

THE ART OF METAPHOR TRANSLATION: TAYLOR SWIFT'S 'WILLOW' IN INDONESIAN

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Abstract

This research aims to help listeners understand the meaning of the lyrics of "Willow" by Taylor Swift through metaphor translation strategies from English to Indonesian. The challenges faced include the numerous figurative meanings that are difficult to translate literally, necessitating metaphor translation strategies to convey the emotional nuances contained in the lyrics. The research method used is qualitative descriptive, involving the collection and recording of data from the lyrics of "Willow." The results indicate that among the five metaphor translation strategies proposed by Larson (1984), there are several strategies that are most suitable for use, particularly translating metaphors into similes. This aims to ensure that the emotional message and the deep meaning implied in the song can be effectively conveyed to Indonesian listeners.

Keywords: translation strategy of metaphors, figurative meaning, song lyrics, Taylor Swift, translation, emotional nuances.

Introduction

Jacques Derrida, in *Acts of Literature* (2017), suggests that literature provides a special place to go beyond normal philosophical rules, allowing us to explore meaning without strict limits. Śliwa and Santos (2019) point out that translating metaphors is difficult because it requires good language skills and understanding of different cultures to share the meaning well. Because of this, literature, especially song lyrics, can show us the complex parts of things like metaphors. Metaphors aren't just language tools; they also help connect cultures and allow us to think across languages. So, translation is more than just moving meaning; it's also about creating chances for different cultures to talk to each other (Gentzler, 2021).

Songs are a common art form that combines rhythm and harmony to express feelings and deep ideas. Lyrics are important because they show the unique personality of the person who wrote them. Johanis and Pendit (2022) say that lyrics are "the power of a song that reflects the diverse character according to its author" (p. 51). As a way to communicate, lyrics can deliver a message more effectively than just telling a story.

Putri and Gusthini (2022), based on Widhyatama (2012), note that different kinds of music, like blues, jazz, pop, rock, and funk, show the rich culture and emotions in music. Each type of music has its own style, including melody, rhythm, and themes, often made better by using metaphors. Metaphors, according to Johanis and Pendit (2022), not only add more emotion but also help listeners understand the hidden meanings in a song.

When it comes to emotions, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) say that metaphors often act like "projections from one conceptual domain to another," showing how language changes to reflect emotions in different cultures. Hutagaol (2022) explains that metaphors help listeners understand complex messages better than literal words. The word "metaphor" comes from Greek words meaning "to carry beyond," and it's a language tool that moves meaning from one area to another. In a song, Hutagaol (2022) believes that "the meaning of a metaphor significantly impacts both interpretation and its artistic aspect" (p. 2). Aristotle, as mentioned in *What is Literature for?* (2024), described metaphors as ways to make abstract ideas more real by using comparisons.

Taylor Swift, born on December 13, 1989, in Pennsylvania, is known as a very influential singer-songwriter. Since her first album in 2006, she has consistently created songs full of emotion and rich in metaphors. Albums like *Folklore* and *Evermore*, including the song "Willow," show her skill in using nature symbols and deep metaphors to describe personal experiences.

The lyrics of "Willow" describe an emotional journey about love, longing, and deep connection. Written and performed by Taylor Swift on the *Evermore* album, the song uses different metaphors and nature symbols to share the idea of inseparable love. Examples include a river that keeps flowing and a willow tree that represents flexibility in facing life's challenges. Swift's lyrics weave together deep meaning, creating a sad mood while still holding onto hope.

Translating the lyrics of "Willow" into Indonesian requires not only language skills but also feeling the emotions and meanings in each metaphor. Taylor Swift is famous for her personal and poetic writing style, using unique metaphors based on Western culture. Because of this, translating these lyrics needs creativity to keep the original feeling of the song.

The album *Evermore*, including the song "Willow," released in December 2020, continues the themes of the previous album, *Folklore*. The song reflects Swift's emotional thoughts after a time of reflection. The use of metaphors, like the willow tree and river, is key to creating the poetic and thoughtful mood of the song.

Research by Astuti et al. (2024) shows that the ways to translate metaphors depend on the context and type of metaphor, mainly focusing on keeping the artistic details and original meaning. Similarly, Arditya Sasmi et al. (2024) show that conceptual metaphors are often used in song lyrics to express complex emotions, especially about love.

Translating song lyrics like "Willow" needs more than just language ability; it needs a full understanding of the culture and emotions in the text. Larson (1998) says that translation has three main steps: understanding the original text, analyzing its meaning,

and re-expressing the same message in the new language while keeping the cultural context. The biggest challenge in translation is sharing the meaning without losing the beauty or emotional impact of the original text.

However, translating metaphors is uniquely challenging because of cultural differences between the original and target languages (Putri & Gusthini, 2022). This challenge requires translators to be creative in finding the right equivalents. Johanis and Pendit (2022) also point out that translating song lyrics needs an understanding of musical elements to keep their emotional effect. Differences in language structure can often prevent keeping the original meaning of the song.

Larson (1998: 278-279) divides metaphor translation strategies into five methods: (1) using the same metaphor in the new language; (2) changing the metaphor into a simile; (3) using a different metaphor in the new language that has a similar meaning; (4) using the same metaphor in the new language and explaining its meaning; and (5) replacing the metaphor with a non-metaphorical expression. These strategies are useful in translating the complex metaphors in "Willow" to keep its original art and emotions. Larson (1998) states that "topics, images, points of similarity, and non-figurative meanings must all be provided" (p. 273). Catford (1964) adds that translation changes the text from the original language to the new language, often making adjustments to ensure the message is relevant in the new culture. This helps translators find matches between the original and new languages without losing the message.

By studying the song lyrics, Taylor Swift's life, and the problems in translating metaphors, this study aims to find out how the metaphors in "Willow" can be translated accurately, both in language and emotion, without losing their artistic value.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This means it aims to understand things by giving detailed, fact-based descriptions. This approach works well for looking closely at the meaning and background of the chosen text. Because this research is qualitative, it focuses on a detailed analysis of the text, rather than representing a larger

group statistically. The main thing being studied is the song "Willow," by Taylor Swift, and its lyrics.

Instruments

Following the ideas of qualitative research, the researcher is the main tool for analyzing the data deeply (Moleong, 2017). Collecting data involves carefully reading the lyrics of "Willow" in English to fully understand the background and meaning. Metaphors, both obvious and not so obvious, are found in the lyrics and then analyzed using Larson's (1998) ideas about translating metaphors. This analysis is done to make sure that the artistic qualities, emotional impact, and cultural values in the original song are carefully thought about and kept when translating it into Indonesian.

Data Analysis Procedure

Translating the song lyrics from English (the original language) to Indonesian (the target language) started with listening to the song many times and carefully reading the lyrics to understand the message Taylor Swift wanted to share. "Willow" has complex metaphors that show deep emotions about love and life, so it's important to fully understand them to translate the meaning and emotions accurately. During this process, there were challenges, especially in finding good metaphorical matches in Indonesian, because some phrases in English don't have direct translations. To solve this, a creative approach was needed to keep the artistic details of the original lyrics without losing their main idea.

Findings

The research results show that, using Larson's (1998) theory of metaphor translation strategies, ten metaphors were identified in the lyrics of the song "Willow." From this analysis, four translation strategies were employed, including changing metaphors into similes, replacing metaphors with non-figurative expressions, translating source language metaphors into other metaphors in the target language that have the same meaning as the source language metaphors, and translating source language metaphors into the same metaphors in the target language accompanied by explanations of the meanings of those metaphors. This analysis aims to maintain the aesthetic of the

lyrics while ensuring that the emotional message of the song is effectively conveyed in the Indonesian translation.

Discussion

Using Larson's (1998) theory of metaphor translation strategies, this study identifies various methods for preserving the emotional and artistic meaning in the translation of the song "Willow." This analysis shows how the beauty of metaphors can be effectively translated without losing their depth. The process requires creative adaptation and a strong understanding of cultural context, enabling the song's message to resonate with Indonesian audiences in a way that is similar to its impact on English-speaking listeners. From Taylor Swift's lyrics in "Willow," ten instances containing conceptual metaphors related to love were identified. The analysis of these instances is presented below.

Data 1

ST: "I'm like the water when your ship rolled in that night."

TT: "*Aku seperti air saat kapalmu berlabuh di malam itu.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor into a simile by adding the word "like."

In this example, the metaphor "I'm like the water" is translated into a simile by including the word "like" in the target text. This strategy clarifies the relationship between the speaker and water, which symbolizes flexibility and acceptance. By using a simile, the metaphor becomes clearer and easier for readers in the target language to understand, while still conveying its emotional depth.

Data 2

ST: "Life was a willow, and it bent right to your wind."

TT: "*Aku seperti air saat kapalmu berlabuh di malam itu.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor from the source language to the same metaphor in the target language.

The metaphor "life was a willow" is directly translated into the same metaphor in Indonesian. This strategy is effective because the willow metaphor is widely recognized across cultures, including Indonesian culture. Using this familiar metaphor preserves both its poetic effect and its meaning about life's flexibility in adapting to external influences.

Data 3

ST: "The more that you say, the less I know."

TT: "*Semakin banyak yang kau katakan, semakin sedikit yang aku tahu.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor into a non-figurative expression.

In this case, the abstract metaphor about confusion is changed into a straightforward expression without figurative language. This approach is chosen to keep the meaning clear and easily understood in Indonesian. The emotion of confusion is still conveyed even without using a metaphor.

Data 4

ST: "Wait for the signal, and I'll meet you after dark."

TT: "*Tunggu isyaratnya, aku akan menemuimu setelah malam tiba.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor from the source language to the same metaphor in the target language, with an explanation of its meaning.

Here, the metaphor "signal" is translated literally as "isyarat." However, its meaning as a symbol of secret communication between two people is explained in context. This strategy aims to preserve the original metaphor while providing additional clarity for readers.

Data 5

ST: "Wherever you stray, I follow."

TT: "*Ke mana pun kau pergi, aku akan mengikutimu.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor from the source language to the same metaphor in the target language.

The metaphor "stray," which symbolizes freedom of movement, is directly translated as "pergi" in Indonesian. This strategy maintains the symbolic meaning of unconditional dedication to a partner. By using this familiar metaphor, the emotional strength of the lyrics is preserved.

Data 6

ST: "But I come back stronger than a 90's trend."

TT: "*Namun aku kembali lebih kuat seperti tren tahun 90-an.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor from the source language into a simile by adding "seperti."

In this instance, the metaphor "stronger than a 90's trend" is translated into a simile by including "seperti" to clarify how strength relates to trends. This helps readers understand both humor and strength within this statement.

Data 7

ST: "You know that my train could take you home."

TT: "*Kau tahu bahwa keretaku dapat membawamu pulang.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor from the source language to the same metaphor in the target language.

The metaphor "train," which symbolizes an emotional journey, is directly translated as "kereta" in Indonesian. This choice preserves both its symbolic effect and emotional connection within relationships.

Data 8

ST: "They count me out time and time again."

TT: "*Mereka terus mengabaikanku berulang kali.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor into a non-figurative expression.

In this case, the phrase "count me out" is changed to a literal expression, "mengabaikan," which means to ignore. This strategy simplifies understanding while keeping its emotional essence intact.

Data 9

ST: "I'm begging for you to take my hand."

TT: "*Aku memohon agar kau menggenggam tanganku.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating the metaphor from the source language to a similar metaphor in the target language but with different emphasis.

Here, "take my hand" is translated as "menggenggam tanganku," which carries a deeper symbolic meaning about seeking emotional connection. Although both metaphors are similar, their emphasis differs in Indonesian.

Data 10

ST: "Life was a willow, and it bent right to your wind."

TT: "*Hidup adalah pohon willow yang tunduk pada arah anginmu.*"

Translation Strategy: Translating from one metaphor in English to another that conveys similar meaning in Indonesian.

In this case, "bent right to your wind" is translated as "tunduk pada arah anginmu." The word "tunduk" replaces "bent" to highlight dependence or influence. This approach maintains core meaning while adapting nuances for Indonesian readers.

Discussion

The analysis indicates that the most frequent translation strategy employed in this study involves converting source language metaphors into similes through the addition of the Indonesian words "seperti" or "bagaikan" (meaning "like"). This strategy is favored due to its effectiveness in maintaining the emotional meaning of the original metaphor while simultaneously enhancing comprehension for target language readers. By explicitly incorporating comparative terms, the metaphorical relationships inherent in the source language are preserved, ensuring that the artistic nuances intended by the songwriter are retained.

This approach aligns with Newmark's (1988) assertion that translation constitutes a transfer of meaning between languages, inextricably linked to a comprehensive understanding of the meanings embedded within each language. Newmark further emphasizes that a primary objective of translation is to convey the meaning of a text into another language, thereby facilitating cross-cultural exchange and introducing one nation's culture to another. A central challenge in this endeavor stems from cultural disparities, encompassing differences in mindset, emotional expression, and the distinct cultural values that characterize the source and target languages.

Within the context of this research, the prevalent use of the strategy of transforming metaphors into similes by adding "bagaikan" or "seperti" in the translation of Taylor Swift's song lyrics suggests that the translation is executed with the intention of preserving both the meaning and artistic subtleties of the song, while also maximizing accessibility for the target audience.

This strategy allows the emotional and artistic meaning of the metaphors in the lyrics to be preserved while making them easier to understand in the target language.

The study underscores the significance of translator ingenuity in adapting lyrics to sustain the aesthetic qualities and emotional message of the song without compromising its cultural value. For translators approaching metaphor translation in songs, it is recommended to engage in repeated listening to foster a deep understanding of the

emotions and messages intended by the songwriter. Furthermore, translators should adopt a flexible approach, employing a range of translation strategies rather than relying on a single method, to identify the most effective means of accurately conveying metaphorical meaning to the target audience.

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