

MEANING AND FORM IN NURSERY RHYMES TRANSLATION

MAKNA DAN BENTUK DALAM PENERJEMAHAN LAGU-LAGU ANAK

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Abstract

Translating nursery rhymes is not an easy task. The problems of equivalence in meaning and form as well as in the harmony between the translated lyrics and the music are aspects that need to be considered by the translators. By considering nursery rhyme lyric as poetry text, this research analyzes the equivalence of meaning and form in nursery rhymes translation. This research focuses on five nursery rhymes. The meaning analysis was done by conducting particular procedures on translation quality assessment. Meanwhile, the analysis of the form was conducted by comparing the two versions of the nursery rhymes focusing on the sound values. From the equivalence of meaning, the result shows that most nursery rhymes are translated less accurately. On the other hand, the finding of the equivalence in form shows that most of the auditory devices are deleted while most of the rhymes are shifted. This research is expected to give a contribution to song translation activities especially those involving children as the target listeners.

Keywords: *equivalence, accuracy, sound values, auditory devices, rhymes*

Abstrak

Menerjemahkan lagu anak bukanlah hal yang mudah. Masalah kesepadanan makna dan bentuk, serta harmonisasi antara lirik terjemahan dan musik adalah aspek-aspek yang harus dipertimbangkan oleh penerjemah. Dengan mempertimbangkan lirik lagu anak sebagai teks puisi, penelitian ini menganalisis kesepadanan antara makna dan bentuk dalam terjemahan lagu anak. Dengan menggunakan teknik sampling, penelitian ini berfokus kepada lima lagu anak. Analisis makna dilakukan dengan prosedur penelitian kualitas terjemahan sedangkan analisis bentuk dilakukan dengan membandingkan dua versi lagu anak dengan fokus kepada *sound values* (bunyi). Analisis kesepadanan makna menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar lagu anak diterjemahkan dengan kurang akurat. Dari segi bentuk, sebagian besar *auditory devices* dihapus sedangkan sebagian besar rima bergeser. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat

memberikan kontribusi terhadap penerjemahan lagu khususnya yang melibatkan anak-anak sebagai pendengar sasaran.

Kata kunci: *kesepadanan, keakuratan, sound values, auditory devices, rima*

Introduction

Nursery rhymes can be one of the most effective media for children to learn about environment, languages and even cultures. Singing nursery rhymes may help children to recognize their surroundings through short, interesting and entertaining rhyming lyrics. Generally, nursery rhymes are known as verse traditionally sung for children (The editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.). While some nursery rhymes were composed only to help children to learn about their environment, some ancient popular nursery rhymes, such as *Mary Had A Little Lamb* and *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, have strong relation with culture and history.

The popularity of English nursery rhymes stimulates the creativity of some Indonesians to translate the lyrics and compose the videos with the translated-lyrics version. Various nursery rhyme translations, from English into Indonesian, can be found easily in www.youtube.com. The lyrics are translated and then sung by Indonesians. The translated nursery rhymes help children to enjoy English nursery rhymes in their own language. It is also possible for children to listen to both versions of the nursery rhymes for it would also give benefits for their bilingual ability.

However, translating nursery rhymes is not a piece of cake. The translator must consider the meaning as well as the form. The fundamental theory of translation states that the most essential factor in translation activity is the ability of the translator to convey the meaning of the source language to the target language. However, form is also important in nursery rhymes. Particular sound values should also be considered in nursery rhyme translation since the beauty of a song is not only in its connotative and denotative meanings of the lyrics but also in its sound values. The dilemma puts the translators to decide whether to preserve the meanings or the sound values as their priority. Furthermore, as the translations are aimed to be sung using the original music, adjusting the translated lyrics with the original music is another difficulty that must be overcome by the translator.

Yang (2014) relates two main aspects of song translation which he named as the aesthetic object and the aesthetic subject. The aesthetic object refers to the song text and its melody consideration while the aesthetic subject refers to the perception of the translator, the singer, and the audience. By analyzing a song entitled *Edelweiss*, the research found out that the aesthetic subject must be the basis in order to reach the aesthetic object in song translation. This research does not employ particular procedure in assessing the accuracy of the meaning transferred for Yang underlines that the beauty of the song, which actually refers to the form, depends on the aesthetic subject. Thus, the interpretation of the lyric may differ from one person to others.

Meanwhile, Kholifah (2009) composed a research on the translation of song lyrics in *Hot Chord* magazine. The result shows that the translator emphasizes the transfer of meaning rather than the form. However, the interpretation of the accuracy is only based on the researcher's arguments. Particular procedures for assessing the translation quality, including questionnaire and an in-depth interview involving three

raters, should be conducted in order to achieve more valuable information about the quality of the translation (M. Nababan, Nuraeni, & Sumardiono, 2012).

This research analyzes the equivalence of meaning and form in nursery rhyme translation. The term "equivalence of meaning" signifies the accuracy of the message conveyed from the source language into the target language. Meanwhile, the term "equivalence of form" indicates the sound values rendered from the source language into the target language. The involvement of the sound values arises from the idea that nursery rhymes can be categorized as literary works, mainly as poetry, which contains some aspects of poetic devices; including assonance, consonance, alliteration, repetition, rhyme, etc. By analyzing the meaning and form in both versions, the English and Indonesian versions, the researcher finds out the tendency of the translators in translating the nursery rhymes, i.e whether the translators emphasize on the meaning or the form. The tendency is also correlated with the the purpose of the translation activity. This research is expected to give a contribution to song translation activities especially those involving children as the target listeners.

Translation is not only changing one language to other languages. Two major issues discussed in translation activity are the aspect of meaning and the aspect of form. Many experts in translation emphasize the importance of meaning in translation activity (Anderson & Brislin, 1976; M. Nababan et al., 2012; Newmark, 1988). The equivalence of meaning in translation is called as accuracy. The accuracy also involves the transfer of idea and thought from the source text into the target text. Accuracy is also one of the three most important aspects, besides acceptability and readability, in translation quality assessment.

Meanwhile, Bell (1991:6) also considers the importance of the language style. When translator deals with literary texts, the attempt of the translator to preserve the language style would contribute on the exquisiteness of the target text, for literary texts are always considered as texts that contain beauty on their language features.

There are many procedures for assessing the quality of a translation. This research uses TQA procedure proposed by Nababan, et al (2012). Three raters were involved in this research. The three raters must be people who have adequate knowledge of translation competence and have experience in translation activity. The procedure makes uses of a questionnaire and in-depth interview techniques. Using open questionnaire, the raters assess the translation quality with particular scale of accuracy (see Table 1). Each score represents the criterion of the translation itself. The in-depth interview would be useful when the information gained from the questionnaire is needed to be discussed with the raters.

Table 1 Scale for Scoring Accuracy (Nababan, et al: 2012)

Category	Score	Description
Accurate	3	The whole meaning of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences in the source text is conveyed in the target text. There are no distortions in meaning.
Less Accurate	2	The meaning of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences in the source text is mostly conveyed accurately in the target text. However, there are still distortions in meaning (deletion that distracts the meaning).
Inaccurate	1	The meaning of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences in the source text is not conveyed accurately in the target text, i.e. deletion.

As has been discussed above, song lyric is also considered as poetry. Thus, poetic devices, such as figurative language, sound values, verification, imagery, etc; can also be found in nursery rhyme lyrics. Among those poetic devices, **sound values** play important role in creating ear-catching sensation toward the songs. Sound values, including assonance, consonance, alliteration, repetition, rhyme, etc; affect the sound of the nursery rhymes that result on the memorable experience for the listeners.

In this research, the aspect of form relies on the sound values. The researcher underlines the transfer of sound values, particularly on the aspects of assonance, consonance, alliteration, repetition, and rhyme. The analysis would show whether the sound values are gained, shifted, or even deleted.

Method

This descriptive qualitative research intends to describe the equivalence of meaning and form in nursery rhyme translation. Two sources of data were employed: documents and informants. The documents are English nursery rhymes and their Indonesian versions. The Indonesian versions were downloaded from *Lagu Anak Indonesia* channel on www.youtube.com. Meanwhile, the informants are three raters who assessed the translation accuracy. Considering the research design, the researcher was involved as one of the three raters.

Using sampling technique, five nursery rhymes, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (Kelap Kelip Bintang di Langit)*, *Finger Family (Jari Jariku)*, *Baa Baa Black Sheep (Domba Hitam)*, *Wheels on the Bus (Roda Mobil Bis Berputar)*, and *Rain Go Away (Hujan Pergilah)*; were chosen as the data in this research. Purposive sampling technique was applied in selecting three raters using particular criteria (as stated in Literature Review).

The English and Indonesian versions were compared and analyzed per-line, except in the analysis of rhymes in which the songs were analyzed per-verse. The analysis was focused on the aspect of meaning (accuracy) and form (sound values).

Research Findings

Meaning in Nursery Rhyme Translation

The table below shows the result of the accuracy assessment:

Table 2 The Results of the Accuracy Assessment of Nursery Rhyme Translation

<i>Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (Kelap Kelip Bintang di Langit)</i>	
Category	Percentage
Accurate	25%
Less Accurate	50%
Inaccurate	25%
<i>Finger Family (Jari Jariku)</i>	
Category	Percentage
Accurate	75%
Inaccurate	25%
<i>Baa Baa Black Sheep (Domba Hitam)</i>	
Category	Percentage
Accurate	33%
Less Accurate	58%
Inaccurate	8%

Wheels on the Bus (Roda Mobil Bis Berputar)

Category	Percentage
Accurate	33%
Less Accurate	44%
Inaccurate	22%

Rain Go Away (Hujan Pergilah)

Category	Percentage
Accurate	79%
Less Accurate	4%
Inaccurate	17%

Based on the results as shown in table 2, it is found out that most of the nursery rhymes are translated less accurately, including *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, and *Wheels on the Bus*. Meanwhile, *Finger Family* and *Rain Go Away* shows highly accurate translation with the percentage of more than 70%.

A. Accurate Translation

Further analysis found out that the reason behind the highly accurate translation score for *Finger Family* and *Rain Go Away* is due to the repetition of several similar words, phrases, clauses, or sentences in the lyrics of both songs which are translated accurately. For example, *where are you* in *Finger Family* is translated into *di mana*; and *daddy wants to play* in *Rain Go Away* is translated into *ayah ingin bermain*.

There is also an interesting phenomenon in *Finger Family* and *Rain Go Away* lyrics. Both songs contain lyrics that introduce children with the terms about family members. The words *daddy*, *mommy*, *brother*, *sister*, and *baby* appear in both songs in order to introduce children with members of a family.

...	...
Brother finger, Brother finger, where are you? Here I am, here I am. How do you do?	Jari abang, jari abang di mana? Di sini di sini. Abang di sini.
Sister finger, Sister finger, where are you? Here I am, here I am. How do you do?	Jari kakak, jari kakak di mana? Di sini di sini. Kakak di sini.
Baby finger, Baby finger, where are you? Here I am, here I am. How do you do	Jari adik, jari adik di mana? Di sini di sini. Adik di sini.
...	...
	Parts of Finger Family lyric

The problem occurs when the translator must differentiate the meanings of *brother*, *sister*, and *baby* in Indonesian. In English, *brother* and *sister* are applicable for younger and elder siblings. In Indonesian, the most neutral term (can be male or female) for *brother* and *sister* is *kakak*. In *Finger Family* song, *sister* is translated into

kakak. On the other hand, with the interference of regional dialect, the translator decides to use variation technique in translating *brother* into *abang*. Meanwhile, literal translation in translating *baby* would be unnatural for Indonesians. Hence, *adik* which refers to a younger sibling is used to translate *baby*.

Rain, rain, go away.	Hujan pergilah
Come again another day.	Datanglah lain hari
BROTHER wants to play.	Kakak ingin bermain
Rain, rain, go away.	Hujan pergilah
Rain, rain, go away.	Hujan pergilah
Come again another day.	Datanglah lain hari
SISTER wants to play.	Adik ingin bermain
Rain, rain, go away.	Hujan pergilah
Rain, rain, go away.	-----
Come again another day.	-----
BABY wants to play.	-----
Rain, rain, go away	-----

Parts of Rain Go Away lyric

Although similar phenomenon also occurs in *Rain Go Away*, the ways the translator adjust the terms of the family members are rather different. Deletion techniques (whole omission) are seen in the verse that contains *baby*; while *brother* is translated into *kakak* and *sister* is translated into *adik*.

B. Less Accurate Translation

Reduction (partial omission) and addition techniques which are employed in translating most lines in *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* unfortunately result in less accurate translation. Those techniques distract the meaning of the source text. For example, the translation of *twinkle twinkle little star* into *kelap kelip bintang di langit* which reduce the phrase *little star* and add the phrase *di langit*. The more accurate translation should be *kelap kelip bintang kecil*. Another example of reduction that causes less accuracy is *like a diamond in the sky* which is translated into *indah bagai permata*. If accuracy is the priority in translating this nursery rhyme, the translator should not reduce *in the sky* which also has its equivalence in Indonesian, *di langit*.

Meanwhile, the dominant less accurate translation in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* is as a result of cultural untranslatability. *Baa Baa Black Sheep* is one of numerous nursery rhymes that comprises cultural and social background on it. The song tells about a master who asked a black sheep whether it produced wool or not. Then the sheep answered that it had three bags of wools that would be given to its master, dame, and to a little boy. This kind of social concept does not exist in the target language culture nowadays and, thus, it would probably be awfully understandable for children if the translator applies literal translation. Variation technique is applied in translating the terms *master*, *dame*, and *a little boy*. The translator uses family member terms so that the translation are *ayah (master)*, *ibu (dame)*, and *adikku (a little boy)*. The greeting *sir* on *yes Sir, yes Sir* is also categorized as cultural concept which is translated less accurately. *Sir* in this song refers to the master of the land who is respected by the

people. Reduction technique is applied by translating it into *ya aku punya*. As the result, the reduction technique erases the implicit meaning of the source text.

Inappropriate dictions used in translating some parts of the lyrics in *Wheels on the Bus* are the reason behind the highly less accurate score. For instance; *the wheels on the bus (roda roda mobil berputar)*, and *all through the town (sepanjang jalan)*. Although the meanings are mostly conveyed, the decision to choose inappropriate dictions alters the original version.

Furthermore, comprehend analysis shows that the main reason of “sacrificing” the meaning in this category is owing to the attempt of the translators to adjust the translated lyrics with the rhythm of the songs instead of focusing on the preciseness of the meaning.

C. Inaccurate Translation

Based on the data analysis, most inaccurate translations happen as the consequence of applying deletion technique. Parts of the songs, such as *how do you do (Finger Family)*, *who lives down the lane (Baa Baa Black Sheep)*, and *rain go away come again another day, baby wants to play (Rain Go Away)* are not translated or omitted in the target language. The first reason behind the deletion is due to the adjustment of the translated version with the rhythm of the music, as products of the translation are aimed to be sung. The other reason for deletion is because of the adjustment of particular term (*baby*) which affects the whole verse (see the discussion of *Rain Go Away*). Similarly, reduction technique, with the aim of simplifying the meaning of the source text so that the lyric and the rhythm of the song would be in harmony, also causes inaccuracy, as seen in the translation of *how I wonder what you are (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)* into *dari mana asalmu*.

Form in Nursery Rhyme Translation

The form aimed in this research includes some types of **sound values**. Four types of sound values found in this research are the consonant repetition at the beginning of words (alliteration), the similar vowel repetition (assonance), the identical consonance repetition before and after different vowels (consonance), word repetition (repetition) and rhymes. The analysis of the first four sound values was analyzed per-line while the analysis of the rhymes was analyzed per-verse. In order to make the analysis uncomplicated, the term **auditory devices** refer to alliteration, assonance, consonance, and repetition; whereas **rhymes** refer to the repetition of accented vowel sounds and all sounds following them in words that are close together.

The results of the form analysis were described as follows:

Table 3 The Results of the Form Analysis of Nursery Rhyme Translation

<i>Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (Kelap Kelip Bintang di Langit)</i>		
Category	Auditory Devices	Rhymes
Gained	-	-
Shifted	40%	100%
Deleted	60%	-
<i>Finger Family (Jari Jariku)</i>		
Category	Auditory Devices	Rhymes
Gained	67%	-
Shifted	-	100%

Deleted	33%	-
<i>Baa Baa Black Sheep (Domba Hitam)</i>		
Category	Auditory Devices	Rhymes
Gained	33%	100%
Shifted	67%	-
Deleted	-	-
<i>Wheels on the Bus (Roda Mobil Bis Berputar)</i>		
Category	Auditory Devices	Rhymes
Gained	41%	33%
Shifted	-	67%
Deleted	59%	-
<i>Rain Go Away (Hujan Pergilah)</i>		
Category	Auditory Devices	Rhymes
Gained	36%	-
Shifted	-	83%
Deleted	64%	17%

A. Gained

In *Finger Family* song, most of the auditory devices are conveyed in the target language. All lines which are categorized as gained auditory devices in this song are in the forms of repetitions (see Parts of *Finger Family* lyric). The same finding is also found in *Wheels on the Bus*. Other auditory devices gained in the target language is in the form of assonance as seen in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and *Rain Go Away*. For example: *have you any wool* is translated into *kau punya bulu?* and *daddy wants to playis* translated into *ayah ingin bermain* (the assonances are seen in the bold-typed parts).

Meanwhile, the translator successfully keeps all rhymes in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* song. Gained rhymes are also found in *Wheels on the Bus* although it is only in small number of percentage.

B. Shifted

Shifted category in the finding means that there are changes of one type of auditory devices into other types. Based on table 3 above, it is clearly seen that shifted in auditory devices occurs mostly in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and *Rain Go Away*. The types of auditory devices involve in this category are various, including: alliteration – assonance, assonance – repetition, consonance – alliteration, etc.

In rhymes analysis, shifted means that the translators do not keep the original rhymes so that the rhymes of the target languages are different from the original ones. Four nursery rhymes, or the majority of the data, show the shifts in rhymes.

C. Deleted

Deleted category in the auditory devices means that the auditory devices exist in the target language does not appear in the target language. Most of the data, including *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Wheels on the Bus* and *Rain Go Away* show that the translators delete the auditory devices of the source language on their translations. Meanwhile, deleted category in rhymes occurs as the result of deletion technique in translating particular verse of the songs. Deletion in rhymes is seen in *Rain Go Away* song due to the deletion of the fifth verse.

Discussion

The componential analysis of the two variables, meaning, and form, in this research is described in the following table:

Table 4 The componential analysis

Nursery rhymes	Accuracy	Auditory devices	Rhymes
<i>Twinkle Twinkle Little Star</i>	Less accurate	Deleted	Shifted
<i>Finger Family</i>	Accurate	Gained	Shifted
<i>Baa Baa Black Sheep</i>	Less accurate	Shifted	Gained
<i>Wheels on the Bus</i>	Less accurate	Deleted	Shifted
<i>Rain Go Away</i>	Less accurate	Deleted	Shifted

According to Table 4, four songs show less accuracy in the equivalence of meaning conveyed in the target language. The meanings in *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, *Wheels on the Bus* and *Rain Go Away* are actually conveyed almost accurately in the target languages. However, there is distortion in meanings that influence the preciseness of the whole meaning. From auditory devices aspect, most auditory devices are deleted whereas only one song in which the auditory devices are shifted and one song which is still kept the auditory devices form in the target language. Meanwhile, the rhymes in four nursery rhymes in this research are shifted while one nursery rhyme shows the preciseness in rhyme. Shifted and deleted in auditory devices also in rhymes depict that the translators put the form aspect aside in their translation activities.

The componential analysis as shown in Table 4 indicates that most translators emphasize in the equivalence of meaning rather than the form. Even though the dominant results in the meaning analysis are less accurate translations, these have been adequate evidences to interpret that most translators focus on the meanings. Further analysis shows that the less accuracy arises as the result of the translators' effort to make the translation versions in harmony with the original music. This is also reasonable as the purpose of the translation is not only to be read but also to be sung. Another aspect that influences the less accuracy is the dictions, i.e. the translation of *master* into *ayah* and *dame* into *ibu* in *Baa Baa Black Sheep*. In doing translation activity, translator also needs to consider the target readers. As the target listeners are children who need words or terms which are easy to understand, the word choices then decrease the level of accuracy.

Based on the text form and the language style, nursery rhymes can be treated as poetry. Thus, the phenomena in translating nursery rhymes are similar with the phenomena in translating poetry. Hence, in accordance with the results of this research, Newmark (1988:165) states that it is difficult for a translator to achieve a parallel effect in poetry translation. The difficulty gets harder when the poetry are in the forms of song lyrics which aim is to be sung. The translator must decide whether to emphasize the equivalence of the meaning or the equivalence of the form. This decision is also correlated with the target listeners (people who would listen to the translated versions are children). In this case, the beauty of the nursery rhymes is not only in the lyrics but also in the music. Thus, when they are translated, the unparalleled effect of the sound values in most nursery rhymes would not be a vital problem as long as the translated-lyric and the music are in harmony. Moreover, the target listeners do not have access to the source text, except when the nursery rhymes are used as the

media for second language learning so that their background knowledge about the source text would not influence them in enjoying the songs.

In accordance with the above analysis, considering the rhythm of the song which is sometimes “sacrificing” the meaning is not forbidden in song translation. Hutardo (in Cintrao, 2009) explains that one of the most important tasks for song translators is to create the symphony between the text and the music so that they need to adjust the linguistic unit to the musical rhythm. This statement can be the theoretical reason why most of the data show less accuracy in meaning.

From the aspect of translation techniques, the data analysis shows some influential techniques that can be used in translating English nursery rhymes into Indonesian. Reduction and addition, for example, can be applied in order to catch the harmony between the translated lyrics and the original music. Meanwhile, variation and deletion can be used to overcome cultural untranslatability as found in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and the overlap syntax meanings as found in *Rain Go Away* and *Finger Family*. In accordance with this, variation and deletion are parts of translation techniques that tend to be close to the target language culture (Nababan, 2010). Furthermore, Kaidl (Cintrao, 2009) states that domestication and globalization are possible in the transfer of meaning in song translation. In translation method stage, domestication and globalization are parts of translation methods that adjusted to the target language (Newmark, 1988:81). Applying target language-oriented translation methods and techniques would, logically, make the product of translation more acceptable and understandable for the target readers/listeners than applying those categorized as source language-oriented ones. Moreover, the choice of translation techniques also depend on the ability of the translators and, obviously, the purpose of the texts being translated (Ardi, 2016:152). However, every single decision in translation activity always has its own consequence. Even though the equivalence of both aspects, meaning and form, are not impossible to be gained; very often, the decision made by the translators would position them in choices: the meaning or the form as the priority. Thus, translation brief is needed before taking the very first step in translating the text. Translators should define the purpose of the translation first, whether to be read or to be sung, whether to be used only for entertainment or for a media of second language learning, etc. These considerations would contribute on the translation quality produced by the translators.

Conclusion

The analysis of five nursery rhymes, including *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* (Kelap Kelip Bintang di Langit), *Finger Family* (Jari Jariku), *Baa Baa Black Sheep* (Domba Hitam), *Wheels on the Bus* (Roda Mobil Bis Berputar), and *Rain Go Away* (Hujan Pergilah), shows that most nursery rhymes are translated less accurately. On the other hand, there are also changings in the form aspect found in most of the nursery rhymes. As the results of the translations are to be sung, the harmony of the translated versions with the music also becomes the consideration in translating the texts. This aspect, in some cases, also influences the accuracy of the meaning transferred. Overall, it can be concluded that most nursery rhyme translators put the equivalence of meaning as their priority rather than the equivalence of the form.

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Nursery Rhymes Videos

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