

English-Indonesian Translation Strategies in Children's Songs

Tiffani Rizki Putri Baihaqi^{1*}, Agus Subiyanto²

¹Universitas Diponegoro,
Jl. Prof. Soedarto, Tembalang, Kec. Tembalang, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah
50275, INDONESIA

²Universitas Diponegoro,
Jl. Prof. Soedarto, Tembalang, Kec. Tembalang, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah
50275, INDONESIA

*Corresponding Author: tiffanirpb@gmail.com

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Abstract: Producing a singable translated song, meaning that the words fit the melody, is far from easy because it involves not only syllables, rhymes, and melody of the original song, but also the distinct cultures from both the Source Text (ST) and the Target Text (TT). Through bilingual songs, children can learn their second language more easily and in a fun way. This research aims to discover the strategy of children's songs translation from English to Indonesian so that they are acceptable, singable, and most importantly, they convey the same messages. Four English children's songs along with their Indonesian version of the same titles were analysed using descriptive qualitative methods, with random sampling, by juxtaposing and scrutinizing the lines to find out whether or not there are omissions, additions, and paraphrases in the translation process on the ST and TT. The results showed that there are omissions, additions, and paraphrases in translating those eight children's songs. Despite having different research objects, the results were similar to the previous research, thus supporting the theories and findings of those research.

Keywords: song, translation, English-Indonesian translation, children

1. Introduction

Children's songs are closely related to children's growth. According to Gudmundsdottir (2019), babies and young children give strong reactions to music as songs can instantly attract their attention. In addition, songs can involve physical reactions such as moving through the rhymes, dancing according to the music, and showing positive emotional behavior. Children's songs can help them know themselves and their surroundings better because those songs have themes that are related to their life and their environment (Wadiyo, 2015). Most importantly, considering the very limited attention span of children, songs can help hook their attention.

*Corresponding author: tiffanirpb@gmail.com

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During the digital era, anything can be accessed from anywhere as borders between nations have vanished. Unavoidably, songs are translated to more languages than ever, whether in the form of subtitles or singable translations. The sole main purpose of a translator in producing a translation is to convey the same message or meaning in the target language text as proposed by the author of the source language (Sharma, 2015). In translating songs, translators must obey certain rules that are not limited to linguistic rules, but also cultural context in general (Eco, 2001). Also, it is essential for the TT to follow the music in every detail possible (Åkerström, 2009). Besides having the assistance from dictionaries and books on synonyms, a translator must possess good association skills, a wide range of vocabulary knowledge, and wordplay expertise.

1.1 Songs translations

Substantially, song lyrics are a language in its formulation that is inseparable from the rules of music, such as melody, rhythm, as well as the harmony of the song (Suharto & Subroto, 2014). Further, they pointed out that besides being beautiful, song lyrics must harmonise to the beauty of the music. It then leads to the main problem in song translation, which is how to balance certain major criteria which are often the opposite (Low, 2005). There are five ‘events’ a translator must pass to create an ‘appropriate’ translated song, namely singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme. Furthermore, it is mentioned that those five are unlike, forcing the translators to face a great challenge to not abandon any of those.

1.2 Previous studies

Translation of songs is very intriguing to be studied in the area of applied linguistics, specifically translation fields. The latest study on song translation is conducted by Hidayati (2020), as she explored the two Indonesian pop songs translated into English. The results show that the translated version emphasized more on the target language yet still matching the lyrics to the tone and melody of the songs. Interestingly, there is a shift of pronouns because the original songs are sung by men, and the translated ones are by women.

Moreover, Laurer (2019) conducted research on eight German and English songs to discover metaphasis, paraphrases, and additions used in the translation by applying Franzon’s approximation approach, as well as how the three contribute to producing a TT. The results are that the translators respected and were loyal to the ST, considering 60% of the directly translated lyrics or using oblique translation. The present research, however, is different from the aforementioned research. Focusing on different objects, which are children’s songs in Indonesian and English, and different theories, this research explores more on the words and syllables count, as well as the additions and omissions in the translation process.

Furthermore, Stopar (2016) discussed the analysis of the translation of a singable text, by presenting a linguistic analysis of the twenty-three songs in the musical text “Mamma Mia!” in Slovenian and English. The results show that the translators rendered the songs faithfully by still maintaining the words in the ST, paraphrasing, and adding and omitting words, as well as maintaining or building the poetic features of the original songs. Additionally, the research reveals the challenges in song translation due to the involvement of both linguistic analysis and musicology theories. On the other hand, the present research puts forward not only different songs, but also those in different languages to discover novel results and enrich the findings within the topic of song translations.

Suharto and Subroto (2014) explored the issue of the equivalence of translated ecclesial song lyrics and their impact on church songs. Employing music, language, and interdisciplinary approach, the research observed five purposively chosen songs: “He’s Everything to Me”, “Jesus, Revealed in Me”, “Send Out Thy Light”, “This I Know”, and, “No, Not One.” The research used questionnaires and content analysis data collection techniques. The results showed that most of the lines that are located in the same bars were equivalently translated (27.07%). Additionally, the beautiful lyrics were not

equivalently translated (61.70%). Lastly, it was found that the differences of structure caused the missing words and wrong choice of words in the translated songs. Despite having the same languages of the ST and TT, the present research focuses on children's songs.

2. Materials and Methods

In conducting this research, there are some materials and methods needed in order to present valid and comprehensive results. The materials that are analysed and methods that are applied are explained thoroughly in the following parts.

2.1 Materials

The primary data source of this research are four English children's songs and their Indonesian translation. The songs chosen are those commonly used in Indonesian kindergarten or daycare, making them worth studying since they have significance in Indonesian kids' formal and informal education. The songs are:

	English Songs	Indonesian Translation Version
1	If You're Happy and You Know It	Kalau Kau Suka Hati
2	Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes	Kepala, Pundak, Lutut, Kaki
3	ABC Song	Lagu ABC
4	Rain-rain Go Away	Hujan-hujan Pergilah

If You're Happy and You Know It, or in Indonesian it is *Kalau Kau Suka Hati*, is a popular song that tells about expressing happiness by clapping hands, stomping feet, and shouting 'hooray!' Meanwhile, the song Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes, or *Kepala, Pundak, Lutut, Kaki*, is a song that is sung with movements of touching the body parts mentioned. In ABC Song, or *Lagu ABC* in Indonesian, is a song with the same melody as the song Twinkle-twinkle Little Star. It is a song that helps children recite the alphabet. Lastly, Rain-rain Go Away, or in Indonesia it is *Hujan-hujan Pergilah*, is a song about disappointment of children who cannot play outside due to the rain.

2.2 Methods

To obtain the answer of the proposed research questions, a descriptive qualitative method was applied in this research. According to Kumar (2011), descriptive qualitative research is a study that spotlights a topic on a situation, problem, phenomenon, provides information, or describes attitudes towards an issue using a description, rather than observing relationships or associations. Additionally, descriptive research is a method that systematically and accurately explains existing phenomena to thoroughly discover the answers to the designated research questions (Atmowardoyo, 2018). After gathering the data, which is in the form of children's song lyrics, the researchers put them in tables so that it is easier to compare. After mastering the translation strategy theory, the next step was identifying the omissions, additions, and paraphrases within the process of translation. Finally, the results were described by descriptively drawing conclusions on the translation strategies and elaborated it through some examples stated in the results and discussions.

3. Results and Discussion

From a total of eight children's songs in English and Indonesian, it was found that omissions, additions, and paraphrases are applied during the translation process. The detailed explanations are elaborated in the following parts.

3.1 Omissions in the translated text

Not to be confused with paraphrase, this research refers to Åkerström's idea which stated that "when words were added or omitted and the translation was very different from the source text, then it was concluded that it was a case of paraphrase rather than an addition or omission" (Åkerström, 2009). Omissions, therefore, is defined as partial deletion of words in order to achieve a desirable translation. In addition, according to Sharma (2015), omission is defined as dropping of words that usually did not occur or when there is no equivalent word in the target culture.

Amongst the four songs, there is only one song, which is "If You're Happy and You Know It", that did not undergo omission of the ST. Meanwhile, there are a total of eight omissions found in Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes; ABC Song; and Rain-rain Go Away. The examples below illustrate omission strategy in the other three songs.

(1) ST : Head, shoulders, knees and toes

Knees and toes

TT : Kepala, pundak, lutut, kaki,

Lutut, kaki

(BT: Head, shoulders, knees, legs, knees, legs)

In (1), the translator omitted the word 'and' (BT: dan) in the song *Kepala, Pundak, Lutut, Kaki*. This is because if the words 'dan' in both lines are maintained in the TT, the lyrics would not match the song. Yet, even though the word is omitted, the meaning and messages are not altered because the highlight of the song is body parts, which are mentioned in the line equally.

(2) ST : Come again another day

TT : Datanglah lain hari

(BT: Come another day)

In (2), the word 'again' (BT: lagi) in *Hujan-hujan Pergilah* is omitted. It is done to match the number of syllables in the TT, which is seven syllables. The same number of syllables is one of the indications that the song in ST is singable. Similar to (1), the omission of the word 'again' does not change the meaning of the song, as that lyrics in ST still conveys the same hopeful feeling of a delayed rain.

(3) ST : W and X

TT : W X

In (3), there is an omission of 'and' (BT: dan) in the translation of ABC Song to *Lagu ABC*. This has something to do with the melody of the song. In the same melody, the English line 'W and X' equals 'W X Y' in Indonesian.

3.2 Additions in the translated text

Addition strategy means inserting additional words in order to achieve a desirable translation. The appropriate application of addition brings local transformation and adds clarity (Sharma, 2015). Furthermore, Van Dijk (1988) argues that additions are often used to give more information regarding historical background, earlier events, context, and therefore can function as explanation.

Amongst the four songs, the only one that applied addition is ABC Song. The following example (4) explains the strategy in detail:

(4) ST : Y and Zee

TT : Y dan juga Z

(BT: Y and also Z)

The translated version of the song has one additional word *juga* (BT: also). This is connected to the previous example (3), that the line in Indonesia with the same melody is actually *dan juga Z* because the word *Y* is sung in the line before it. This line difference influences the translation process, which results in the application of addition.

3.3 Use of paraphrase

Paraphrase is defined as “to express what somebody has said or written using different words, especially in order to make it easier to understand” (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2021). Similarly, Åkerström (2019) implied that one example of paraphrase in song translation is to express what is written or sung in a different way. Paraphrase is the most frequently used strategy in translation of the four English children’s songs to the Indonesian versions.

All four songs in this research applied this strategy. This is similar to the purpose of paraphrase, which is mentioned earlier in the definition, that is to make the sentences easier to comprehend. Children’s songs, after all, are a way to teach children new vocabularies in a more fun and easier way. The more thorough discussion of the findings are written in the examples below.

(5) ST: If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet

TT : Kalau kau suka hati, injak bumi

(BT: If you're happy, step on the earth)

In the song If You're Happy and You Know It, the translation strategy used is paraphrase. One example is in (5) above, which shows a shift of words, but still contains the same meaning in the TT. The line ‘stomp your feet’, if done physically, is the same as ‘*injak bumi.*’ Therefore, the paraphrase strategy applied in this song can make the TT singable and still has the same movement that the children can do.

(6) ST : Next time won't you sing with me?

TT : Menyanyilah bersamaku

(BT: Sing with me)

The above example from the ABC Song depicts the use of paraphrase strategy. There is an alteration of the line, which is from interrogative to affirmative sentence, that also changes the tone of the sentence. The word ‘will not’, seen through modality aspects, is categorised as an inclination in which the speaker tends to command, suggest, demand or give advice. Despite the different form of sentence, TT and ST have the same function which demands the listener to do something again. Another reason for the translator to paraphrase this line is to match it with the melody of the song, so it is singable.

3.4 Word-for-word

Word-for-word translation strategy is defined as translating the words in their literal meaning, using the exact translation of each word in the sentence. This strategy is used in ABC Song and Rain-rain Go Away and is elaborated in the following examples. Having the same alphabet, what differs the English and Indonesian ABC Song lyrics is the pronunciation of the letters.

(7) ST : A-B-C-D-E-F-G

TT : A-B-C-D-E-F-G

Having the same alphabet, what differs the English and Indonesian ABC Song lyrics is the pronunciation of the letters. In (7), the word-per-word translation strategy is clearly seen on the same alphabet A-B-C-D-E-F-G in both languages. Additionally, this strategy keeps the TT singable.

(8) ST : Rain, rain go away

TT : Hujan hujan pergilah

(BT: Rain, rain go away)

In (8), from the song Rain-rain Go Away, the strategy used is word-per-word. The word ‘rain’ is directly translated to ‘*hujan*’ whilst ‘go away’ is ‘*pergilah*’ in Indonesian. The suffix *-lah* in *pergilah* emphasizes the sentence, making it imperative, asking the rain to go on that instant. Besides having the same words, the TT is also acceptable as it conveys the same meaning, and is singable.

Table 1: The Translation Strategies in the Eight EN-ID Children’s Songs

Item	Strategy	Token	Percentage
1	Paraphrase	18	51.4%
2	Omission	9	25.8%
3	Word-per-word	7	20.0%
4	Addition	1	2.8%
		Total	100%

Table 1 presents the summary of each translation strategy applied in the eight songs. Unlike the previous research by Laurer in 2019, this research found that the most frequently used strategy in translating English to Indonesian Children’s Songs is paraphrase strategy, not direct translation or word-per-word. This is arguably not only because the translator must arrange new words so it can match the melody of the song, but also and to adjust it to children’s simple or communicative language.

4. Conclusion

From the total of 36 lines on the songs, 18 of them (50%) applied paraphrase strategy, making it the most frequently used strategy in translating EN-ID children’s songs. It is followed by omission (25.8%), word-per-word (20%) and addition (2.8%). Paraphrase is the most frequently used translation strategy because the main audience of the songs are children, meaning that the translator must choose words that are communicative and simple so they can recite the lyrics better and easier.

Despite revealing the translation strategies in the eight songs, further elaboration on this topic is needed. Further research can explore different songs, or add more data, as well as observe different language translation other than English to Indonesian.

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