

A Descriptive Analysis of Translation Methods Found in The Book of Ecclesiastes

Mario Pellondou

Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Mentari Kupang

pellondoumar@gmail.com

Abstract - The aim of this research is to analyze the bible translation by using methods of translation theory by Newmark (1988). This research was a qualitative research that focused to analyze the Book of Ecclesiastes. Bible entitled New King James Version (NKJV) and Alkitab Terjemahan Baru 2 (2023) were the data sources used. It was published by The Indonesian Bible Society. The book consists of 12 chapters. Informal method was used to present the results of the analysis. It was the explanation of the translation methods used. Formal method was used to describe the table of the frequency of the translation methods applied in the bible translation found in the old testament bible of Ecclesiastes. The translation methods found in data source were word for word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. Adaptation was not found in all chapters of data source. The most translation method applied in the old testament bible of Ecclesiastes was free translation. Free translation had the highest percentage in every chapter in the old testament bible of Ecclesiastes. In the other word, the translator tried to transfer the meaning from source text into target text with changing the form based on cultures in target language.

Keywords: bible translation, holy text, translation method

I. INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a vital medium through which humans convey ideas and emotions. Translation bridges the gap between languages and cultures, allowing messages to be understood globally. According to Newmark (1988), translation involves rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text.

The Bible is one of the most translated books in human history (Kennedy & Newcombe, 1999). Among its books, Ecclesiastes presents unique challenges because of its poetic, reflective,

and philosophical language that discusses the nature of life, wisdom, and mortality. The expressions “vanity of vanities” or “a time to be born and a time to die” carry deep meaning that must be conveyed accurately and naturally in the target language.

This research aims to identify and classify the translation methods used in the Indonesian version of Ecclesiastes (Kitab Pengkhotbah), focusing on how meaning is transferred from the English source text (ST) to the Indonesian target text (TT) following Newmark’s seven methods of translation.

II. METHODS

This study was qualitative descriptive research that sought to understand the linguistic phenomenon of Bible translation. The data consisted of phrases, clauses, and sentences taken from Ecclesiastes (12 chapters) in the New King James Version (NKJV) and the Alkitab Terjemahan Baru 2 (LAI, 2023).

The analysis followed Newmark's (1988) classification of translation methods: word-for-word, literal, faithful, semantic, free, idiomatic, and communicative translation. Observation and note-taking methods were used to

collect data. The results were presented using the informal method (explanation in sentences) and the formal method (through a table of translation method frequency).

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

From the result of the analysis, it can be found that several translation methods were used in translating Ecclesiastes from English into Indonesian. The frequency and distribution are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Translation Methods Found in Old Testament Bible Of Ecclesiastes

Methods of Translation Found in Bible Translation									
	Word for word translation	Literal translation	Faithful translation	Semantic translation	Adaptation	Free translation	Idiomatic translation	Communicative translation	Total
Cp 1	8%	12%	10%	10%		60%			100%
Cp 2		20%	30%			50%			100%
Cp 3	7%	10%	8%			75%			100%
Cp 4		15%	10%			75%			100%
Cp 5		20%	15%			65%			100%
Cp 6		12%	13%			75%			100%
Cp 7	8%	12%	10%	5%		65%			100%
Cp 8		10%	10%			70%	10%		100%
Cp 9		10%	10%			80%			100%
Cp 10	6%	12%	12%			60%	10%		100%
Cp 11		10%	25%	5%		60%			100%
Cp 12		10%	10%			72%		8%	100%

Based on the table above, it was said that free translation was the most frequently applied translation method in Ecclesiastes. Word for word translation was found in chapters 1, 3, 7, and 10. Literal translation appears across many chapters (Cp 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Faithful translation was found in all chapters. Semantic translation was found in chapter 1, chapter 7, and chapter 11. Idiomatic translation was found in chapter 8 and chapter 10, while communicative translation was applied in chapter 12. Adaptation was not found in any chapter.

Free translation was found in every chapter. Idiomatic translation was limited to chapters 8 and 10. Communicative translation appeared only in chapter 12. The translation methods used in each chapter and their distributions are described in the detailed method-by-method section that follows.

1. Word for Word Translation

- a. SL (Ecclesiastes 1:2)
“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 1:2)
Kesia-siaan belaka, kata Pengkhotbah, kesia-siaan belaka, segala sesuatu adalah sia-sia.
- b. SL (Ecclesiastes 3:20)
“All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all return to dust.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 3:20)
Semuanya menuju satu tempat; semuanya berasal dari debu dan semuanya kembali menjadi debu.
- c. SL (Ecclesiastes 7:2)

“It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.”

TL (Pengkhotbah 7:2)

Lebih baik pergi ke rumah duka daripada pergi ke rumah pesta.

In the first data above, the expression “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” was translated into “Kesia-siaan belaka, segala sesuatu adalah sia-sia.” The translator only searched for equivalent words in the target language and translated them directly without changing the sentence structure. Therefore, the method applied was word for word translation.

In the second data, the text “All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all return to dust” was translated as “Semuanya menuju satu tempat; semuanya berasal dari debu dan semuanya kembali menjadi debu.” The translator translated word by word, maintaining the order and grammatical pattern of the source text.

In the third data, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting” became “Lebih baik pergi ke rumah duka daripada pergi ke rumah pesta.” The translator again used a word-for-word procedure, translating each word directly while keeping the same syntactic sequence as in the source text.

2. Literal Translation

- a. SL (Ecclesiastes 3:1)
“For everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 3:1)

Untuk segala sesuatu ada masanya, untuk apapun di bawah langit ada waktunya.

b. SL (Ecclesiastes 8:7)

“For he does not know what will happen; so who can tell him when it will occur?”

TL (Pengkhotbah 8:7)

Karena ia tidak mengetahui apa yang akan terjadi; siapakah yang dapat mengatakan kapan hal itu akan terjadi?

In the first data, the source text “For everything there is a season” was translated into “Untuk segala sesuatu ada masanya.” The translator slightly adjusted the structure but still kept the original meaning and order. The method used was literal translation, where the grammatical form is changed only to fit the rules of the target language.

The second data “He does not know what will happen” was translated as “Ia tidak mengetahui apa yang akan terjadi.” The translator applied literal translation by transferring the message directly but adapting word order to produce natural Indonesian grammar.

3. Faithful Translation

a. SL (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

“Do not be rash with your mouth, and don’t let your heart be hasty to utter anything before God.”

TL (Pengkhotbah 5:2)

Janganlah terburu-buru dengan mulutmu, dan janganlah hatimu lekas-lekas mengeluarkan perkataan di hadapan Allah.

b. SL (Ecclesiastes 9:12)

“For man also does not know his time.”

TL (Pengkhotbah 9:12)

Karena manusia tidak mengetahui waktunya.

In the first data, “Do not be rash with your mouth” was translated into “Janganlah terburu-buru dengan mulutmu.” The translator was faithful to the contextual meaning and style of the original text without omitting or adding new elements. The translation reflects faithful translation, which preserves grammatical and contextual meaning from the source text.

In the second data, the short sentence “For man also does not know his time” was rendered as “Karena manusia tidak mengetahui waktunya.” The translator conveyed the original idea precisely and retained the same syntactic structure, showing the characteristics of faithful translation.

4. Semantic Translation

a. SL (Ecclesiastes 11:8)

“Yes, for if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all, but let him remember the days of darkness.”

TL (Pengkhotbah 11:8)

Oleh sebab itu jikalau orang panjang umurnya, biarlah ia bersukacita di dalamnya, tetapi hendaklah ia ingat akan hari-hari yang gelap.

b. SL (Ecclesiastes 7:14)

“In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider.”

TL (Pengkhotbah 7:14)

Pada hari mujur bergembiralah,
tetapi pada hari malang ingatlah.

In the first data, the translator rendered “rejoice in them all” as “biarlah ia bersukacita di dalamnya.” The translation keeps the expressive tone of the text and focuses on meaning rather than structure. This method is called semantic translation because it emphasizes the sense and emotional color of the source message.

In the second data, “In the day of prosperity be joyful” was translated as “Pada hari mujur bergembiralah.” The translator conveyed the idea smoothly and adjusted the emotional expression into a natural form in Indonesian.

5. Free Translation

- a. SL (Ecclesiastes 9:10)
“Whatever your hand finds to do,
do it with your might.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 9:10)
Segala sesuatu yang dijumpai
tanganmu untuk dikerjakan,
kerjakanlah itu sekuat tenaga.
- b. SL (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
“Remember also your Creator in
the days of your youth.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 12:1)
Ingatlah akan Penciptamu pada
masa mudamu.

In the first data, “Whatever your hand finds to do” was translated into “Segala sesuatu yang dijumpai tanganmu untuk dikerjakan.” The translator paraphrased the idea in a natural way to make it clear for readers. The translation focuses on meaning rather than literal form, so this is free translation.

In the second data, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth” became “Ingatlah akan Penciptamu pada masa mudamu.” The translator simplified the phrase “in the days of your youth” to make it more fluent and communicative in Indonesian, typical of free translation.

6. Idiomatic Translation

- a. SL (Ecclesiastes 8:15)
“Then I commended mirth, because
a man has no better thing under the
sun than to eat, to drink, and to be
joyfull.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 8:15)
Oleh sebab itu aku memuji
kesukaan, karena tidak ada
kebahagiaan lain bagi manusia di
bawah matahari kecuali makan,
dan minum, dan bersukaria.
- b. SL (Ecclesiastes 10:2)
“A wise man’s heart is at his right
hand, but a fool’s heart at his left.”
TL (Pengkhotbah 10:2)
Hati orang berhikmat menuju ke
kanan, tetapi hati orang bodoh ke
kiri.

In the first data, “to eat, to drink, and to be joyfull” was translated as “makan, dan minum, dan bersukaria.” The translator used a natural Indonesian idiom to convey the expression of joy, showing idiomatic translation.

In the second data, “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand” became “Hati orang berhikmat menuju ke kanan.” The translator used figurative meaning instead of literal direction, showing an idiomatic approach to express moral contrast.



7. Communicative Translation

a. SL (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

TL (Pengkhotbah 12:13)

Takutlah akan Allah dan berpeganglah pada perintah-perintah-Nya, karena ini adalah kewajiban setiap orang.

In this verse, the translator rendered “for this is the whole duty of man” into “karena ini adalah kewajiban setiap orang.” The translator chose words that are easier to understand for Indonesian readers, ensuring that the message of fearing God and obeying His commandments is clearly communicated. This verse exemplifies communicative translation, where the priority is to make the text understandable and natural to the reader while keeping the original message intact.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the result and discussion above, it can be concluded that there were seven translation methods applied in the Old Testament Bible of Ecclesiastes, namely: word for word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. Adaptation was not found in any chapter. From the analysis, the most dominant translation method found was free translation, since it appeared in all chapters of Ecclesiastes. This shows that the translator preferred to focus on transferring the meaning and message naturally into the target language rather than maintaining

the exact grammatical structure of the source text.

Meanwhile, word for word translation and literal translation were used to maintain the poetic and repetitive style typical of biblical language, especially in verses expressing universal truths or moral statements. Faithful and semantic translations were used when the translator needed to preserve theological nuance. Idiomatic translation appeared rarely, used only when an expression could not be translated literally. Communicative translation appeared only in the last chapter, emphasizing clarity and spiritual message for the readers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the translation of Ecclesiastes was dominated by a communicative and meaningful approach to convey the philosophical ideas in a way that is clear and acceptable to Indonesian readers while still respecting the sacredness of the original text.

REFERENCES

- Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia. (2023). *Alkitab Terjemahan Baru II (TB II)*. Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (LAI).
- Bawemenewi, E. P. S., & Swarniti, N. W. (2024). Analysis of figurative language in “Rewrite the Stars” song lyrics. *PRAGMATICA: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 2(1), 1-8.



Holy Bible: *New King James Version (NKJV)*. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Nugraha, A. F., & Adika, D. (2024). Translation of Metaphors Within The Lyrics of Queen's Songs. *PRAGMATICA: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 2(2), 48-54.

Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-Based Translation, a guide to Cross Language Equivalence*. University Press of America.

Pande, N. P. E. A. P., Budiarta, I. W., & Rajistha, I. G. N. A. (2023). Figurative Language in White Swan's Song Lyrics. *PRAGMATICA: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 1(2), 67-76.

Swarniti, N. W. (2021). Translation Methods Found in New Testament Bible of Mark's Gospel. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*.