

ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR POPULAR DISNEY SONG LYRICS

Analisis Strategi Terjemahan Untuk Lirik Lagu Disney Populer

Hernandez Trivano Hardwi Atmaja ^{1a(*)} Naila Rohmah²,

¹²Diponegoro University Vocational School, Jl. Prof. Sudharto, Tembalang, Semarang 50275, Indonesia

^a hernandeztri.h.a@gmail.com

^b nailarohmah@live.undip.ac.id

(*) Corresponding Author

hernandeztri.h.a@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the translation strategies used in the Indonesian version of ten popular Disney songs, in response to the increasing importance of culturally resonant translations in global media. With more than 2.5 million Disney+ Hotstar users in Indonesia, localized song lyrics play a key role in increasing audience engagement. Using descriptive qualitative methods and documentation analysis, this study analyzed the lyrics of English and Indonesian songs such as Let It Go, A Whole New World, and Beauty and the Beast. The findings show paraphrasing as the most frequently used strategy (165 examples), followed by adaptation and substitution (59 each), omission (25), and addition (2). These results highlight how translators prioritize meaning and musicality in the Indonesian version. The study concluded that song translation requires a balance of semantic accuracy, rhythm, and cultural context. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of audiovisual translation in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Future work may explore similar strategies across other languages and media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Song translations in Disney movies are essential to ensure that cultural messages remain relevant across different languages and regions. Disney is known as a leader in the global entertainment industry, with iconic animated films and songs that are famous around the world. With the growth of platforms like Disney+ Hotstar which has millions of subscribers in Southeast Asia (Media Partners Asia, 2021), the need for an effective song translation strategy is increasingly important. Song translation is not only about translating words, but also about preserving musicality and cultural nuances so that songs can be accepted by local audiences (Franzon, 2008; Low, 2013).

Song translation is a complex process that involves more than just language skills. Nida and Taber (2003) explain that translation not only transfers meaning from one language to another, but also adapts the message to suit the target culture. According to Cruz-Durán (2023), in the translation of audiovisual songs, it is necessary to pay attention to linguistic suitability, musical rhythm, and cultural meaning. This is important so that the musicality, rhythm, and melody remain compatible with the target language without changing the meaning of the lyrics. Franzon (2008) explained that the ability to sing, the ability to translate lyrics to be sung according to the original music is a big challenge

in song translation. Kaindl (2005) also notes that song translation is not just about translating words, but also having to consider the associated musical and visual elements.

Cultural adaptation is also important in the translation of songs, as explained by Larson (1998). A good translation not only conveys meaning but also aligns with the audience's culture. For Disney songs, this means adapting foreign cultural references and expressions in a way that is easier to understand, without compromising the emotional impact of the song. Amelia (2021) explained that such an adaptation is important so that the emotional tone of the song is maintained, even though some of the meanings of the word are adjusted to better suit Indonesian culture.

In addition, Disney song translations also face challenges in maintaining the musicality and rhyme patterns of the original lyrics. Low (2013) developed the Pentathlon Approach, which states that the translation of songs must achieve a balance in five elements: meaning, rhythm, style, content, and naturalness. This approach is useful in analyzing how Disney maintains the artistic quality of its songs while still providing accurate meaning. Munday (2016) also supports this view, emphasizing that song translation should consider linguistic and creative elements.

As the global market for Disney content grows, the need for effective song translations is becoming even greater. This study aims to explore the translation strategies used in the ten Disney songs, focusing on how elements of culture, musicality, and local adaptation are applied in the Indonesian version. It will also examine how translation theory and strategies are used to keep Disney songs relevant and emotionally resonant for Indonesian audiences, without sacrificing the integrity of the original material.

Translation Theory

Song translations in Disney movies play an important role in preserving relevant cultural messages, especially on streaming platforms like Disney+ Hotstar which has millions of users in Southeast Asia (Media Partners Asia, 2021). In song translation, the focus is not only on language transfer but also on maintaining musicality and cultural adaptation so that songs can be embraced by local audiences (Franzon, 2008; Low, 2013).

Meanwhile, the concept of formal equivalence by Nida and Taber (2003) emphasizes fidelity to the form and structure of the source text. This approach is often used in traditional translation, but it can present challenges in song translation where musicality is just as important as meaning. Franzon (2008), in his research on the translation of Disney songs, points out that song translations often require a balance between these forms of equality, where literal meaning sometimes needs to be sacrificed in order to preserve musicality and rhyme, both of which are integral parts of a song's performance.

Franzon (2008) also developed a specific framework for song translation, emphasizing the importance of sung ability (ease of singing) and semantic accuracy. This model encourages translators to produce musically appropriate versions of songs while still conveying the emotional core of the original. Low (2013) complements this approach by proposing five main principles in song translation: meaning, rhythm, style, content, and naturalness. These five aspects are considered important to ensure that the translated lyrics continue to resonate with the target audience, especially when there are significant cultural differences from the original version.

Cultural adaptations in song translations have become particularly relevant in the context of Disney films. Munday (2016) emphasizes the importance of cultural adaptation, which allows flexibility in the translation process. This flexibility helps ensure that the translated lyrics remain relevant to the target culture while still respecting the core message of the original song. If the cultural

references in a song are not easily understood by local audiences, translators must find creative solutions to adapt the content without losing its emotional and narrative power. These various theories and approaches provide a solid basis for analyzing how Disney songs are translated into Indonesian, while also offering insight into how translators make decisions when balancing these often conflicting demands.

Cultural and Contextual Aspects

Cultural adaptations are a big challenge in translating Disney songs. Salsabila and Mustofa (2024) emphasize that cultural adaptation is not just about changing words but about creating translations that are emotionally relevant and resonate for the target audience. Some references to Indonesian culture may be unfamiliar to a global audience, so translators must adjust the lyrics to retain meaning and ensure understanding. Mogi, Herawati, and Putra (2023) highlight the importance of adapting cultural nuances while preserving the original musicality, as seen in the Indonesian adaptation of Moana's songs.

Localization plays a crucial role in ensuring that Disney films are accepted by international audiences and remain relevant in local culture. Putri and Ayuningsih (2021) explain that using translation strategies that change perspectives is very effective when adapting songs for local audiences. This approach allows the translator to modify aspects of the song that may be irrelevant or difficult to understand. For example, in the Indonesian version of Frozen II, Salsabila and Mustofa (2024) show how cultural references such as food, customs, and places are modified to align with Indonesian traditions, while still maintaining the emotional appeal of the song.

Seran and Subiyanto (2023) emphasize that successful translation and dubbing in Indonesia requires attention to local language structure, humor, and emotional expression. While the English version of Disney songs may use expressions familiar to Western audiences, the Indonesian version often needs to reuse those expressions to make them more suitable for the local culture. Naimushin (2021) argues that when direct translation is not possible, creative solutions are needed, one that still respects the narrative flow and emotional tone of the song.

In the translation of Disney songs, Tekin (2022) shows that cultural references are often modified to fit the local context, ensuring that the essence of the song is preserved and remains accessible to local audiences. Understanding the cultural context is very important in the translation process. Rahardjo (1990) explained that music education in Indonesia influenced how these songs were adapted to suit the musical tastes and cultural norms of Indonesian listeners.

In addition, the growth of platforms such as Disney+ Hotstar and the increasing reach of Disney content in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, have strengthened the need for effective localization. Media Partners Asia (2021) notes that the increasing consumption of online video content in Southeast Asia underscores the importance of translating content both linguistically and culturally. The success of such a translation depends largely on how well cultural elements are effectively integrated into the final product.

Challenges and Technical Aspects

The main challenge in translating Disney songs is ensuring that the translated lyrics are in harmony with the original melody and rhythm. Song translation involves more than just language transfer, it also requires music synchronization. Franzone (2008) emphasizes that the ability to sing, or the ability of lyrics translated to be sung with original music, is an important element. The translator must balance the literal meaning with the fluidity of the lyrics that match the rhythm of the music.

Low (2013) explains that this balancing act becomes more complex in animated films, where musicality and visuals play an important role in storytelling. Translators often need to make creative adjustments to maintain the rhythm and tempo of the song without losing its emotional feel. Kaindl (2005) adds that in musical-verbal works such as songs, translations must combine linguistic accuracy with musical demands, such as rhyme scheme, syllable emphasis, and time compatibility.

Another challenge lies in adapting culturally specific references. Many Disney songs include idiomatic expressions, values, or cultural references related to the source language and culture. Salsabila and Mustofa (2024) provide an example from the Indonesian version of *Frozen II*, where references such as traditional food, historical figures, and cultural expressions are adapted to better resonate with local audiences while maintaining their original emotional depth. This cultural adaptation helps the song feel authentic and relevant to Indonesian viewers, avoiding cultural dissonance. Redita (2020) also notes that idiomatic expressions in English lyrics often need to be modified to suit Indonesian cultural norms, without reducing the emotional impact of songs.

AI-based technologies have begun to help address these challenges. Li et al. (2023) explain that machine learning models can now automatically align melodies with lyrics, supporting translators by suggesting phrases that match the music and rhythm, although the final decision is still in the hands of the human translator. Cho et al. (2025) introduced the MAVL dataset, which contains audio-video translations of animated songs, showing how AI can help align lyrics with audio tracks while taking into account the nuances of the local language.

However, despite these benefits, Naimushin (2021) warns that translation tools still have limitations in handling the creative aspects of song translation. While machines can match melodies to lyrics, they can't understand the emotional nuances that only human translators can convey, especially when dealing with idiomatic language and cultural references. Silverman (2020) also discusses the challenges in the analysis of translation data and emphasizes that although technology can support the technical aspect, the creativity of translators remains essential to preserve the emotional impact of songs.

Additionally, maintaining the emotional feel of the song is essential to provide a meaningful experience for the audience. Rosenbluh (1968) emphasized that even small changes in the meaning of lyrics can alter the emotional delivery of a song. Therefore, the translator must ensure that the adaptation does not eliminate the song's core message or emotional resonance, even when cultural references must be altered or omitted. While AI and machine learning can help with certain technical aspects, ultimately it's the creativity and cultural insights of human translators that form the foundation of successful song translation.

Research Contributions

The study provides insight into the strategies used in translating Disney songs, but there are still many areas that require further research. One potential topic is the role of technology in improving the efficiency and accuracy of song translation. With the advancement of AI tools, future research could explore how machine learning can collaborate with the expertise of human translators to improve the quality of song translations (Li et al., 2023). In addition, the research can examine how the technology affects trends in audiovisual translation and the globalization of media content (Cho et al., 2025).

In addition, more comparative studies across languages and cultures are needed. Although this study focused on translating Disney songs into Indonesian, examining translations into other languages such as Spanish, French, or Chinese can reveal strategies that are universally effective

as well as culturally specific (Tekin, 2022). Such research will provide a broader understanding of the cross-cultural dynamics in song translation and global media consumption (Munday, 2016).

In addition, the impact of cultural adaptation on audience acceptance is an important topic for deeper investigation. Future studies could examine how translated songs are received by different demographic groups, such as age groups, socioeconomic class, or ethnic backgrounds within a single country (Salsabila & Mustofa, 2024). This approach will offer a richer understanding of how cultural elements in song translation affect the emotional impact and engagement of audiences.

This study contributes to the existing literature by presenting a comprehensive analysis of the translation strategies used in Disney songs, particularly in the context of cultural adaptations to ensure that the songs are well received by Indonesian audiences (Amelia, 2021). It also highlights the complexity of song translation, which involves not only linguistic aspects but also considerations of musical rhythm, emotional tone, and cultural context (Franzon, 2008). Additionally, these findings open up opportunities for future research on the integration of AI in song translation and its implications for the future of multimedia content translation (Li et al., 2023).

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the translation strategies applied in the Indonesian version of Disney songs. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the research is to explore the processes and decision-making behind song translation, especially in balancing meaning, musicality, and cultural adaptation. Creswell (2014) states that qualitative approaches are very useful for understanding phenomena that require a deep understanding of social and cultural contexts, such as in translation.

The study was designed as a documentary research project, where the main data sources were the original English lyrics and official Indonesian translations of ten selected Disney songs. The songs analyzed included *A Whole New World* from *Aladdin* (1992), *Let It Go* from *Frozen* (2013), and *Under the Sea* from *The Little Mermaid* (1989). The songs were chosen based on their popularity and the wide availability of their Indonesian translations in various media, especially through the Disney+ Hotstar platform.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected by systematically reviewing the original English lyrics and the official Indonesian translation. This process involves several steps:

1. Collect official translated lyrics from Disney+ Hotstar and other trusted sources
2. Check official translations in the form of subtitles, voiceovers, and song lyric transcripts
3. Cross-reference different translated versions to ensure consistency and accuracy, especially for songs that appear in multiple movies or series

This method is in line with the principles of documentary research, which includes the analysis of the content of the available material (Moleong, 2017). The aim of this stage is to identify the translation strategies used and to analyse how meaning and musicality are maintained in the target language.

Framework of Analysis

This analysis is based on a framework developed by Franzon (2008) regarding song translation. This framework is particularly relevant because it directly addresses the two main goals of song translation: conveying original meaning and preserving musicality. Franzon categorizes song translation strategies into five types:

1. Translation: Retaining its original meaning precisely
2. Paraphrasing: Conveying original meaning with more flexibility in form
3. Adaptation: Modifying cultural references to fit the target culture

4. Replacement: Replace certain elements with equivalent expressions in the target language
5. Omission: Removing words or lines to maintain flow and musicality appropriateness

Each song will be analyzed to identify the strategies (or combinations of strategies) used and how the balance between fidelity to the source text and audience acceptance is achieved. Li et al. (2023) stated that successful song translation requires harmony between melody and lyrics while considering the cultural context of the audience, making this framework a perfect fit for this study.

Data analysis will continue in the following stages:

1. Step 1: Compare the original lyrics and translations side by side
2. Step 2: Categorize each line of lyrics according to Franzon's (2008) strategy
3. Step 3: Evaluate the effectiveness of the translation based on singing ability, cultural relevance, and emotional resonance
4. Step 4: Perform a qualitative interpretation of the data to identify patterns in translation choices and their impact on the overall message of the song

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the findings, the study applied a triangulation technique by comparing multiple translations of the same song from different sources (such as subtitles, official lyrics, and voiceovers). As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), this approach increases the credibility of the results by verifying the findings from various perspectives. In addition, a peer review will be conducted to ensure the objectivity and reliability of the analysis, as recommended by Patton (2015).

Results and Discussion

Result

The study analyzed ten popular Disney songs in the officially dubbed Indonesian version. The songs cover various eras and movies, including *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, *Frozen*, and *Moana*. Through segmented lyric analysis, data were collected on the use of translation strategies based on the classification of Johan Franzon (2008), which included adaptation, substitution, omission, addition, and paraphrasing strategies.

Quantitative results showed that paraphrasing was the most frequently used strategy, appearing 165 times, followed by adaptation and substitution (59 examples each), omission (25 examples), and addition (2 examples). The table below summarizes the frequency of each strategy across all tracks:

Table 1. Frequency of Translation Strategies Used

Translation Strategy	Frequency
Paraphrase	165
Adaptation	59
Substitution	59
Negligence	25
Addition	2
Entire	310

In addition to quantity, the tendency in the use of strategies is mapped based on individual songs. Songs like *Let It Go*, *Colors of the Wind*, and *You'll Be in My Heart* mostly use paraphrasing and adaptation to maintain an emotional feel. Songs with a more complex poetic structure, such as

Circle of Life and Beauty and the Beast, use a broader combination of strategies, including omission and substitution to adjust the rhythm and number of syllables.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that paraphrasing is the most commonly used strategy in translating Disney songs into Indonesian. This is understandable, as paraphrasing offers translators the flexibility to convey meaning contextually without being tied to a literal structure. In songs where rhythm and syllable count are essential, paraphrasing allows for the reorganization of sentences to fit the musical pattern without compromising the core message.

The use of paraphrasing is in line with the principle of dynamic equality of Nida and Taber (1969), which emphasizes producing the same effect of meaning on the listener. In song translation, the priority is not verbatim accuracy, but how effectively the message is communicated in a form that resonates emotionally and culturally when sung.

Adaptation and substitution strategies are also commonly used, especially in translating metaphors, idioms, or expressions that are not directly equivalent in Indonesian culture. For example, the phrase "A whole new world" translates as "The whole world", which, although not literal, still conveys a sense of wonder and discovery. This shows that the translator is not only translating the text but also reinterpreting the cultural context of the song.

The omission strategy is used when parts of the lyrics are excluded due to time constraints in the music or because the part is considered irrelevant in the context of the target language. For example, repetitive phrases are often omitted in the Indonesian version, especially when interrupting the rhythm or prolonging the verse unnecessarily.

In addition, although it only happens twice, it depicts an attempt to clarify the context or enrich the emotional tone. One example is the inclusion of the word "sayang" in the lyrics to reinforce feelings of affection that were not explicitly conveyed in the original version.

Referring back to Franzon's (2008) theory, the findings show that Disney song translators tend to prioritize the harmony between meaning and musicality, indicating a high degree of flexibility towards linguistic structures. The chosen strategy reflects the performative purpose of Disney songs: to convey a powerful moral message and emotional experience in a memorable and sung format.

These findings also support previous research by Mogi et al. (2023), who found that interpretive strategies and metrics are the most dominant in the translation of Disney Indonesian songs. Similarly, Amelia (2021) highlights the importance of adaptation and paraphrasing in producing functional translations of music. The study expands on previous work by adding quantitative data across tracks and systematically mapping the strategies used.

From a humanities perspective, the process of translating Disney songs into Indonesian can be seen as "negotiating the meaning between cultures". These songs are not just a tool of entertainment but a representation of global values and narratives that are localized within the Indonesian framework. Thus, translation becomes a cultural activity that requires aesthetic, linguistic, and social sensitivity at the same time.

CONCLUSION

This study examines translation strategies in the Indonesian versions of Disney songs from animated films, using Franzon's (2008) framework and a qualitative approach. Analyzing 310 lyric segments from ten songs, it found paraphrasing as the dominant strategy (165 instances), followed

by adaptation and substitution (59 each), omission (25), and addition (2). Paraphrasing allows flexible restructuring to maintain meaning and emotional tone while aligning with the song's rhythm, reflecting Nida and Taber's (1969) dynamic equivalence principle. Adaptations and substitutions address idiomatic or cultural elements, like translating *A Whole New World* to "The Whole World," preserving wonder and discovery. Omission skips repetitive or less critical lyrics to maintain rhythm, while additions, like "dear," enhance emotional depth, ensuring cultural and musical alignment.

The study highlights the intercultural negotiation in translating Disney songs, balancing meaning, musicality, and local appeal. Franzon's model proves effective in this underexplored Indonesian context, offering practical guidance for translators and producers. It underscores Disney songs as carriers of moral and cultural values, adapted for Indonesian audiences without losing global appeal. However, the study is limited to official animated film lyrics, excluding live-action versions, visual elements, or audience reception. Future research could compare strategies across languages like Japanese or Arabic to explore cultural globalization or investigate local audience responses for deeper insights into preferences and emotional resonance, expanding the study into linguistics, musicology, and cultural anthropology.

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