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Song Lyric Translation Strategies and Techniques: A Case Study of *Kun Anta* Translation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategies and techniques used to translate the song *Kun Anta* from Arabic into Indonesian. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, the research analyses 20 lines of song lyrics based on Lefevere's (1992) translation strategy framework and Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques. The findings reveal four translation strategies: interpretative Translation, rhymed Translation, metrical Translation, and blank verse translation. Additionally, six translation techniques are identified, e.g., modulation, reduction, amplification, literal Translation, transposition, and adaptation. The results indicate that the translator prioritised musicality and lyric readability over strict semantic accuracy, ensuring the translated lyrics aligned with the song's rhythm and cultural Context. This study highlights the challenges of translating song lyrics, particularly in balancing meaning, poetic structure, and singability. The findings contribute to the broader discussion on translation studies, offering insights for translators, linguists, and music industry practitioners in adapting songs across languages while maintaining their artistic and cultural essence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Music has become one of the most effective cultural elements in bridging differences between nations. In the era of globalisation, technological advances and the presence of digital platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, and Apple Music have made it easier for songs from various countries to reach listeners worldwide. Along with this phenomenon, the demand for song translation has increased. Translation is carried out to ensure that audiences from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can understand the message, emotions, and aesthetic quality of the lyrics (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Suharto, 2006). As part of this intercultural communication, Translation plays a vital role in multilingual societies by reproducing from one language to another (Adebisi & Mukadam, 2020).

Song translation is one of the complex fields of writing in translation studies because it involves linguistic, musical, and cultural aspects (Fitria, 2022). Song translation aims to translate the text and allows listeners from various countries to understand the song's meaning without losing its aesthetic essence (Suharto & Subroto, 2014). Furthermore, Opperman et al. (2018) stated that in this process, translators face challenges because a song is bound to a predetermined melody, and the translator cannot change the melody to match the desired lyrics. Budiarta et al. (2022) and Ilham et al. (2022) also mentioned that the translator must understand the culture of the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) because each language has its cultural elements. With that said, the translator must be careful in choosing the target lyrics to match the melody of the SL song.

The success of the global music industry, such as K-pop, Latin Pop, and Arabic Pop, illustrates that effective Translation can significantly expand a song's international reach. One notable example is the Arabic Pop song *Kun Anta* (Be You) by Humood Alkhuder, released in 2015, which topped charts in Indonesia and Malaysia. In response to its popularity, *Kun Anta* was translated into Indonesian in 2016 as *Jadi Diri Sendiri* (Be Yourself) (Music, 2017). As part of the Arabic Pop genre, *Kun Anta* offers musical aesthetics and a positive message. In globalisation, religious-themed songs are increasingly adapted into various languages. However, song translation requires careful attention to language and musicality, rhythm, and message integrity (Franzon, 2014). Thus, appropriate strategies are needed to ensure the target audience understands the original message (Jumatulaini, 2020).

Given this Context, this study aims to analyse the Translation of *Kun Anta* song lyrics into Indonesian by applying two theoretical frameworks, namely seven translation strategies proposed by Lefevere (1992) in Bassnett (2014) and 18 translation techniques according to Molina and Albir (2002). Lefevere (1992) stated that the Translation is done by combining cultural and linguistic approaches so that the translator can maintain the meaning of the SL well. Meanwhile, Molina and Albir (2002) propose various translation techniques that can be used to adapt the text of the SL into the TL by considering linguistic and cultural aspects. Both of these theories are very relevant in analysing the Translation of song lyrics because they consider both technical and ideological elements in the translation process (Adhimas et al., 2023)

Previous studies on song lyric Translation have often focused on movie soundtracks and popular music. For example, Abu-Rayyash and Haider (2023) analysed English-to-Arabic lyric Translation in Netflix movie subtitles, highlighting the balance between meaning and aesthetics. Similarly, Adhimas et al. (2023) applied Lefevere's theory to translating Chinese songs into Indonesian, noting the prioritisation of musicality. Mogi et al. (2023) explored translation strategies in the film *Moana*, while Andriningtyas & Nugroho (2023) and Leni and Pattiwael (2019) analysed non-strategic adaptation approaches in Disney songs. These studies demonstrate that song lyric translation often prioritises musical and performative aspects alongside linguistic fidelity.

Studies on the Translation of *Kun Anta* song lyrics have been carried out from various perspectives, such as semiotic analysis by Yadiyanti (2021) as well as metaphorical studies in the album *Aseer Ahsan* by Romdloni and Asror (2024). However, no research has specifically examined the Translation of *Kun Anta* using the Lefevere (1992) strategy approach or the Molina and Albir (2002) techniques. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analysing how translation strategies and techniques are applied in *Kun Anta*'s lyrics from Arabic to Indonesian.

Despite the popularity of song translation in global markets, systematic analysis of strategies balancing meaning and musicality remains scarce. Thus, this research is necessary to enrich academic discourse and translation practice. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analysing the strategies and techniques employed in translating *Kun Anta* from Arabic into Indonesian. Furthermore, the findings are expected to offer practical insights for translators, academics, and practitioners in the music industry regarding the adaptation of song lyrics across languages. A deeper understanding of lyric translation strategies and techniques will contribute to preserving the cultural and musical integrity of songs while making them accessible to diverse audiences.

2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design focusing on translation products. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the translation strategies and techniques used in the song's lyrics. The source of data in this study is in the form of lyrics of *Kun Anta* by Humood Alkhuder (2015) in Arabic and Indonesian translated version, *Jadi Diri Sendiri* (Be Yourself) (2016), available on the Musixmatch website. The selection of this song is based on its relevance in the Context of cross-cultural Translation and the differences in linguistic structure between Arabic and Indonesian.

Data is collected through documentation techniques with a listen-and-record approach (Mahsun, 2017). In this process, the researcher listened to the song *Kun Anta* in SL and the song *Jadi Diri Sendiri* in TL, transcribed the lyrics, and produced a literal translation (LT) of the Arabic lyrics into Indonesian and compared the lyrics of the two versions to identify differences in structure, meaning, and musicality. A total of 20 lyric segments were identified and analysed comprehensively. However, in this article, only the lyric sections that meet

specific criteria, namely the opening lines and the chorus (reff), are presented. These parts are selected because they are central to conveying the song's main themes and emotional expression.

An analysis sheet was developed as a research instrument to support the analysis. The sheet included columns for the source text (SL), target text (TL), literal translation (LT), identified translation techniques based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, and applied translation strategies following Lefevere's (1992) model.

The data that has been collected is then analysed using an interactive model by Miles & Huberman (1994), which consists of three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Abdussamad, 2021). In the data reduction stage, irrelevant or redundant data were filtered out, and the focus was directed toward segments most representative of the translation strategies and techniques under study. Furthermore, at the stage of presenting data, the lyrics were systematically categorised according to the identified translation strategies and techniques. Finally, the conclusion-drawing stage is carried out by analysing patterns and trends to explain how specific methods and techniques contributed to meaning transfer, cultural adaptation, and musical coherence between the source and target versions. Through this analytical process, the study seeks to enhance the understanding of methods and approaches in song lyrics translation, particularly in the Context of Arabic to Indonesian Translation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of 20 data points on the lyrics of the song *Kun Anta* and the lyrics of the song *Jadi Diri Sendiri*, it was found that there are four out of seven translation strategies, according to Lefevere (1992). Namely, the interpretation strategy of 7 data, rhyme translation strategy of 6 data, metrical translation strategy of 4 data, blank verses translation of as much as 3 data, and the interpretation is the most used. In addition, the researcher also identified six translation techniques used in each song lyric according to Molina and Albir (2002), namely: modulation technique, reduction technique, amplification technique, literal technique, transposition technique, and adaptation technique. The following details the types of translation strategies and techniques used in the song *Kun Anta* (SL), *Jadi Diri Sendiri* (TL), and the discussion.

Interpretation Translation Strategy

The interpretation strategy dominates the lyrics of *Jadi Diri Sendiri*. This strategy is applied because it is commonly used to translate a song. This strategy frees the translator to translate a song lyric according to their wishes, without being bound by the original song lyrics and only based on their interpretation (Anwar, 2020). The interpretation translation strategy was applied to Data 1.

Data 1

SL : لَأُجَارِيَهُمْ، قَلَدْتُ ظَاهِرَ مَا فِيهِمْ :

LT : Agar aku mengikuti mereka, aku meniru apa yang tampak pada mereka

(In order for me to follow them, I imitate what appears to them)
 TL : *Ingin diri ku jadi seperti mereka* (I want myself to be like them)

According to Al Farisi (2014), the interpretation strategy is used when the translator simplifies and condenses the original meaning of SL to be conveyed into TL in a more direct and easy-to-understand way. However, some details are missing in the translation process, and the message conveyed from the SL song remains the same. Therefore, in Data 1, the translator uses this strategy by maintaining the message of SL's music, which is to want to be someone else, even if the melody or rhythm of TL's song still sounds the same as SL's song. For the translation techniques found in this lyric data, it can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Techniques for Translation on Data 1

SL	LT	TL	Translation Techniques	Description
لَأُجَارِيَهُمْ	<i>Agar aku mengikuti mereka</i> (In order for me to follow them)	<i>Ingin diriku</i> (I want myself)	Modulation	A change in the perspective of direct action becomes a statement of desire
قَلَّدْتُ	<i>Aku meniru</i> (I imitate)	<i>Jadi</i> (to be)	Transposition	Change of verbs to nouns
ظَاهِرَ مَا فِيهِمْ	<i>Apa yang tampak pada mereka</i> (what appears to them)	-	Reduction	Removal of parts deemed non-essential

As can be seen in Table 1, the translator using the modulation technique changes the point of view about the SL song (Farahsani et al., 2024), on the word لَأُجَارِيَهُمْ (*agar aku mengikuti mereka*) to '*Ingin diriku*' so that the lyrics of the song sound more natural in TL. The translator also simplified the meaning of قَلَّدْتُ ظَاهِرَ مَا فِيهِمْ (*aku meniru apa yang tampak pada mereka*) by reducing the word ظَاهِرَ مَا فِيهِمْ (*apa yang tampak pada mereka*) to make the Translation shorter and replace it with '*Jadi seperti mereka*' (to be like them) using adaptation techniques that adapt to the style of the TL language to make it more pleasant to listen to and still retain the meaning of the SL song (Baking & Sajarwa, 2023). These techniques reflect efforts to maintain beauty, harmony, and understanding in the Context of TL's culture.

Rhyme Translation Strategies

Rhyme translation is a difficult translation because it has to match the rhyme of the two songs, but Apter (1985) stated that to translate rhyme, it is not necessary to match the rhyme in the SL, such as the rhyme (ain) in the word pain and refrain in the SL lyrics, the TL lyrics do not need to match the rhyme but choose a rhyme that is suitable and appropriate in the TL

(Bosseaux, 2011). According to Lefevere (1992), the strategy of rhyming Translation prioritises the transfer of the rhyme or the final similarity of the lyrics of the SL song into the lyrics of the TL song so that the translation results are by the rhyme form. However, sometimes, the meaning is not very satisfactory or changes slightly.

Data 2

SL : فَبَدَوْتُ شَخْصًا آخَرَ، كَيْ أَتَفَاخَرَ

LT : *Maka aku terlihat seperti orang lain, agar aku dapat berbangga*
(Then I look like someone else, so that I can be proud)

TL : *Agar aku berharga, bisa berbangga* (So that I am precious, I can be proud)

In both lyrics, we can see that both show a consistent rhyme pattern between the words فَبَدَوْتُ/ākhar/ [someone else] and أَتَفَاخَرَ /attafākhar/ [I can be proud] in SL, namely the similarity of the final pattern /-khar/, which in the lyrics of TL, namely 'berbangga' (precious) and 'berharga' (proud) which have the same final pattern (-ga), that words where the final sound of a line is a consonant called by rhymes with closed syllables (Fitri et al., 2022). The translator focuses on maintaining the similarity of the sound and rhyme pattern of the song's lyrics so that the Translation of the TL lyrics changes slightly but still maintains the message of the meaning of the SL song, which is to be able to be proud of yourself. The translation techniques for the lyrics will be presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Translation Techniques on Data 2

SL	LT	TL	Translation Techniques	Description
فَبَدَوْتُ شَخْصًا آخَرَ	<i>Maka aku terlihat seperti orang lain</i> (Then I look like someone else)	<i>Aku berharga</i> (I am precious)	Modulation	Change of viewpoint
كَيْ	<i>Agar</i> (so that)	<i>Agar</i> (so that)	Literals and transpositions	Moving the position of the word
أَتَفَاخَرَ	<i>Aku dapat berbangga</i> (I can be proud)	<i>Bisa berbangga</i> (I can be proud)	Transposition	Change in structure from verbs to verbal phrases

It can be seen in Table 2 that in the lyrics, the translator changed the point of view from فَبَدَوْتُ شَخْصًا آخَرَ (*maka aku terlihat seperti orang lain*) to '*aku berharga*', which is more in

line with the meaning that I want to convey in TL. The word كَيّ is translated word by word, or the appropriate definition in the dictionary (Maulana, 2019), namely 'agar', but the position of the word moves from the middle to the beginning of the sentence. The word أَنفَاخَر (aku dapat berbangga) changes the structure of the word, which was initially a verb, into a verbal phrase, 'bisa berbangga'. SL's song lyrics also adapt into a poetic and emotional style of TL's language, and according to the Context of the song's lyrics, they often need simplicity.

Metrical Translation Strategies

According to Lefevere (1992), the metrical translation strategy is a strategy that pays attention to the similarity of metric structures, such as the number of syllables, rhythm patterns, and rhythms in the lyrics of SL and TL songs. Syllables are an essential element in song creation because each note usually represents one word in the lyrics to maintain the rhythm of the original music so that the Translation remains like the lyrics of a song with a similar rhythm (Åkerström, 2009). Despite this, the song's original meaning remains a priority, even though some words or phrases may change or even be omitted. The metric strategy is used in Data 5 as follows:

Data 5

SL : لَا، لَا، لَا نَحْتَاجُ الْمَالَ

LT : *Tidak, tidak, kami tidak membutuhkan harta*

(No, no, we don't need treasure)

TL : *Bukan, kau tak perlu harta* (No, you don't need wealth)

In the lyrics of the SL song, there is a repetition of the word لَا three times; this does not make the rhythm of the two songs different; even the syllables in the two lyrics amount to the same, which is as many as eight syllables. This similarity in the number of syllables makes the rhythmic beats of both songs sound the same. Although there is a slight change in the writing of words to adjust the number of syllables and rhythms, the message conveyed remains the same. Namely, there is no need for wealth or money. For the translation techniques used in Data 5, it is listed in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Translation Techniques on Data 5

SL	LT	TL	Translation Techniques	Description
لَا، لَا، لَا	<i>Tidak, tidak</i> (No, no)	<i>Bukan</i> (No)	Reduction	Removal of repeated words
لَا نَحْتَاجُ	<i>Kami tidak membutuhkan</i> (we don't need)	<i>Kau tak perlu</i> (you don't need)	Transposition	Change of plural to singular
	<i>Harta</i> (treasure)	<i>Harta</i> (treasure)	Literal	Word

In Table 3, we can see that the translator reduces the repetition of the word *لَا* (*tidak*) to make it look simpler while keeping the song's rhythm the same. This situation is in line with Mogi et al. (2023) research that removes repetitive words in English dubbed songs to maintain the rhythm of the original song. There is a transposition technique, namely the change of the structural form in the sentence SL to TL (Subhan, 2020), which is changing the plural form to singular, in the sentence *لَا نَحْتَاجُ* (*kami tidak membutuhkan*), which is mark by the letter *ن* attached to the verb *احتاج*, this shows in the plural first-person pronoun, it changes to 'kau' (you) which indicates the singular second-person pronoun (Ryding, 2005). The literal technique in this lyric is found in the word *المال* in SL, which means treasure in the TL language (Almaany, 2025).

Another example of this strategy is found in this song's popular lyrics, which the singer uses as the title of the song, namely *Kun Anta* in SL or *Jadi Diri Sendiri* in TL.

Data 12

SL : *كُنْ أَنْتَ تَزِدُّ جَمَالًا*

LT : *Jadilah kamu yang semakin bertambah indah*

(Be you who grows more beautiful)

TL : *Jadilah diri sendiri* (Be yourself)

Just like in Data 5, in Data 12, it can also be seen that the lyrics of SL and TL songs maintain the same rhythm and number of syllables. The syllables in this lyric also have eight syllables. However, there is a difference in word writing; the translator maintains the meaning of the message conveyed in the lyrics of the SL song, which is to be yourself. The translation techniques used in Data 12 are:

Table 4. Translation Techniques on Data 12

SL	LT	TL	Translation Techniques	Description
<i>كُنْ</i>	<i>Jadilah</i> (Be)	<i>Jadilah</i> (Be)	Literal	Verb words
<i>أَنْتَ</i>	<i>Kamu</i> (you)	<i>Diri sendiri</i> (Yourself)	Modulation	Changes in TL's viewpoint
<i>تَزِدُّ</i>	<i>Yang semakin bertambah indah</i>	-	Reduction	Phrase removal
<i>جَمَالًا</i>	(who grows more beautiful)			

The verb *كُنْ* (*jadilah*) in the original song lyrics (SL) is translated word by word in the

lyrics of the TL song, which means 'jadilah' (Glosbe, 2025). The word أَنْتَ (kamu) in the lyrics of the SL song, which has the equivalent (kamu), is modulated by a change in the point of view to 'diri sendiri' to adjust to the Context of the TL language and maintain the naturalness and clarity of the original song's message. There is a reduction technique, namely the change of the structural form in the sentence SL to TL by removing the phrase (Utama & Masrukhi, 2021) and the translator removing the phrase تَزِدُّ جَمَالًا (yang semakin bertambah indah) does not explicitly translate because it has been implied in the concept of being yourself, which means that in the lyrics of the song SL أَنْتَ تَزِدُّ جَمَالًا (kamu yang semakin bertambah indah), it changes to the concept of 'itulah diri sendiri' (that's myself). The translation technique in Data 12 is different from the translation technique in the song title, although there are similarities in the meaning and writing of the lyrics. In the song title SL كُنْ أَنْتَ (Kun Anta) changes to 'Jadi Diri Sendiri' in the TL song, there is a change in perspective by using the modulation technique in the word كُنْ (jadilah), which is an imperative verb to the word 'jadi,' which is a verb. The word أَنْتَ (kamu) uses the modulation technique by changing the perspective to 'diri sendiri,' the same as in Data12.

Blank Verse Translation Strategies

The strategy of translating empty verses is almost similar to the modulation or paraphrasing strategy, where the translator translates by replacing the words in the text of the SL using the words of the translator according to the TL so that it sounds natural and easy for the listener to understand (Lefevere, 1992). Despite this, the changes in words still retain their original meaning. This Translation is similar to the metrical strategy, but the number of syllables or rhymes does not limit it. Usually, this strategy involves using blank stanzas or long notes from SL songs, which can be adjusted by adding or removing syllables. This strategy is found in the following Data 8,

Data 8

SL : فِي الْقَلْبِ تَلَالًا

LT : Di dalam hati, bersinar

(In the heart, shine)

TL : Hanya di dalam jiwa (Only in the soul)

Data 8 shows that both SL and TL have different numbers of syllables, so the translator uses the empty verse strategy in translating the song. The syllables in the TL lyrics are one syllable more than the TL lyrics, and the beat in the TL song lyrics is slower than the SL song lyrics, so the song's rhythm still sounds the same to the listeners. There is a change in the structure of the lyrics of the SL song that adjusts to TL; here are the translation techniques

used in Data 8:

Table 5. Translation Techniques on Data 8

SL	LT	TL	Translation Techniques	Description
-	-	<i>Hanya</i> (Only)	Amplification	Addition of words
فِي	<i>Di dalam</i> (In)	<i>Di dalam</i> (In)	Literals and transpositions	Moving the position of the word
الْقَلْبِ	<i>Hati</i> (the heart)	<i>Jiwa</i> (the soul)	Modulation	Changes in TL's viewpoint
تَلَا	<i>Bersinar</i> (shine)	-	Reduction	Word deletion

There is a amplification technique, namely the adding some words that are intended to clarify the SL's message (Zahra et al., 2024), which the word '*hanya*' is added at the beginning of the sentence to the lyrics of the song TL to make it clear that one's worth lies in the soul, not anything else. The word فِي (*Di dalam*) in SL is translated word by word in TL, which means '*Di dalam*' (Munawwir, 2016). However, the word's position is moved to the middle of the sentence. The word الْقَلْبِ (*Hati*) in the song SL is modulated into '*jiwa*', which has a broader meaning in TL and is more emotionally appropriate. The deletion of the word تَلَا (*bersinar*) to be more concise, and by the rhythm of the TL song.

The analysis found that the interpretation and rhyming translation strategies dominated the Translation of *Kun Anta's* song lyrics. This research is in line with the research of Safitri et al. (2023), which is dominated by interpretation translation strategies in song translation. Interpretation translation strategies are highly recommended for song translation, but it is not recommended to translate the dub song in the film because it is not a stand-alone song. The results of this study are also in line with the research of Mogi et al. (2023), which revealed that the Translation of dubbing songs also prioritises the rhythm and beat of the song's musicality. However, the most commonly used translation strategy is the metrical strategy.

In addition, the most commonly used translation techniques are modulation and reduction, suggesting that translators often change points of view and simplify meanings to match TL's rhythmic patterns better. Adaptation techniques are also widely applied to adjust to aspects of language style and cultural elements in songs. This finding also strengthens Yusuf's (2024) research, which states that modulation techniques are often used in song translation because translators aim to convey the message's meaning from source SL songs into TL songs.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has analysed the translation strategies and techniques utilised in adapting the song *Kun Anta* from Arabic into Indonesian, revealing that interpretation strategies were predominantly employed to preserve musicality and readability, often at the expense of literal meaning. The recurrent use of modulation and reduction techniques illustrates the translator's strategic efforts to ensure cultural adaptation while adhering to musical constraints. These findings address the research objective by demonstrating the practical application of Lefevere's (1992) strategies and Molina and Albir's (2002) techniques within the Context of song translation. Theoretically, the study enriches the discourse in translation studies by emphasising the complexity of balancing semantic fidelity with artistic performance. Practically, it offers valuable insights for translators and practitioners involved in cross-cultural adaptation within the global music industry. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single song and the absence of an audience reception analysis, which could further illuminate the effectiveness of the Translation. Therefore, future research should explore a broader range of musical genres and incorporate audience-centred perspectives to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of translation impact.

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