i2.1961>

INTRODUCTION

Translation serves as a crucial bridge between languages and cultures, involving more than just replacing words from one language to another. Translation can be understood as a communicative process that emerges from cultural interaction, requiring sensitivity to context, structure, and linguistic differences to preserve meaning across languages (Ajunwa, as cited in Ifesieh, 2015). It involves replacing source language (SL) material with target language (TL) equivalents (Catford, 1965), a process in which shifts often occur when formal correspondence cannot be maintained. These shifts, described as structural or grammatical adjustments, are essential

for achieving naturalness and fluency in the TL (Ekasani et al., 2018). Moreover, as Nida (1964) emphasizes, meaning is not fixed in words but shaped by context, making such shifts particularly significant when translating metaphorical or culturally embedded expressions.

Building on these perspectives, translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but also an adaptation to cultural and contextual demands. This complexity is heightened in artistic texts, where style and expression carry equal weight with meaning. Translating song lyrics presents additional challenges, particularly due to structural and expressive differences between source and target languages (Ye et al., 2024). Lyric translation goes beyond lexical equivalence, requiring careful attention to meaning, tone, and form (Kalondu, 2019). It must also account for rhythm, poetic structure, and emotion (Diaga, 2021), while the expectations and experiences of the target audience should be prioritized (Low, 2003). Furthermore, musicality, message, and performance should be preserved (Franzon, 2014). These complexities underscore that lyric translation is particularly demanding when figurative language and cultural references are involved. Failure to convey both meaning and artistry may distort the listener's experience and diminish the cultural and emotional impact of the lyrics. Taylor Swift's songs, for instance, are widely recognized for their lyrical depth, addressing themes of self-discovery, love, alienation, and social critique (CBC Music, 2019). Given the grammatical differences between English and Indonesian, translation shifts are often unavoidable, making it crucial to investigate how these shifts operate to preserve meaning and tone in the target language (Putranto et al., 2024, p. 1065).

Several studies have addressed translation shifts across various text types. Imanda (2023) examined structural shifts in the English–Indonesian subtitles of the *Luca* movie, showing that translation shifts helped produce natural and fluent translations. However, this study was limited to audiovisual media, where space and time constraints strongly influence translation choices. Ekasani et al. (2018) explored translation shifts in a cookbook and provided useful insight into non-literary translation, but their data did not involve figurative or poetic expressions. Suharto (2004) points out that song lyrics differ from other text types because they carry symbolic meanings and rhythmic constraints, which require more creative translation strategies. Meanwhile, Mahdafiqya and Ekawati (2024) investigated figurative meaning in Taylor Swift's lyrics, but their study did not analyze translation shifts or equivalence. These previous studies demonstrate the importance of translation shift analysis but leave a gap in the context of song lyrics, especially those rich in figurative language. Unlike subtitles or non-literary texts, song lyrics demand a balance between meaning, rhythm, and emotion, making translation more complex. Therefore, this research differs by specifically analyzing translation shifts and equivalence in the Indonesian translations of Taylor Swift's lyrics. By focusing on both types of shifts (Catford, 1965) and equivalence strategies (Nida, 1964), this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how translators navigate the dual challenge of linguistic differences and artistic expression in song translation.

Based on this background, this study focuses on two main issues: the types of translation shifts that occur in Taylor Swift's English song lyrics when translated into Indonesian, and how these shifts relate to the use of equivalence in the translations. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to analyze the translation shifts found in the selected lyrics and to examine the strategies of equivalence applied to preserve meaning and naturalness in the target language.

This current study differs by analyzing translation shifts and equivalence in Taylor Swift's song lyrics translated from English into Indonesian. The selected songs—“*Blank Space*,” “*Shake It Off*,” and “*You Belong with Me*”—contain emotional narratives and figurative expressions that require careful examination. These songs also serve as effective tools in language learning (Anggreni, 2023), making them valuable data for translation studies. Unlike previous studies that focused on subtitles, cookbooks, or single types of shifts, this study explores multiple types of shifts (structure, class, unit, intra-system) based on Catford (1965), and examines how these shifts influence translation equivalence, based on Nida's (1964) theory.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design to investigate translation shifts and equivalence in the Indonesian translations of selected Taylor Swift song lyrics. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research emphasizes textual analysis and interpretation rather than numerical data. The data consist of three tracks by Taylor Swift—“*Blank Space*,” “*Shake It Off*,” and “*You Belong with Me*.” The official English lyrics serve as the source language (SL), while their Indonesian translations represent the target language (TL). Data were collected using the documentation technique, which involves gathering and examining written or recorded materials relevant to the object of study. This technique was chosen because it enables direct engagement with authentic texts, ensuring accuracy and consistency in identifying linguistic features for further analysis.

The data analysis procedure began with compiling the official English lyrics and their corresponding Indonesian translations. Each line of the lyrics was then numbered to facilitate a systematic comparison between the SL and TL. The analysis focused on linguistic structures such as noun phrases, verb phrases, and syntactic patterns to identify instances of translation shift. A comparative analysis was then applied to classify the shifts according to Catford's (1965) framework, which distinguishes between level shifts and category shifts. In addition, the study evaluates the types of equivalence used, drawing on Nida's (1964) concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence to assess how meaning and effect are preserved in the target language.

RESULTS

The analysis of the three selected songs—“*Blank Space*,” “*Shake It Off*,” and “*You Belong with Me*”—identified a total of 44 translation shifts. Structure shifts were the most frequent, indicating that grammatical patterns were often adjusted when rendering English lyrics into Indonesian. Level shifts and class shifts occurred less frequently, while unit shifts were the least common. No intra-system shifts were found in the data. These findings suggest that translators predominantly adapted syntactic structures to achieve natural and grammatically acceptable expressions in Indonesian, reflecting the significant structural differences between the two languages. By contrast, the minimal use of unit shifts and the absence of intra-system shifts indicate that such transformations were less relevant within the scope of the selected lyrics.

Translation Shift

Translation shift is defined as a departure from formal correspondence between the source and target languages. This means that during the translation process, structural or linguistic elements of the source text (ST) are adjusted to fit the norms of the target language. Catford (1965, p. 73) categorizes translation shifts into two main types of shifts and four types of category shift.

Level shift

In the Indonesian translation of Taylor Swift's lyrics, level shifts are evident in how English grammatical elements such as auxiliary verbs, tense, and aspect are rendered into lexical forms. According to Catford (1965), a level shift occurs when a grammatical item in the source language (SL) is translated into a lexical item in the target language (TL), or vice versa. These shifts typically arise due to structural differences between English and Indonesian, especially in expressing tense, aspect, and continuity.

- (1) SL : Saw you there and I thought
TL : Melihatmu di sana dan aku berpikir
(Blank Space – line 4)

In sample data (1), the verb “saw” is the past participle form of “see”, which indicating a completed action in the past. English uses grammatical tense, specifically the simple past, to mark this. However, the Indonesian translation uses the verb *melihat* (to see). Here, no explicit past time marker is present in the target language (TL), but the context implies a past action. This shift from a grammatical tense marker in English to a lexical or context-based temporal understanding in Indonesian illustrates a level shift, as defined by Catford (1965), where grammatical meaning in the SL is expressed through lexical or contextual elements in the TL.

- (2) SL : But I keep cruisin'
TL : Tapi aku akan tetap berkelana
(*Shake It Off* – line 9)

In sample data (2), the verb phrase “keep cruisin'” combines the present tense auxiliary “keep” with a present participle “cruising,” indicating a continuous action. This construction belongs to the grammatical category known as the progressive aspect, used to express ongoing activity. Meanwhile, in the target language (Indonesian), the phrase “*tetap berkelana*” contains the lexical items “*tetap*” (still/remain), which serve to convey the sense of continuity intention. The *-ing* form in “cruisin'” also carries the meaning of “sedang” (ongoing) in Indonesian. Although “berkelana” does not contain any explicit grammatical marker for continuous aspect, the meaning of ongoing action is still preserved through context and word choice. This translation illustrates a level shift from grammatical aspect in English (using “keep + V-ing”) to lexis in Indonesian (using “*tetap*” and a base verb).

- (3) SL : Has been here the whole time
TL : Selama ini telah di sini
(*You Belong With Me* – line 15)

In sample data (3), the source language (English), the phrase “has been” is in the present perfect tense, which combines the auxiliary verb “has” with the past participle “been.” This grammatical construction expresses an action that began in the past and continues up to the present or has present relevance. In the target language (Indonesian), the verb phrase is translated using the lexical word “telah,” which serves as a marker to indicate that something has already happened. Unlike English, Indonesian does not have a direct grammatical equivalent for the present perfect tense; instead, it relies on lexical markers such as “sudah” or “telah” to convey the sense of completion or past relevance. This translation illustrates a level shift from grammar (present perfect) in the source language to lexis (“telah”) in the target language.

Category Shift

Category shifts involve changes in grammatical categories or structures during translation. According to Catford (1965), these include structure shift, class shift, unit shift, and intra-system shift. These shifts are common in translating song lyrics, particularly those rich in idioms and informal expressions, as they help maintain naturalness and meaning across languages.

Category Shift - Structure Shift

Structure shift occurs when the grammatical arrangement of a sentence or phrase in the SL is altered in the TL. For example, English typically follows a modifier-head (MH) order, whereas Indonesian prefers head-modifier (HM). These shifts are necessary for producing grammatically natural and meaningful translations.

(4) SL : Got nothing in my brain

TL : Kepalaku tak ada isinya

(*Shake It Off* – line 2)

In sample data (4), a structure shift is evident between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). The English phrase *got nothing in my brain* follows the structure Aux V + NP (act as modifier) + PP (in + Poss Pron + N, as the head), where “got” acts as an auxiliary verb expressing possession, “nothing” is the noun phrase acting as the object, and “in my brain” is a prepositional phrase indicating location. In contrast, the Indonesian translation *kepalaku tak ada isinya* restructures the sentence significantly. It follows a pattern of N (as the head) + Poss Pron + Negator + V + N + Poss Pron (as the modifier). The possessive structure in the SL “my brain” becomes the subject in the TL (*kepalaku*), while “got nothing” is restructured into *tak ada isinya*, with *tak* serving as a negator, *ada* as the verb, and *isinya* as the object. This shift alters both syntactic order and grammatical roles: what is a prepositional phrase in the SL becomes the main subject in the TL. The original structure expressing possession and location is shifted into an existential sentence that is more natural in Indonesian.

(5) SL: And I know your favorite songs

TL : Dan aku tahu lagu-lagu kesukaanmu

(*You Belong With Me* - line 39)

In sample data (5), the phrase “your favorite songs” from the source language (SL) is translated into Indonesian as “lagu-lagu kesukaanmu.” In the SL, the structure follows *Possessive Pronoun +*

Adjective + Noun (“your” as possessive pronoun, “favorite” as adjective, and “songs” as noun), which is a typical English noun phrase structure where modifiers precede the head noun. In the target language (TL), the structure becomes *Noun (head) + Noun (modifier) + Possessive Pronoun*, where “lagu-lagu” (songs) is the head noun, followed by “kesukaan” (favorite) as a nominal modifier, and “-mu” (your) as a possessive suffix. This shift in modifier placement and structure illustrates a structure shift, where the modifier-head pattern in English changes to a head-modifier pattern in Indonesian. The transformation is necessary to conform to Indonesian syntactic norms, yet the meaning of the phrase remains intact, successfully conveying the idea of “your favorite songs” in a natural and culturally appropriate form.

Category Shift - Class Shift

Class shift occurs when a word in the SL is translated into a different grammatical class in the TL, such as a noun becoming a verb or an adjective.

- (6) SL: And the *fakers* gonna fake, fake, fake, fake, fake
TL: Dan yang *bermuka dua* akan terus bermuka dua
(*Shake It Off* – line 18)

In sample data (6), the word “fakers” in the SL is a noun, derived from the verb “fake” with the addition of the agentive suffix “-er,” indicating a person who performs the action of faking. Meanwhile, in the target language (Indonesian), the translator uses the phrase “*yang bermuka dua*”, which is a verb phrase functioning to describe someone who is deceitful or two-faced. The word “*bermuka dua*” literally means “to have two faces” and is an idiomatic expression in Indonesian. Here, the word class clearly shifts from a noun (fakers) in English to a verb (*bermuka dua*) in Indonesian. Rather than creating a literal noun equivalent (e.g., *pemalsu* or *penipu*), which might sound awkward or overly formal, the translator opts for a verb phrase that better conveys the nuance of the original.

- (7) SL: You're on the phone with your girlfriend
TL: Kau sedang bertelpon dengan kekasihmu
(*You Belong With Me* – line 1)

In sample data (7), the word “phone” in the source language (SL) is a noun, referring specifically to the device used for communication. The phrase “on the phone” in English meaning “engaged in a phone conversation.” In the target language (TL), this expression is translated as “*bertelpon*,” which is a verb based on *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)*. It is formed from the noun “*telepon*” by adding the verbal prefix “*ber-*,” which indicates an action or process. In this case, the act of using the phone. This is a clear example of class shift from noun (SL) to verb (TL) according to translation shift theory by Catford (1965).

Category Shift - Unit Shift

Unit shift, also known as rank shift, refers to a change in linguistic unit or level during the translation process such as translating a word into a phrase, or a phrase into a word. According to Catford (1965), this type of shift occurs when the translation equivalent of a unit at one rank in the source language (SL) corresponds to a unit at a different rank in the target language (TL).

- (8) SL : *Heartbreakers* gonna break, break, break, break, break

TL : *Para pematah hati tak akan berhenti mematahkan hati*
(*Shake It Off – line 18*)

In sample data (8), the source language (SL) contains the word “heartbreakers,” a plural noun formed by combining the noun “heart” and the verb “break” with the agentive suffix -er. It denotes individuals who break hearts or cause emotional pain. In the target language (TL), this term is translated as “*para pematah hati*,” which is a noun phrase in Indonesian. The phrase consists of “*para*” (a plural marker used for people), “*pematah*” (an agentive noun meaning ‘breaker’ derived from the root *patah*), and “*hati*” (meaning ‘heart’). While the SL uses a single compound word, the TL uses a more elaborated structure to convey the same meaning. This change demonstrates a unit shift from a lower to a higher linguistic rank, moving from a word to a phrase. The shift reflects a common strategy in Indonesian translation, where compounding or affixation in English is often rendered through phrases in the TL for clarity and naturalness.

(9) SL : Dreaming about the day when you *wake up*

TL : *Mimpikan hari saat kau terbangun.*
(*You Belong With Me - line 13*)

In sample data (9), the word “wake up” is a verb phrase in the source language (SL), translated as “*terbangun*” in the TL. “Wake up” is a phrasal verb composed of the base verb “wake” and the particle “up,” forming a two-word verbal expression that conveys the action of becoming awake. In the target language (TL), however, the equivalent meaning is expressed using the single verb “*terbangun*.” This word consists of the base verb “*bangun*” (wake) and the prefix “*ter-*,” which marks a passive or stative form in Indonesian. The shift from a multi-word phrasal verb in English to a single word in Indonesian represents a unit shift. Specifically, a shift from a higher linguistic unit (phrase) to a lower unit (word). Indonesian.

Category Shift – Intra-system Shift

Intra-system shift involves modifications within a particular linguistic system. It occurs when elements within a structured set of choices in one language are translated differently in another language, despite belonging to the same system. The options available within a linguistic system can vary significantly between languages. This difference often leads to shifts. Specifically, intra-system shifts occur when a term in the source language corresponds to a different term in the target language system. For example, a singular term in the source text might be translated as a plural term in the target text, or vice versa, despite both languages having similar number systems.

However, in the analysis of the three selected Taylor Swift song lyrics, there were no intra-system shifts found. Although both English and Indonesian have comparable grammatical systems such as number and definiteness, none of the translated lyrics exhibited a shift within these systems that would qualify as an intra-system shift. This case can happen due to the translator’s tendency to preserve the original grammatical form or the nature of the lyrics themselves, which often avoid explicit pluralization or structural contrasts where intra-system shifts would typically occur.

Equivalence

According to Nida (1964, p. 159), there are two types of equivalence: formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence consists of target language items that represent the closest equivalent of the word or phrase in the source language. However, finding formal equivalence between linguistic pairs is not always possible, especially when structural and cultural differences exist (Nida, 1964, p. 165-166). In such cases, translators rely on dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes naturalness and aims to produce a similar effect on the target reader as the original text did on its source reader.

Formal Equivalence

Formal equivalence refers to a type of equivalence in which the translation closely mirrors the lexical meaning of the source language (SL). According to Nida (1964, p. 165), F-E focuses on both the form and content of the message, aiming to reproduce the original text as faithfully as possible. This type of equivalence occurs when the target language (TL) maintains the original word classes, literal meaning, and vocabulary choices. Although achieving perfect formal correspondence is not always possible due to differences between English and Indonesian structure, some data still show a strong alignment between the SL and TL.

(1) SL : Saw

TL : *Melihat*

This sample data can be classified as formal equivalence because the words in the source language (SL) and target language (TL) are translated with direct correspondents. Both words belong to the same grammatical category, as verbs, which reflects an attempt to preserve grammatical units. However, “saw” is a past tense verb in English, while “melihat” is a base form in Indonesian. Despite this, the lexical meaning is maintained, within the limits of the TL grammar, “melihat” functions as a direct and consistent equivalent of “saw.” This reflects what Nida (1964) describes as formal equivalence: preserving grammatical units, consistency in word usage, and meaning in source context. Thus, despite differences in tense expression, this translation aligns with the core principles of formal equivalence.

(9) SL : Wake up

TL : *Terbangun*

This ample data demonstrates formal equivalence. The source language (SL) expression "wake up" and the target language (TL) translation "*terbangun*" both belong to the same grammatical category; verbs, and convey the same core meaning: the act of ceasing to sleep. Although “wake up” is a phrasal verb and “terbangun” is a single-word verb in Indonesian, the translation preserves the structural unit by maintaining verbal form and reflecting the original meaning in a direct manner. This aligns with Nida’s (1964) description of formal equivalence, which seeks to retain grammatical units, lexical consistency, and meanings based on the source context. "*Terbangun*" is a standard and direct equivalent often used for "wake up" in formal or neutral Indonesian. Therefore, this translation reflects formal equivalence, as it prioritizes consistency in form and content over naturalness or stylistic adaptation.

Dynamic Equivalence

Dynamic equivalence emphasizes the translation of meaning rather than the exact form, aiming to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original message did on the source audience. According to Nida (1964), dynamic equivalence allows for structural and lexical changes in the translation, so long as the message is communicated naturally and clearly in the target language. This approach is especially relevant in translating song lyrics, where idiomatic expressions and figurative language often require the translator to adapt the original text for greater clarity and impact in the target language.

(2) SL : Keep cruisin'

TL : *Tetap berkelana*

The phrase “*Keep cruisin'*” translated as “*Tetap berkelana*” is a strong example of dynamic equivalence. In the source language (SL), “*cruisin'*” is the informal, contracted form of “*cruising*”, the present participle (-ing form) of “*cruise*”, which denotes continuous action. The base verb “*cruise*” often refers to a smooth, leisurely journey, usually by ship. A literal or formal translation would be “*terus berlayar*”, maintaining the imagery of sailing. However, the translator chose “*berkelana*”, meaning *to roam or wander*, which shifts the focus from literal sea travel to a more metaphorical or emotional journey. This adjustment reflects the song's overall theme of carefree freedom and emotional movement. Additionally, the use of “*tetap*” to reflect the continuous aspect of the -ing form ensures the sense of ongoing action is maintained. This translation moves beyond direct correspondence to prioritize mood, tone, and cultural resonance, making it a clear case of dynamic equivalence.

(2) SL : Has been

TL : *Telah*

This sample data exemplifies dynamic equivalence, where the translation prioritizes conveying the intended meaning naturally in the target language rather than preserving the exact structure of the source. The English sentence “*Has been here the whole time*” uses the present perfect tense, indicating a continuous presence up to the present moment. In the target language, this is rendered as “*Selama ini telah di sini*”, which, while not structurally identical, successfully conveys the same temporal meaning. The auxiliary verb phrase “*has been*” is translated into “*telah*”, and the locative phrase “*here*” becomes “*di sini*”. The Indonesian translation omits a direct equivalent of “*been*” (e.g., *berada*), but this omission is a deliberate simplification that aligns with natural Indonesian phrasing. A more literal translation like “*telah berada di sini selama ini*” might be grammatically correct but sound overly stiff or formal in lyrical or conversational Indonesian. By restructuring the sentence, the translator maintains fluency and emotional tone, capturing the enduring presence implied in the original. This approach reflects dynamic equivalence, as it emphasizes the communicative effect and natural expression over rigid word-for-word matching.

(3) SL : Got nothing in my brain

TL : *Kepalaku tak ada isinya*

Sample data (4) exemplifies dynamic equivalence. The original English sentence is colloquial

and informal, using a contracted form “got” and a casual phrase “in my brain.” Rather than translating it word-for-word, the translator restructures the sentence into a natural and meaningful Indonesian equivalent: *Kepalaku tak ada isinya* (literally: “my head has nothing inside”). This Indonesian version is idiomatic and sounds natural to native speakers, even though it shifts away from the exact structure of the SL. The choice to prioritize clarity and naturalness over form shows that the translator aimed for dynamic equivalence, focusing on how the message is best conveyed in the TL rather than adhering strictly to the grammatical form of the SL.

(4) SL: Your favorite songs

TL : *Lagu-lagu kesukaanmu*

The phrase *Your favorite songs* is translated into Indonesian as *Lagu-lagu kesukaanmu*, which demonstrates a dynamic equivalence approach. While the original English structure follows a possessive adjective (“your”) + adjective (“favorite”) + noun (“songs”), Indonesian grammar places the possessive suffix *-mu* at the end and often uses a reduplicated noun (*lagu-lagu*) to indicate plurality. Additionally, the word *kesukaan* is a noun form meaning “favorite” or “preference,” rather than a direct adjective equivalent. This translation adjusts the word order and class slightly to match the natural and grammatically correct expression in Indonesian. Although the structure changes, the overall meaning remains equivalent, reflecting Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence—prioritizing clarity, naturalness, and cultural-linguistic norms in the target language.

(5) SL : *Fakers*

TL : *Bermuka dua*

Sample data (6) reflects dynamic equivalence, as it prioritizes the meaning and impact over formal structure. The word *fakers* in the source language is a noun, referring to people who pretend or deceive. In contrast, the target language renders it as *bermuka dua*, an idiomatic verb phrase in Indonesian that literally means “to have two faces,” and is commonly used to describe hypocritical or deceitful behavior. Here, the shift from a noun to a verb phrase is a clear example of grammatical restructuring, a key feature of dynamic equivalence. The translator intentionally avoids a literal or morphological translation (e.g., *pemalsu* or *penipu*) and instead chooses a culturally resonant expression that better conveys the connotative meaning and emotional weight of the original. Overall, this translation emphasizes naturalness and relevance in the target language, demonstrating how dynamic equivalence allows for greater flexibility in form to preserve the intended effect of the message.

(6) SL : *Phone*

TL : *Bertelpon*

The English noun “Phone” is translated into Indonesian as “Bertelpon,” which actually functions as a verb, meaning “to make a phone call” or “talk on the phone.” This translation shifts the word class from a noun to a verb, which means it does not follow formal equivalence—where a noun would ideally be translated by a noun (e.g., *telepon*). Instead, this reflects a dynamic equivalence strategy, aiming to capture the contextual meaning or usage of the word rather than its grammatical form. If the intent was to translate “phone” as an object, the accurate literal translation

would be “*telepon.*”

(8) SL : Heartbreakers

TL : *Para pematah hati*

This sample data demonstrates dynamic equivalence, where the focus is on conveying the intended meaning naturally and idiomatically in the target language rather than preserving a direct, structural correspondence. The English word “*heartbreakers*” is a plural noun formed by compounding “*heart*” and “*breakers*”, referring to people who cause emotional pain or romantic disappointment. In the translation, it becomes “*para pematah hati*”, which breaks the compound into a noun phrase: “*pematah*” (breaker) and “*hati*” (heart), with the plural marker “*para*” to indicate a group of people. Although the morphological structure differs—transforming a compound noun into a noun phrase—the semantic content remains intact. This restructuring ensures the translation resonates naturally with Indonesian readers and retains the expressive weight of the original. The use of “*para*” adds nuance and formality appropriate in the context of lyrics or poetic language. Therefore, this translation prioritizes meaning and naturalness over form, making it a clear example of dynamic equivalence.

DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that structure shifts were the most frequent, followed by level, class, and unit shifts, with no intra-system shifts. This pattern highlights how grammatical and structural differences between English and Indonesian influence translators’ choices, confirming Catford’s (1965) assertion that translation shifts are often unavoidable when formal correspondence cannot be maintained. Moreover, the dominance of dynamic equivalence indicates that translators prioritized naturalness and idiomatic expression over strict formal correspondence, aligning with Nida’s (1964) theory that translation should consider context and effect, particularly for figurative or expressive texts like song lyrics.

The prominence of structure and level shifts reflects the inherent differences in tense, aspect, and syntactic arrangement between the two languages. For instance, English tense markers such as the simple past (“saw”) or present perfect (“has been”) were frequently rendered in Indonesian using lexical or contextual elements rather than explicit grammatical forms, illustrating level shifts. Compared to previous studies on non-literary texts, such as Ekasani, Irawan, and Purwanti (2018) on cookbooks and Imanda (2023) on movie subtitles, this study demonstrates that translating song lyrics requires additional attention to rhythm, rhyme, and emotional impact. Dynamic equivalence strategies proved essential for preserving metaphorical meaning and aesthetic qualities, supporting findings by Ye, Zhang, and Li (2024) and Diaga (2021) on artistic translation.

Theoretically, the study reinforces Catford’s (1965) framework and extends its application to creative texts, while also providing empirical support for Nida’s (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence. Practically, the findings highlight the importance for translators and language educators to integrate both linguistic and cultural sensitivity when translating lyrics. Effective translation involves adapting syntax, semantics, and cultural nuances to maintain both meaning and expressive effect.

Finally, this research contributes to translation studies by clarifying how translation shifts and equivalence strategies function in lyrical texts, a less-explored domain compared to audiovisual or literary translation. Future studies could examine other song genres, languages, or cultural contexts to further explore adaptive strategies in artistic translation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that translation shifts are not merely technical adjustments but essential strategies for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps in song translation. By examining the Indonesian translations of Taylor Swift's lyrics, the research highlights how structure shifts dominate due to grammatical differences between English and Indonesian, while the frequent use of dynamic equivalence reflects the translators' effort to preserve meaning, tone, and naturalness for the target audience.

The findings underscore the importance of investigating song lyrics as a distinct text type, where poetic form, rhythm, and figurative meaning intensify the complexity of translation. This contributes to translation studies by showing how Catford's theory of shifts and Nida's theory of equivalence can be applied to creative texts, not just to prose or audiovisual materials.

Nevertheless, the study is limited to three songs and relies on written translations without considering performability or singability. Future research could expand the dataset, explore audience reception, or examine how translation strategies affect the musicality and performance aspects of lyrics. Such studies would provide a fuller picture of how meaning, artistry, and cultural resonance are negotiated in song translation.

REFERENCES

- Anggreni, K., et al. 2023. Improving the Vocabulary Mastery and Listening Skill at Junior High School Using Taylor Swift's Songs. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(1), 139-156.
- Catford, J.C. 1965. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. London: Oxford University Press.
- CBC Music. 2019. *Taylor Swift's songwriting: how the star's music has changed, for better or worse*. [WWW Document]. URL [www.cbc.ca:https://www.cbc.ca/music/taylor-swift-s-songwriting-how-the-star-s-music-has-changed-for-better-or-worse-1.5246984](https://www.cbc.ca/music/taylor-swift-s-songwriting-how-the-star-s-music-has-changed-for-better-or-worse-1.5246984) (accessed 16.5.2025)
- Diaga, H. D. 2021. Figurative Language Found in Popular Songs of Secondhand Serenade. *Philosophica: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya*, 4(1), 35-42.
- Ekasani, K. A., et al. 2018. Category Shifts in the Translation of Verb Phrases in English Cookbook into Indonesian. *International Journal of Linguistics Literature & Translation*, 1(4), 290397. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2018.1.4.10>
- Franzon, J. 2014. Choices in Song Translation: Singability in Print, Subtitles and Sung Performance. *The Translator*, 14(2).
- Ifesieh, E. C. 2015. Semantic Translation as Panacea to Misinformation in Literary Translation. *US-China Foreign Language*, 628-639.
- Imanda, R. 2023. *The Translation Shift Analysis in the "Luca" Movie*. Darussalam: Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh.
- Kendong, F. A., Daud, A. S., & Joharry, A. 2023. *A Corpus-driven analysis of Taylor Swift's song*

- lyrics. *International Journal of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics*, 7(2), 59-82.
- Kalonde, M., 2019. Strategies Used in the Reformulation of Lyrics: *an Analysis of Kenyan Gospel Kiswahili Covers*. Doctoral dissertation; University of Nairobi.
- Low, P. 2003. Singable translations of songs. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 11(2), 87-103.
- Mahdafiqya, N., & Ekawati, A. D. 2024. Unveiling Figurative Meaning: In-Depth Investigation into Taylor Swift's Song 'Cruel Summer'. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 12(2), 2378-2391.
- Nida, E., 1964. *Towards a Science of Translating*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Putranto, K. N., et al. 2024. Translation Shift of Noun Phrases in English-Indonesian Translation of Song Lyric Entitled Fix You By Coldplay. *Project: Professional Journal of English Education*, 7 (5), 1063-1073.
- Saputra, G. B. A. 2023. *Lirik dan Makna Lagu 'Blank Space' - Taylor Swift, National Anthem Cegil Dunia!* [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.sonora.id/read/423930789/lirik-dan-makna-lagu-blank-space-taylor-swift-national-anthem-cegil-dunia> (accessed 16.3.2025)
- Sheptiany, C. 2023. *Lirik Lagu dan Terjemahan Shake it Off - Taylor Swift* [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.sonora.id/read/423860836/lirik-lagu-dan-terjemahan-shake-it-off-taylor-swift> (accessed 6.2.2025)
- Suharto, S. 2004. Music And Language: A Stress Analysis of English Song Lyrics. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 5(3).
- Swift, T., 2008. You Belong With Me, Fearless.
- Swift, T., 2014. Blank Space, 1989.
- Swift, T., 2014. Shake It Off, 1989.
- Ye, Z., Li, J., Xu, R., 2024. Sing it, Narrate it: Quality Musical Lyrics Translation. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2410.22066*.
- Yustika, G. 2023. *Lirik You Belong with Me Karya Taylor Swift dan Terjemahan!* [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.orami.co.id/magazine/lirik-you-belong-with-me> (accessed 16.3.2025)