

## The Poetic Lyrics of Taylor Swift's Songs and Its Translation

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**Abstract-** Lyrics is a crucial part of the song, it usually contained by the message from the songwriter, it can created from imagination, moral message or personal experience and so on. The songwriter itself have their own style to create the lyrics. Some lyrics came with outspoken and some came with implicit way to convey what's the songwriter aim's. This research was made to identify poetical sentence contained in several Taylor Swift's lyric song, also to find out the meaning behind the lyrics written. This research used a qualitative method with collecting poetical sentence contained in three different song from Taylor Swift's newest album called The Tortured Poets Department; The Anthology, then translated into Indonesian as a target language (TL). In this research also conclude about how importance of translating song lyrics appropriately and acceptably for the audience without losing the message from songwriter, where in this case the songwriter uses poetic sentence to convey the interpretation of thought and feeling of the songwriter.

**Keywords:** Meaning; Poetic lyrics; Taylor Swift; The Tortured Poets Department; Translation

### I. INTRODUCTION

Music is part of the human art which is as an expression of heart that shape in the form of sound or composition through harmonization melodies to express the thoughts and feelings of the songwriter, Jamalus (1988). Music commonly contained with melodies and lyrics which inspired by various background. Song lyrics usually contained by imagination from the songwriter or it can be personal experience or a message that the songwriter want to convey. Nowadays people use music as a tool to express themselves, it is not only about the songwriter who can makes music, as a song listeners also usually try to find some music which can relate with their situation or feelings.

As the one of music enthusiast, the researcher get interest with the solo singer who's debut and released the first album on 2006 and newly finished the world tour concert, also 1 released the latest album on 2024 called The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology, Taylor Swift. As a singer and

songwriter Taylor Swift have been popular because she's often write song's about her personal experience in a love story, she write the lyrics to express her feelings and thoughts. Swift often write a lyric with poetic style, in this album Swift express her feeling and experience with an excellent wordplay which can be tricky to translate into TL without missing the intention of the songwriter.

Song lyrics is a part of modern poetry which offers a freer approach to form and structure compared to old poetry (Diva, 2024). Where old poetry is often shaped by key elements such as rhyme, rhythm, meter, and stanza to provide an aesthetic impression an emotional resonance in it (Max, 2023). The physical components of poetry consist of diction, imagery, and figurative language, while spiritual component involve theme, tone, and emotion, all of which collaborate to explore the expression of human experience (Bunga, et al., 2024; Wisang 2014).

The song lyrics are often viewed as a contemporary form of short poetry which created with rhythmic words and loose

structure that complements music (Agatha, 2023). Different from old poetry which has a strict rules, song lyrics are more flexible that allows the songwriter express emotion or messages and when it paired with melody, it can be a powerful medium for emotional and artistic communication, creating a deep connection with audiences through a blend of poetic and musical elements (Rogers, 2013; Delima, 2017; Diva, 2024). This combination of poetic techniques in modern styles showcases the lasting importance of poetry as a vibrant medium for self-expression.

According to Max (2023) and Diva (2024) there are three primary genres of poetry: narrative, dramatic, and lyrics. In narrative poetry there is epics and ballads both tell stories through verse and elements like plot, characters, also dialogue rely on rhythm and figurative language to create memorable and impactful storytelling. Epics poem are long, usually exploring heroic adventures from ancient time and often reflecting cultural values and tradition, meanwhile ballads are shorter with structured rhyme scheme and focused themes, often set to music and dealing with love, death, or historical events. Dramatic poetry shaped with emphasize character development, with personas expressing problems or conflicts through monologues and soliloquies. Where dramatic monologues present interaction with audience and soliloquies reveal inner thoughts of the poet's to the audience. And last is lyrics which characterized by its emotional depth and musicality, it includes sonnets which is a poem's with 14-line and love-themed; elegies poems that reflect about loss and hope; and odes, a poem that use to celebrate and praise subject in a formal tone. Each of them are expressing personal intentions such as feelings and thoughts of the poet's.

Song lyrics, which are type of poetry designed to be sung, can include different poetic types such as epic, ballad, sonnet, elegy, and ode (Max, 2023). Song lyrics are more closely associated with the rhythm of the accompanying music. Both poem and

song lyrics can help to creatively expressing message and emotion, and by understanding the basic elements of poetry such as voice, diction, sentence structure, imagery, figurative language, and rhythm help the audience gain insight to the artistic expression and meaning behind the poetic works and song lyrics, exposing the close connection between poetry and music (Diyani, 2004; Moore, 2018).

There are some relevant research papers translating poetic lyrics. The first is came from Diva (2024) contained analyzing techniques and quality of translation poetic lyrics on streaming music platform, she also discuss about types of poetry lyric within the theory of Max, (2023) and Diyanni, (2024). In her thesis, she found three types of poetic lyrics by using 41 sample and most all is elegy type found in the lyrics of TTPD song's. Another she discuss in her paper is translation accuracy and readability of the lyrics on Spotify as a streaming service with the theory of Nababan et al's, (2012) within the song 's from the album The Torture Pets Department: The Anthology, in this section she revealed that the translation provide by streaming music platform were deemed fully accurate. Another research of this album is from Kevin (2024) in his research, he analyze the uses of hyperbole in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's TTPD album. His research revealed that in TTPD album the most forms of hyperbole used were phrasal hyperbole and clausal hyperbole to conveying the message also to highlight the emotion of her feelings and thoughts.

This research came based on researcher interest within a poetic style in the lyrics song of The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology album. And this research is aim only to translating the poetic sentence which contained in Taylor Swift song's. Translating poetic sentence must be deliver the meaning contained of source language (SL) to target language (TL) with the same understanding message. Translation means deliver a closest message which is naturally and has equal meaning and style between source and target language, Nida and Taber (1974). And

Newmark (1988) said that the translation is transferring meaning of the source text into target language. This research is specially focused to translating poetic lyric of three different song from Taylor Swift's use Literal Translation method and also an opinion from the researcher point of view about the meaning behind the lyrics.

Therefore it can be define, in translating poetic lyric sentence the researcher must know about where the lyric will be translated, it is need a knowledge of the researcher to translate from source language. Also as the researcher and translator must be able to understand the meaning behind the lyrics before translated into target language. The reason why it is important of giving a good translation especially if it's has poetic style, so that the audience in target language would get a better understanding of the meaning and message of the song that has been translated. With this paper, the researcher has a purpose to the audience or music enthusiast may be able to get better understanding from foreign song, especially in some of Taylor Swift's song.

## II. METHODS

This research using qualitative method, according to Moleong (2005:6) "qualitative research aim's to understand the act, perception and motivation from the subject research through descriptive approach". The samples data of this research was obtained by collecting several part of song lyrics that has a poetic sentence from selected song in The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology album, in this study the researcher will translate the lyrics into Target Language using Literal Technique Translation method also with some opinion which the researcher want to try to give from researcher point of view about the meaning behind the poetical sentence in selected song. According to Nugraha (2024), "this allows researchers to contribute to related research on intrinsic elements contained in literary works of art, in

this case a song".

The data that will analyze here contained 8 poetical sentence from three different song's of one album. The sample data that will analyze in this research was obtained by individual observation with listening and watching the official lyric video on Taylor Swift Official YouTube to collecting some lyrics which has poetic style which viewed within the poetry theory of Max, (2023) encompassing narrative poetry and lyrics poetry. Then these data will be translate into target language to see acceptability of poetical translation result so that the right equivalent can be found in target language. All the data research will be discuss and displayed in the table from each song with the following explanation.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Translating is one of the activity which quiet tricky to be doing, in the translation the most crucial thing to be highlight is convey the meaning without losing it. In translating song lyrics which is in the form of poetic sentence and contained a metaphor, the translator required to understand the meaning behind. As mentioned that the use of metaphor in the lyric song is to create an aesthetic effect also to describe the expression of the songwriter. Therefore a good translation must be able to conveying the meaning with maintain the beauty of the literary elements, Putri,G., & Guthini, M. (2022). Based on the researcher experience when looking for the translation of Taylor Swift song in the internet there are some mistakes or unnaturally and unacceptable translation can be found, these case may be occurred because the translator misunderstand the meaning contained in the song, especially in the part of the poetic sentence and metaphor, the translator only translate the text freely and made the translation result sounds a little strange for the audience.

In this result and discussion section, same as the research by Nugraha (2024) the researcher get help from oxford dictionary

also the “kamusku” and “U-Dictionary” app to understand some of the terms or word contained in the lyrics by looking the meaning of it. In this section the research will presented the result and discussion of the collected data and the researcher will analyze the meaning and give the translation result of the sentence.

### 1. I Look In People’s Windows

The song that will be discuss first in this paper is the song called “I Look People’s Windows” from the album The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology. There are 2 poetic sentence will be discuss within the table below.

Source Language	Literal Meaning	Target Language
“A feather taken by the wind blowing, I’m afflicted by the not knowing”	This sentence depict the situation of sadness and clueless about something.	“Bulu yang terbawa oleh tiupan angin, aku menderita dalam ketidaktahuan”
“I tried searching faces on streets, what are the chances you’d be downtown”.	This sentence depict the situation of the narrator where she look around the street traying to find someone existence in the downtown.	“Aku coba melihat wajah-wajah di jalan, apakah mungkin kau ada di pusat kota”

Table.1 Poetic Sentence Translation of “I Look In People’s Windows”

The song “I Look In People’s Windows” which is the twenty fifth track from the TTPD album written by Taylor Swift, Patrick Berger, and Jack Antonoff. This song describe a tale of the old romantic connection between the narrator and someone in the past which ended so sudden, it gives characters of elegy that shows a situation of loss and hope. In this song the narrator show how she still longing and hoping for something in the past. The narrator is like want to tell how she’s trying to find an answer or a person from her past romantic connection.

In these selected lyrics the narrator tells about her sadness and clueless about the ending of their relationship or the existence of this person, the narrator describe herself as “a feather” which swept away by the wind, where “a feather” is a inanimate objects which is has no power, weak, brittle and it cannot move if there’s no something move them. The narrator feels the same as the feather, she feels like she’s suddenly carried away from her relationship and she’s got no clue about what did happened and now she’s trying to find “a faces” of that person, with a secret hope to encounter them again or maybe to get a clarity or a closure of the relationship.

### 2. The Black Dog

The next song that will be discuss is the song called “The Black Dog” from, there are 3 poetic sentence will be discuss within the table below.

Source Language	Literal Meaning	Target Language
“Six weeks of breathing clean air, I still miss the smoke”	This sentence describe a comparison between desire for healing and dependence on the past moment.	“Enam minggu setelah menghirup udara segar, aku masih merindukan asapnya”
“Hire a	This sentence	“Memanggil



priest to come and exorcise my demons, even if I die screaming”	depict how the narrator needed a help from somebody else to do something, even if it’s could kill the narrator.	pendeta untuk datang dan dan mengusir setan-setan ku, meskipun jika aku mati dengan teriakan”
“Old habits die screaming”	This sentence depict the pain of the narrator in letting of something she’s ever held.	“kebiasaan lama mati dalam teriakan”

Table. 2 Poetic Sentence Translation of “The Black Dog”

The song called “The Black Dog” is the seventeenth track from the TTPD album written by Taylor Swift. This song relate to a condition of heartbreak, desperation and unanswered question from the narrator. This song written by Taylor Swift where in this song Swift express her feeling with excellently wordplay. The title “The Black Dog” itself contained a meaning refers to depression and melancholy, Thinard (2019). It is consider as a ballad, the narrator trying to convey how she feels disappointed by her partner and how she’s struggle to moving on from her past relationship and evoke strong emotion.

In these selected lyrics show that the narrator still has a mixed feeling after the ended of her relationship, “breathing clean air” represent that the narrator is finally can letting go and trying to heal from a heartbreak also moving on from her past relationship but, in the other side she’s still lingering with it “the smoke” refers to the past attachment or memories she ever had where she’s still stuck in it. In the second and third sentence the narrator also want to tell

the audience how she’s struggle and desperate to moving on until she “hire a priest” means she need a help from somebody or something to erase all the past imagery which still haunted her “exorcise my demons”. The narrator is like want to tell that she will do anything to help her erase all the memories or the “old habits” of her past situation even if he would have to die with it.

### 3. “The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived”

The next song will be discuss here is the song called “The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived” from The Tortured Poets Department album. There are 3 poetic sentence that will be discuss within the table below.

Source Language	Literal Meaning	Target Language
“You hang me on your wall”	This sentence represent the feeling of being ignored like an displaying object on the wall	“Kau menggantung kan ku di dindingmu”
“Cause once your queen had come, you treat her like an also – ran ”	In this sentence represent the habit of someone who cannot treat his partner appropriately.	“Ketika ratu mu telah tiba, kau memperlakuk an hal yang sama”
“You kicked out the stage light, but you still performing ”	This sentence represent someone who don’t seems feel guilty after doing something bad.	“Kau menendang lampu panggung, tapi kau masih terus tampil”

Table.3 Poetic Sentence Translation of “The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived”

The last song in this study called “The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived” this is the fourteenth track from the TTPD album which written by Taylor Swift and Aaron Dessner. This song also tells about the past relationship of the narrator with the toxic partner. It is also consider as a ballad, where the narrator tells that she was ever being trapped in a relationship with a person which has a good figure but the fact he is a bad or toxic person who didn’t have a responsibility to his partner.

In these selected lyrics the narrator describe “this man” as a toxic partner, he cannot treat his partner appropriately. The narrator tells that be in relationship with “this man” make her feels being ignored just like an displaying object on the wall, and it becomes his habit to his partner. The word “queen” use to described a woman who deserved to be respected by a man in a relationship but “this man” cannot do the same as a man should do, he just doing his habit and give no respect. “This man” never feel guilty about what his done, still act like nothing happen even though he has ignoring and make his partner drown in emotional waves of heartbreak.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis, poetic sentence translation is a very important thing to pay high attention to. The use of poetic sentence in lyrics of the songwriter is to convey something implicitly to the audience. This study has a result that show how important it is to pay attention and understanding to the meaning of the sentence first before translating it, because poor translation result will be produce if the poetic sentence translated freely. In this research, the researcher know that the selected song which analyze here is the song that contained a tale of the heartbreak which is conveyed with a poetic sentence, where the first song tell about the narrator who still secretly searching and hoping for something in the past, the second song tell about how the

narrator so desperate to move on because she still shackled by memories in the past, and the last song is tell about the toxic ex-partner of the narrator who is irresponsible, like to ignore and has no guilt to his partner.

To conclude this research, the researcher would like to say that in completing this study there is may be contained some errors or shortcoming in it, so that the feedback or correction is still needed to be a lesson for the next. The researcher also hope that this study can be useful to contribute to the works of translation song.

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