

## **An Analytical Study of Translation Methods in the Song Rewrite the Stars by James Arthur and Anne-Marie: A Theoretical Application of Peter Newmark's Framework**

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**Abstract-** This study aims to analyze the translation methods employed in the Indonesian rendering of the song "Rewrite the Stars" by James Arthur and Anne-Marie, using Peter Newmark's (1988) classification of translation methods. Adopting a qualitative descriptive approach, the data were drawn from the original English lyrics and their Indonesian translation. Each line of the lyrics was examined to identify the translation method applied, including literal, faithful, semantic, communicative, and idiomatic translation. The findings reveal that communicative translation is the most dominant method (42%), followed by literal translation (26%), faithful translation (14%), semantic translation (12%), and idiomatic translation (6%). No instances of word-for-word, adaptation, or free translation were identified. These results suggest that the translator favors a communicative approach that prioritizes naturalness and comprehensibility in the target language, rather than methods that are overly rigid or excessively liberal. This study underscores the importance of selecting appropriate translation methods in song translation to ensure that emotional nuances, aesthetic qualities, and cultural elements are effectively conveyed to the target audience.

**Keywords:** translation methods, song lyrics, Rewrite the Stars, Newmark, communicative translation

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Language functions not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a reflection of human culture, identity, and collective emotional experience. Kramsch (1998) describes language as "the home of cultural experiences," shaping individuals' interpretations of the world. Similarly, Halliday (2004) conceptualizes language as a complex semiotic system that represents the worldview of its speakers. Supporting this view, Zaitova et al. (2025) argue that idioms embody non-literal meanings that cannot be fully understood through the analysis of their individual lexical components.

In an era of intensified globalization, translation serves as a crucial intercultural bridge. Catford (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of a text in one language by an equivalent text in another language," while House (2015) extends this concept by underscoring the importance of pragmatic and cultural equivalence, not merely linguistic accuracy. Venuti (2000) further

highlights the tension between remaining faithful to the source text and ensuring readability for the target audience, introducing the notion of "sense-for-sense translation," which reflects the shift toward audience-centered interpretation.

Translating song lyrics presents additional challenges due to the need to preserve aesthetic and musical qualities such as rhythm, rhyme, and emotional resonance. Susilawati et al. (2023) observe that literal translation methods often diminish the expressive force of lyrics. Correspondingly, Satriawan (2016) notes that figurative language and idiomatic expressions in songs demand translation strategies that respect both cultural aesthetics and fluency. Andayani et al. (2023) similarly emphasize that successful translation of idioms in song lyrics requires deep cultural understanding and strategic decision-making.

Peter Newmark (1988) categorizes translation methods into eight types, ranging from word-for-word translation to adaptation.

In Approaches to Translation, Newmark (1981) distinguishes between semantic translation, which prioritizes fidelity to the source text, and communicative translation, which aims to evoke a comparable response in the target audience. Studies such as Sihitea et al. (2024) demonstrate that freer forms of translation are commonly employed in song translation to maintain emotional and artistic impact, as shown in their analysis of the song “Cintanya Aku.”

The song “Rewrite the Stars” exemplifies the intricate balance between meaning and form in the translation of lyrical texts. Larson (1998) asserts that, in literary texts including song lyrics, aesthetic qualities form an essential part of the message, requiring translators to harmonize meaning with artistic nuance. Consistent with this, Ye et al. (2024), in *Sing It, Narrate It: Quality Musical Lyrics Translation*, argue that the main challenge in translating song lyrics lies in preserving singability—length, rhyme, and rhythm—without compromising translation quality.

This study aims to analyze the translation methods applied in Indonesian versions of the lyrics of “Rewrite the Stars” using Newmark’s theoretical framework. Specifically, it seeks to identify strategies such as idiomatic, free, adaptation, communicative, and semantic translation across various translated renditions. This focus aligns with the methodological approaches used in prior studies (Sihitea et al., 2024; Satriawan, 2016) that assess the effectiveness of translation techniques in conveying original meaning while retaining emotional and artistic nuance.

The song was selected due to its global popularity and the abundance of translated versions, including subtitles and cover lyrics. As Low (2015) notes, diverse musical genres and contexts create a range of translation challenges, with “approximation and appropriation” offering a useful lens through which to understand the relationship between an original song and its translated form.

Previous research further illustrates the

varied strategies used in song translation. Diani et al. (2022) found that adaptation and communicative translation were commonly employed to maintain the emotional impact of Demi Lovato’s songs. Patmawati and Jayantini (2024) reported that idiomatic and free translation helped preserve Taylor Swift’s stylistic identity. Likewise, Sihitea et al. (2024) demonstrated that free translation plays a dominant role in song translation due to its artistic flexibility.

Guided by Newmark’s theoretical framework, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper methodological understanding of song lyric translation. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for translators, educators, and students of linguistics in designing translation strategies that balance cultural and artistic nuance with fidelity to the source text.

## II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method that aims to analyze the translation methods used in the Indonesian version of the lyrics of the song “Rewrite the Stars” by James Arthur and Anne-Marie. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it focuses on the interpretation of textual data and the identification of translation strategies based on Newmark’s (1988) theoretical framework. This research is textual and interpretive, not quantitative or statistical.

The primary data in this study are the original English lyrics of the song “Rewrite the Stars” (source language or SL) and its Indonesian translation (target language or TL), which were obtained from trusted online sources such as official lyrics sites and public subtitles. These two versions of the lyrics serve as the main basis for analyzing the types of translation methods used in each line of the song, especially in transferring emotional messages, poetic tones, and idiomatic meanings.

The data collection process was carried out through observation and documentation techniques. The initial step was taken by

downloading the complete lyrics of the song “Rewrite the Stars” in English and its Indonesian translation. After that, the lyrics were divided line by line to form parallel pairs between SL and TL. Each pair was then arranged in a table format to facilitate the process of comparison and linguistic analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, each pair of SL-TL lyrics lines was identified and treated as a unit of analysis. Then, the unit was analyzed to determine the translation method used, based on the classification of methods proposed by Peter Newmark (1988), such as word-for-word, literal, semantic, communicative, free translation, idiomatic, and adaptation. After the methods were classified, an interpretation was made regarding the effectiveness of their application in conveying the original meaning, emotional tone, and cultural relevance of the song to an Indonesian-speaking audience.

The results of the analysis are presented in tabular and narrative form. The tables serve to visually and systematically display the classification of translation methods for each line of lyrics, while the narrative explanations provide an in-depth qualitative analysis. This analysis includes the reasons for choosing a particular method, the extent

to which the method maintains the meaning and style of the language, and how the translator balances between fidelity to the source text and flexibility in the target culture. This dual presentation allows the reader to understand both the technical and reflective aspects of the practice of translating song lyrics.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After reading the lyrics of the song “*Rewrite the Stars*” in English (SL) and Indonesian translation (TL), the researcher identified and matched parallel lines from both versions to be analyzed based on Peter Newmark’s (1988) translation method. Each text unit was compared in terms of sentence structure, meaning, emotion, and cultural context.

The identification process is carried out by matching each line of lyrics (SL) with its translation equivalent (TL), then determining the most appropriate method based on form, meaning, and level of naturalness in Indonesian. Based on the classification results, the following distribution of the frequency of use of the method was obtained:

Translation Method	Total	Percentage %
Communicative Translation	21	42 %
Literal Translation	13	26 %
Faithful Translation	7	14 %
Semantic Translation	6	12 %
Idiomatic Translation	3	6 %
Word-for-word Translation	0	0 %
Adaptation	0	0 %
Free Translation	0	0 %

Tabel 1

The table above presents the distribution of the use of translation methods based on Peter Newmark's theory (1988) in the lyrics of the song "Rewrite the Stars". There are a total of 50 lines of lyrics analyzed from English (SL) to Indonesian (TL), and each is classified into one of Newmark's eight translation methods.

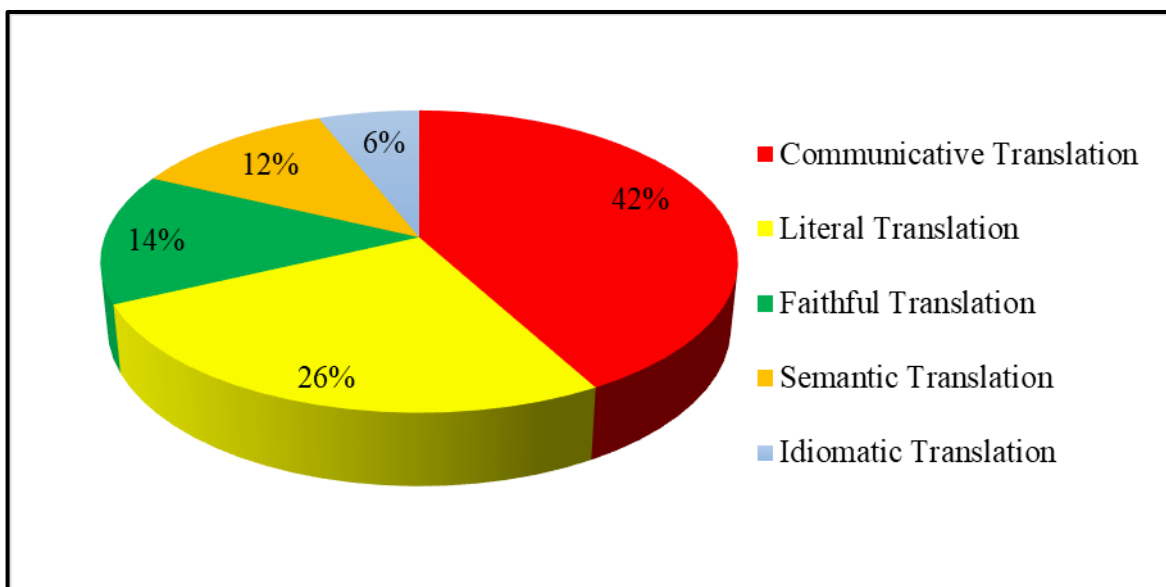
The results show that only five methods are used by translators: *communicative, literal, faithful, semantic, and idiomatic translation*.

1. **Communicative Translation** used 21 times (42%), indicating the translator's preference for conveying meaning that is natural and easy for the audience to understand.
2. **Literal Translation** occurs in 13 lines (26%), often applied to sections that are structurally and meaningfully simple

3. **Faithful Translation** dan **Semantic Translation** used more limitedly (14% and 12%), usually for phrases that want to stay true to the original message or contain emotional overtones.

4. **Idiomatic Translation** only used 3 times (6%), indicating that the idiomatic phrases in this song are not too dominant or intentionally distorted literally or communicatively.

Meanwhile, Word-for-word, Adaptation, and Free Translation are not used at all in this lyric. This can be interpreted that the translator does not choose extreme approaches such as translating word for word (which can cause rigidity), or adapting freely which can change the original meaning. This choice reflects a translation strategy that is careful and focused on the balance between meaning and fluency.



The pie chart shown above illustrates the visual proportion of each translation method used. The colour and size of the slices in the diagram provide a more intuitive picture of the dominance of a particular method. From

the visualization, it is clear that Communicative Translation occupies the largest slice, emphasizing its position as the main method used by translators. Followed by Literal Translation, which also occupies a



significant portion. The slice sizes for Faithful, Semantic, and Idiomatic are much smaller, indicating their use is more limited. Meanwhile, there are no slices for Word-for-word, Adaptation, and Free Translation, confirming that these three methods are not used at all.

### 1) Literal Translation

The literal translation method translates text directly from the source language to the target language, without changing the word order, grammatical structure, or lexical meaning. This technique is very effective if the sentence structure in the source and target languages is relatively similar, and if the source text does not contain idioms, metaphors, or cultural elements that require adaptation.

- **SL:** *You know I want you*
- **TL:** *Kau tahu aku menginginkanmu*

This sentence is transferred into Indonesian directly without any structural changes or additional words. The word “you” becomes “kau”, “know” becomes “tahu”, and “I want you” is translated into “aku inginmu”. There are no idioms or cultural expressions in this sentence, so the literal method can be applied effectively. The result remains natural in the target language because the structure and meaning are universal.

- **SL:** *It's up to you, and it's up to me*
- **TL:** *Semua tergantung padamu, dan padaku*

Despite the slight differences in structure, this translation is still categorized as literal because it maintains the syntactic relationship and the meaning of each word. The source sentence contains the idiomatic expression “it's up to you”, but because this idiom is common and has a direct equivalent in Indonesian (*tergantung padamu*), the translation remains literal. This shows that not all idioms should be translated idiomatically if their literal equivalent is widely accepted.

- **SL:** *You think it's easy*
  - **TL:** *Kau pikir ini mudah*
- This is a very simple short sentence.

The S-P-O structure in English can be directly translated into Indonesian with a similar structure: “You” (*kau*) – “think” (*pikir*) – “it's easy” (*ini mudah*). Since it does not contain any hidden meaning or special cultural context, the literal method is the most logical choice. The result still sounds natural and not awkward in the target language.

- **SL:** *We're bound to break and my hands are tied*
- **TL:** *Kita pasti akan hancur dan tanganku terikat*

This sentence actually contains the idiom “my hands are tied,” which means “I am powerless” or “I have no choice.” However, in this literal translation, the idiom is not interpreted for its meaning but is instead translated word-for-word as “my hands are tied.” While it may still be understandable in a literal sense, the emotional and implicit meaning might not be fully conveyed. This illustrates the limitations of a literal approach when dealing with idioms or figurative expressions. However, if the context of the song supports a visual or symbolic interpretation, this literal translation might be considered sufficiently appropriate.

### 2) Faithful Translation

The faithful translation method aims to accurately convey the message of the source text into the target language while preserving the original structure, meaning, and nuances. However, unlike literal translation, this method is more flexible in adjusting grammar and style to maintain naturalness in the target language without compromising meaning. Its main goal is to remain faithful to the message and intent of the original author

- **SL:** *It's not a secret I try to hide*
- **TL:** *Ini bukan rahasia yang ingin aku sembunyikan*

This translation remains faithful to the structure and content of the source sentence. Although it could have been translated literally, the translator chose to rearrange the sentence structure to make it flow more

naturally in Indonesian. The phrase "*I try to hide*" becomes "*yang ingin aku sembunyikan*" instead of "*aku coba sembunyikan*," in order to maintain clarity and naturalness in the context of the song. This reflects the core principle of the faithful method: loyalty to the intended meaning without neglecting grammatical fluency in the target language.

- **SL:** *You'll be the one I was meant to find*
- **TL:** *Kau akan jadi orang yang seharusnya kutemukan*

The translator preserves the structure of the source sentence but makes small adjustments to maintain clarity in Indonesian. The phrase "*I was meant to find*" is translated as "*yang seharusnya kutemukan*," which implies destiny without rendering it as "*aku ditakdirkan menemukan*," which would sound awkward. This demonstrates an effort to retain the implicit meaning of the word meant in a form that feels more natural to Indonesian readers.

- **SL:** *And there are doors that we can't walk through*
- **TL:** *Dan ada pintu yang tidak bisa kita lewati*

This sentence is a form of faithfulness to the logical structure of the original text. The translation maintains the symbolic meaning of "*door*" as an obstacle or limitation without changing it into another metaphor. Although the literal meaning is acceptable, the reordering of the phrase is done to be in line with the grammatical habits of the Indonesian language. This is a characteristic of faithful translation—it does not add or subtract meaning, only adjusts the flow.

- **SL:** *Because we're able to be just you and me within these walls*
- **TL:** *Karena kita bisa hanya menjadi kau dan aku di dalam dinding ini*

The translator maintains the original message and sentence structure, including the nuance of the limited space of "*within these walls*". Rather than replacing the phrase with another idiom or expanding the meaning, the

translator is faithful to the original sound and content of the song. The sentence still sounds like song lyrics and contains a strong emotional meaning about alienation or social boundaries, which is an important part of the song's message.

### 3) Communicative Translation

The communicative translation method emphasizes on delivering messages that are easy to understand and feel natural to readers or listeners of the target language. Sometimes, this method sacrifices the form and structure of the original sentence for the sake of communication effectiveness. Adjustments are often made so that the meaning is conveyed according to the culture and logic of the target reader.

- **SL:** *I know you want me*
- **TL:** *Aku tahu kau juga menginginkanku*

The word "*juga*" is not in the source text, but is added in the translated version to clarify the reciprocal relationship in feelings of love. This is done so that the reader feels the emotional closeness of the two characters more real. By adding one word, the relational meaning and narrative flow become clearer for Indonesian speakers.

- **SL:** *Say that the world can be ours, tonight*
- **TL:** *Katakanlah dunia bisa jadi milik kita, malam ini*

The sentence structure is adjusted to feel like a poetic and romantic statement in Indonesian. The addition of the particle "*lah*" and the changed word order show that this translation is oriented towards the style of speech in the lyrics, not just the accuracy of the words. The goal is for the emotional message to be conveyed effectively to local listeners.

- **SL:** *What if we rewrite the stars?*
- **TL:** *Bagaimana jika kita menulis ulang bintang-bintang?*

Literally, this phrase is already comprehensible. However, the use of "*bagaimana jika*" ("*what if*") indicates that the

translator opted for a common and natural interrogative structure in Indonesian, rather than retaining the direct construction of the source text. This choice enhances the reader's emotional engagement with the translation.

- **SL:** *All I want is to fly with you*
- **TL:** *Yang kuinginkan hanyalah terbang bersamamu*

This translation is made as communicative and emotional as possible. The word "*hanyalah*" is used to emphasize the deep feeling, even though it is not in the source text. This translation pays attention to the romantic nuances in the lyrics and conveys it more touchingly in the context of Indonesian culture.

#### 4) Semantic Translation

The semantic translation method emphasizes the transfer of contextual and emotional meaning from the source language to the target language. This method is often used when the text contains idioms, metaphors, or cultural expressions. Different from communicative, this method is more respectful of the original form and nuance, but still considers the suitability with the target language.

- **SL:** *So don't keep sayin' our hands are tied*
- **TL:** *Jadi jangan terus bilang tangan kita terikat*

The phrase "*our hands are tied*" is an idiom in English that means we have no choice or freedom. This translation does not change the idiom into a free form, but maintains its metaphorical form in Indonesian. The implicit meaning can still be understood because the idiom is quite common and visual.

- **SL:** *And fate is pullin' you miles away and out of a reach from me*
- **TL:** *Dan takdir menarikmu jauh dariku*

This translation simplifies long phrases without losing their main meaning. Words like "*miles away*" and "*out of reach from me*" are combined into "*jauh dariku*".

This shows a semantic approach that prioritizes meaning, not literal form, while still maintaining a poetic tone.

- **SL:** *You're gonna wake up and see that it was hopeless after all*
- **TL:** *Kau akan terbangun dan melihat bahwa semua ini sia-sia*

This translation conveys the emotional meaning of failed expectations without adhering to the lengthy structure of the source sentence. The word "*hopeless*" is rendered as "*sia-sia*," which, in the Indonesian context, carries a deeper and more emotional resonance. This reflects a semantic strategy aimed at effectively expressing a profound sense of despair.

- **SL:** *Changin' the world to be ours*
- **TL:** *Mengubah dunia agar jadi milik kita*

The translation is carried out semantically to preserve the poetic meaning of the sentence. The structure is modified to align with the grammar and expressive style of the Indonesian language. Instead of retaining the phrase "*to be ours*," the translator opts for "*agar jadi milik kita*," which flows more smoothly and conveys a clearer meaning in the target language.

#### 5) Idiomatic Translation

The idiomatic translation method aims to replace idioms or typical expressions in the source language with equivalent idioms in the target language, so that the meaning is still conveyed naturally. The focus is not on word for word, but on the effect and meaning that is intended to be conveyed.

- **SL:** *You claim it's not in the cards*
- **TL:** *Kau bilang ini bukan takdir kita*

The idiom "*not in the cards*" literally means something that will not happen or is not destined to occur. In this translation, the idiom is replaced with an equivalent expression in Indonesian: "*bukan takdir kita*" ("*not our fate*"). This is an effective idiomatic translation, as it preserves both the intended meaning and the emotional nuance of the

original expression.

- **SL:** *But there are mountains*
- **TL:** *Tapi ada rintangan*

The word “*mountains*” literally means “*gunung*,” but in the context of the song, it serves as a metaphor for obstacles or challenges. The translation “*rintangan*” is idiomatic, as it does not render the term literally but instead captures the figurative meaning intended by the songwriter.

- **SL:** *We're bound to break and my hands are tied*
- **TL:** *Kita pasti akan hancur dan tanganku terikat*

Although the phrase “*my hands are tied*” can be translated literally, its actual meaning is “*I can't do anything*.” In this context, the translator chooses to retain the idiomatic form in the Indonesian version, which can still be understood as a metaphor. This decision reflects alignment with the lyrical style of the song.

Overall, the analysis of translation methods in the song “*Rewrite the Stars*” shows that each approach—whether literal, faithful, communicative, semantic, or idiomatic—has an important role in conveying the meaning and nuance of the lyrics to the target audience. The application of these methods depends not only on the structure of the source language, but also on the emotional, cultural, and aesthetic contexts that are to be maintained in the target language. In the context of translating song lyrics, the success of a translation is not only measured by word-for-word accuracy, but also by its ability to convey the feelings, rhythm, and beauty contained therein. Therefore, the translator's flexibility and sensitivity in choosing the appropriate method are the main keys to producing an effective and meaningful translation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the lyrics of the song “*Rewrite the Stars*”, it can be concluded that the translator applies various

translation methods classified in Peter Newmark's theory. Of the five methods identified, communicative translation is the most dominant because it is able to convey messages naturally and emotionally to the target audience. On the other hand, the literal and faithful methods are also widely used to maintain the original structure and meaning, especially in parts of the lyrics that are not too complex idiomatically. The semantic and idiomatic methods are applied to parts that require deeper interpretation of cultural and emotional meanings.

The absence of word-for-word, adaptation, and free translation methods indicates that the translator chose a strategy that balanced between fidelity to the source text and acceptability in the target language. This is important in the context of translating song lyrics, because in addition to conveying meaning, the translation must also maintain emotion, rhyme, and artistic nuance. Therefore, the conclusion of this study confirms that choosing an appropriate, flexible, and sensitive translation method to the cultural and emotional context is the key to producing an effective and meaningful translation of song lyrics.

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