

# Investigating Translation Methods and Shifts in Translating the Song All too Well (10 Minute Version) by Taylor Swift from English into Indonesian

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## ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyze the translation methods and shifts applied in translating the song All Too Well (10 Minute Version) by Taylor Swift from English into Indonesian. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected from the original English lyrics and their Indonesian translation. The data are analyzed to identify the translation methods employed and the shifts that occur during the translation process. The findings indicate that semantic and communicative translation methods are predominantly used, highlighting the translator's emphasis on meaning and emotional expression rather than literal word-for-word translation. Translation shifts were observed in grammatical structure and expression to adapt the lyrics to Indonesian while preserving the original meaning. This study demonstrates the importance of selecting appropriate translation methods and managing shifts to maintain both meaning and emotional impact in song translation. The results are expected to contribute to the field of translation studies, particularly in understanding the translation of song lyrics.

**Keywords:** Translation Methods, Translation Shifts, Song Translation, English-Indonesian Translation, All Too Well, Lyric Analysis, Literary Translation.

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## Introduction

Language is one of the most important tools humans use for communication, not only to convey information but also to express thoughts, emotions, and culture (Crystal, 2003). Through language, humans share knowledge, create art, and connect socially. The ability to use language effectively requires mastering language skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing (R, S, L, W). In translation, reading and listening are essential for understanding the source text, while writing and speaking are applied when producing the target text and discussing interpretation choices (De Silva et al., 2025).

Translation itself is a crucial process when dealing with different languages. It allows messages, ideas, and cultural nuances to move across linguistic boundaries (Andayani et

al., 2023). In the context of songs or movies, translation is not only about converting words but also about transferring meaning, emotion, and style from one language to another. Taylor Swift's All Too Well (10 Minute Version) is an example of a complex text with deeply emotional content, narrative storytelling, and culturally specific references. Translating it into Indonesian requires more than literal word-for-word conversion; it demands attention to translation methods, translation shifts, and cultural adaptation.

Language plays a vital role in translating songs, movies, and other texts because it is the medium through which meaning is conveyed. Experts emphasize that translation involves not just linguistic knowledge but also understanding the cultural and contextual background of

the source and target languages (Larson, 1998). In song translation, the translator must carefully consider idioms, metaphors, and emotional tone to preserve the aesthetic and emotional integrity of the lyrics (Batubara et al., 2023). Speaking and writing are critical in translation. Speaking helps in oral interpretations or discussions about translation choices, while writing ensures that the final translated text is coherent, grammatically correct, and communicates the intended message to the target audience. These skills collectively ensure that the translator can produce a text that is both accurate and natural in the target language.

Translation is defined as the process of transferring meaning from a source language to a target language while considering linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors (Newmark, 1988; Herman et al., 2024). It involves decisions about words, structure, style, and cultural references, aiming to produce a translation that communicates the original message effectively. In song translation, this process is even more complex due to additional constraints such as rhythm, rhyme, and musicality, which must be preserved alongside meaning.

Previous studies on song translation show that semantic and communicative methods dominate, while literal translation is limited to simple, concrete lines. Low (2005) emphasized that translators often adjust idiomatic expressions and emotional phrases to preserve meaning. Franzon (2008) highlighted the importance of balancing fidelity to the source text with naturalness in the target language (Van Thao et al., 2020). Dewi (2019) demonstrated that translation shifts—such as grammatical, lexical, and structural adjustments—are common in English–Indonesian song translations. This study builds on that knowledge by analyzing a narrative-rich, emotionally complex song, providing both practical and theoretical contributions to translation studies.

In a more general scholarly context, translation studies has begun to argue for the interdisciplinarity of the study of translation, and particularly where it involves artistic texts such as song lyrics. Lyrics as culture and Lyrics in culture Songs are not only evidence of a language, but they are also evidence of the culture that produced them: social values, emotions, experiences shared by a community. As such, translating a song is not only about transferring meaning at the level of words; it also has to manage multiple layers of meanings (affectivity, iconicity, and cultural dimensions). This complexity gives value to this study, which demonstrates how translation strategies and shifts work in creative texts and not just solely in informative or technical material.

Moreover, the selection of All Too Well (10 Minute Version) as an object of investigation is relevant in that

it is a story song with prolonged lyric development. As opposed to the short pop songs with A-B-A-B segments, this song tells a story, by providing detailed imagery and developing emotions. Such features offer a wealth of material with which to approach translation techniques and shifts – how translators cope with the coherence, consistency, emotional continuity of these extended lyrical sequences. It is this that makes the study useful not only for readers interested in song translation per se, but also for those working more generally within literary and audiovisual contexts here and elsewhere.

These days, music is a big deal. It's truly one of the most powerful ways we connect, doesn't matter where you're from, what language you speak, or what your background is. Songs do more than just entertain us. They tell stories, let us express what we feel, and show off our culture. Songwriters really use their words to share what they've been through, talk about things happening in society, and express all sorts of feelings. It's cool how those stories can truly speak to anyone, no matter where they come from. So, when we translate a song into another language, it's not just about changing the words. You really have to get what it means emotionally and culturally. English songs are getting super popular across the world, so figuring out translations has become really important, especially in places like Indonesia where English isn't the main language. Indonesian listeners often need subtitles or translated lyrics to truly grasp what foreign songs are trying to say. So, how good the translation is really makes a big difference in what people think and how they feel. If a translation isn't quite right, or too word-for-word, it can really mess with the song's meaning, take away its feeling, or just get what the songwriter was trying to say all wrong. Looking at how songs get translated really gives us a good idea of the deep ways language, culture, and feelings all mix together when you're trying to translate something. Looking at how translations are done and where changes happen helps researchers get a better grip on the ways translators bridge the language gap between the original text and the final one. This look at things really shows how important it is for a translator to be good at finding that sweet spot between staying true to the original and making it sound natural. So, when we look at how songs are translated, like what this particular study does, it really helps translation studies. It shows us how those big ideas in theory actually work in real, culturally loaded songs.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Definition and Scope of Translation**

Translation is the process of transferring meaning from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL) while

maintaining linguistic, cultural, and contextual accuracy (Newmark, 1988). Unlike simple word-for-word conversion, translation involves interpreting meaning, tone, style, and emotion, especially in artistic texts like songs.

Baker (1992) explains that translation requires creative problem-solving, as translators encounter idioms, metaphors, and cultural references that may lack direct equivalents in the target language (Sinambela et al, 2024). For example, Taylor Swift's All Too Well (10 Minute Version) contains expressive metaphors such as "Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it", which must be adapted in Indonesian to preserve both the narrative and emotional intensity.

Nida (1964) introduced dynamic equivalence, emphasizing that a translation should evoke the same response in the TL audience as the SL audience experiences. Larson (1998) also stressed the importance of balancing fidelity to the source text with naturalness in the target language, a principle critical for song translation.

### **Translation Methods**

Translation methods are strategies applied to render a source text effectively into the target language, considering meaning, emotion, and culture (Newmark, 1988; Ngongo et al., 2024). In song translation, these methods ensure that lyrics are accurate, natural, and emotionally engaging.

#### *Literal Translation*

- Definition: Word-for-word translation maintaining source grammar.
- Application: Concrete, simple lines with minimal figurative content.
- Example: "Left my scarf there" → "Meninggalkan syalku di sana"
- Advantages: Preserves exact meaning; minimal interpretation required.
- Limitations: Can sound unnatural for metaphors or emotional content.

#### *Semantic Translation*

- Definition: Preserves meaning and stylistic nuance, with minor adjustments for clarity.
- Example: "I had my heart break in two" → "Hatiku hancur menjadi dua"
- Advantages: Maintains emotional and stylistic integrity.
- Limitations: Slight risk of misinterpretation if not carefully adapted.

#### *Communicative Translation*

- Definition: Adapts text for the TL audience, emphasizing comprehension and emotional effect.
- Example: "Time won't fly" → "Waktu tak bergerak"
- Advantages: Natural and relatable to TL audience; preserves intended effect.
- Limitations: May deviate from literal wording.

*Note:* Complex lyrics often require multiple methods per line to balance fidelity, emotional impact, and cultural adaptation.

### **Translation Shifts**

A translation shift is a change that occurs when translating a text to maintain meaning, readability, and style (Catford, 1965). In this study, two main types of shifts are analyzed: Level Shift and Category Shift.

#### *Level Shift*

Level shift occurs when a translator moves between linguistic levels—such as from word → phrase, or phrase → clause—to ensure naturalness in the TL.

#### *Example*

Source: "I had my heart break in two"

Target: "Hatiku hancur menjadi dua"

Here, the clause-level expression in English becomes a slightly condensed phrase in Indonesian.

Importance: Level shifts help maintain fluency and emotional intensity in song translation.

#### *Category Shift*

- Category shift refers to changes in linguistic categories and can be subdivided into:
  - Unit Shift: Changes from one linguistic unit to another (word → phrase or phrase → clause).
  - Example: "Left my scarf there" → "Meninggalkan syalku di sana"
  - Structure Shift: Changes in sentence structure while preserving meaning.
  - Example: "Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it" → "Waktu tak bergerak, aku seakan lumpuh karenanya"
  - Class Shift: Changes in part of speech.
  - Example: English adjective → Indonesian verb: "Frozen" → "Membeku"
  - Intra-System Shift: Adjustments within the same linguistic system, like tense, number, or degree.

Example: “I remember it all too well” → “Aku mengingat semuanya terlalu jelas”

Importance: Category shifts allow adaptation to TL grammar, syntax, and style without losing meaning or emotional effect.

### ***Importance of Translation Methods and Shifts***

Song lyrics integrate linguistic meaning, emotion, and cultural references. Proper method and shift selection ensures:

- **Meaning:** Semantic and faithful translations maintain clarity.
- **Emotion:** Communicative and free translations preserve emotional resonance.
- **Culture:** Adaptation and naturalization ensure relatability to TL audiences.

For example, “You kept me like a secret” requires semantic + communicative translation with lexical shift to sound natural and emotionally strong in Indonesian.

### ***Subtitling vs Song Translation***

Subtitling and song translation share several principles:

- Both aim for audience comprehension
- Both may involve condensation of the text
- Both preserve style and tone

### ***Differences***

- Song translation must account for musicality: rhyme, rhythm, and phrasing.
- Subtitles are constrained by screen time, while songs are constrained by musical timing.

Thus, song translation is a practical application of theoretical translation studies, integrating linguistic, cultural, and artistic considerations.

### ***Previous Studies / State of the Art (SOTA)***

- Low (2005): Semantic and communicative methods dominate song translation; literal translation is rare.
- Franzon (2008): Balancing fidelity and naturalness is essential.
- Dewi (2019): Lexical, grammatical, idiomatic, and structural shifts are common in English–Indonesian song translation.
- Vinay & Darbelnet (1995): Emphasized procedures like transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.
- **Research Gap:** Previous studies mostly focus on short songs or literary texts. This study examines narrative-

rich, emotionally complex songs, offering insights into method application and shift patterns in translation.

In addition to the theories discussed above, modern translation studies also recognize that the translator plays an active role in decision-making, instead of just being a passive language converter. Toury (1995) argues that translators work within norms shaped by cultural expectations, genre conventions, and audience needs. In song translation, these norms often favor emotional accessibility and naturalness over strict formal equivalence. This view supports the frequent use of communicative and semantic translation methods found in this study, as translators must consider how target audiences perceive and emotionally react to translated lyrics.

Moreover, the concept of equivalence in translation has changed over time. While early theories focused on formal equivalence, later scholars like Nida and Baker highlighted functional and dynamic equivalence. In the context of song translation, achieving functional equivalence means making sure that the translated lyrics evoke similar feelings and interpretations as the original, even if structural changes are necessary. Translation shifts should be seen as strategic tools that help translators bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, rather than as deviations from accuracy.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Type: Qualitative (descriptive qualitative)

### ***Description***

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design, widely applied in translation studies to analyze language phenomena in their natural context (Creswell, 2014). The approach allows the researcher to examine translation methods and shifts in the Indonesian translation of Taylor Swift’s All Too Well (10 Minute Version) without manipulating variables.

The design provides line-by-line observation of the SL lyrics and TL subtitles, aiming to:

- Identify the types of translation methods used in the TL subtitles.
- Analyze translation shifts, including level and category shifts (unit, structure, class, intra-system).
- Explore the relationship between methods and shifts, assessing how translation choices affect meaning, emotion, and naturalness.

This design is suitable for song translation analysis because it accommodates linguistic accuracy and cultural adaptation, offering detailed and interpretive insights.

### **Data Source of Research**

Primary Data: Official English lyrics of Taylor Swift's All Too Well (10 Minute Version)

Target Data: Indonesian subtitle translation of the song (verified online source, link in appendix)

#### *Rationale for Selection*

- The song contains narrative-rich and emotionally complex lyrics, ideal for studying translation strategies.
- Lyrics include idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and culturally bound references, which require careful adaptation.
- Indonesian subtitles provide a direct comparison for observing methods and shifts.

Secondary Data: Books, journal articles, and prior studies on translation methods, translation shifts, and subtitling theory to support the theoretical framework.

### **Instrument of Research**

Main Instrument: Researcher as primary observer and analyst

Supporting Tools / Alat Bantu.

Data Recording Sheet – Records SL lyrics, TL subtitles, applied translation methods, and observed shifts

#### *Coding Scheme*

Translation Methods: literal, semantic, communicative, adaptation, idiomatic, free, faithful, naturalization (Newmark, 1988)

Translation Shifts: level shift, category shift (unit, structure, class, intra-system) (Catford, 1965)

Software Assistance: Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets for data organization, frequency tables, and visualization of patterns.

This combination ensures accuracy, consistency, and replicability in analyzing the data.

### **Data Collection Technique / Method**

1. The data collection procedure is divided into four stages:

Lyric Extraction: Obtain all SL lyrics of All Too Well (10 Minute Version) from official sources.

2. TL Subtitle Collection: Collect the Indonesian subtitle translation from verified sources.

3. Comparative Reading: Examine each SL lyric line alongside the TL translation to identify:

Translation method(s) applied

Type of shift (level or category) applied

4. Documentation: Record findings in the data sheet, ensuring all examples are systematically logged for later analysis.

This method ensures systematic line-by-line analysis, capturing both linguistic accuracy and cultural adaptation.

#### **Data Analysis Technique / Method**

Data analysis is conducted using a qualitative descriptive framework, including four main steps:

##### Identification of Translation Methods:

Each TL line is analyzed to determine which translation method(s) apply.

Multiple methods in a single line are recorded when necessary.

##### Identification of Translation Shifts:

Each TL line is examined for level shifts (changes in linguistic level, e.g., word → phrase) and category shifts (unit, structure, class, intra-system).

##### Pattern Recognition and Frequency Analysis:

Count the frequency of each translation method and shift type.

Prepare tables and figures to visualize patterns and trends.

##### Interpretation:

Discuss how translation methods correlate with observed shifts.

Analyze effects on meaning, readability, naturalness, and emotional tone.

Highlight challenging lines, including idioms, metaphors, or culturally bound expressions, to demonstrate translator decisions.

This technique ensures the analysis captures both linguistic precision and cultural adaptation, providing comprehensive insights into the translation process. We chose a qualitative descriptive approach for this research because it's really good for digging into song lyrics and understanding what the language means. Quantitative methods just count things, right? But qualitative analysis? That's where you get to explain why someone picked a certain way to translate something, or why they changed it in a particular situation. It really opens up the conversation. This way, the researcher can really dig into those little things like how someone feels or what a metaphor actually means, which are all super important when you're translating a song.

Since the researcher is our main tool, it fits perfectly with how we understand translation studies. It's really important to have a human look at translations, because figuring out the best ways to translate things and what changes happen during translation often comes down to personal judgment. We write everything down and use special codes so we can check every translation choice fairly. Because we were so careful with how we did things, people can really trust what we found. Plus, other researchers can use our work to do similar studies or build on what we started.

So, besides what we've already talked about, picking a qualitative descriptive approach just makes sense because of the kind of research data we're looking at. Song lyrics are really expressive. They have all these feelings, metaphors, and special styles that you just can't get at by only looking at numbers. When you take a qualitative approach, you can really dig into these things. It gives you a chance to give rich explanations about just how translation methods and shifts actually work in different song contexts. Being clear about every step you take and how you look at what you find is really important for this kind of research. We laid out exactly how we collected, coded, and made sense of our data. That way, other researchers can follow along and understand what we did. Getting things clear is a big deal in translation studies, especially since figuring out what to do often comes down to how you interpret things. The researcher made sure to write everything down and code it the same way every time. This helped keep things fair and made the results more believable.

**Table 1.** Example of Data Analysis.

No	Source Language (English)	Target Language (Indonesian)	Translation Method	Explanation
1.	I walked through the door with you	Aku melangkah masuk bersamamu	Literal Translation	The translator maintains the original structure and meaning of the sentence. The shift occurs only in grammatical structure to fit Indonesian syntax.
2.	You kept me like a secret	Kau menyembunyikanku seperti rahasia	Semantic Translation	The translator focuses on conveying the meaning and emotional nuance rather than translating word-for-word.
3.	But I kept you like an oath	Namun aku menjagamu seperti sumpah	Communicative Translation	The translation prioritizes natural expression and emotional impact in the target language.
4.	I remember it all too well	Aku mengingat semuanya terlalu jelas”	Semantic Translation	Preserves meaning; adjusts word order to sound natural in Indonesian.
5.	Maybe we got lost in translation”	“Mungkin kita tersesat dalam terjemahan	Semantic Translation Idiomatic Shift	Direct idiomatic translation; phrasing adjusted to fit Indonesian.
6.	Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it	Waktu tak bergerak, rasanya aku membeku karenanya	Grammatical Shift	Adapts metaphor naturally; emotional impact preserved
7.	Left my scarf there at your sister's house	Meninggalkan syalku di rumah saudaramu	Communicative Translation	Literal translation works; minimal adjustment for clarity.
8.	And I know it's long gone and there's nothing else I could do	Dan aku tahu itu sudah lama berlalu dan tak ada yang bisa kulakukan	Semantic Translation	Maintains meaning; structure adjusted to Indonesian syntax.

## Data Analysis and Findings

### Data Analysis

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze translation shifts and translation methods found in the Indonesian subtitles of the song All Too Well. The data were analyzed by comparing the source language (English) lyrics with their target language (Indonesian) subtitles. Each datum was examined to identify the type of translation method used and the occurrence of translation shifts, particularly level shift and category shift (unit shift, structure shift, class shift, and intra-system shift).

The analysis process involved several steps. First, the researchers carefully read and aligned the English lyrics with the Indonesian subtitle lines. Second, each pair of source and target text was categorized based on the applied translation method (literal, semantic, or communicative translation). Third, the researchers identified whether a translation shift occurred and classified it according to Catford's theory. Finally, the data were tabulated and interpreted to reveal patterns and tendencies in the subtitle translation.

#### Example of Data Analysis

The following table presents examples of the data analysis used in this study. Each example consists of the source language, target language, translation method, and explanation of the translation choice and shift. These

No	Source Language (English)	Target Language (Indonesian)	Translation Method	Explanation
9.	Do you remember it all too well?	Apakah kamu mengingat semuanya terlalu jelas?	Communicative Translation	Maintains emotional intensity; word order adapted for question form.
10.	Maybe we got lost in translation	Mungkin kita tersesat dalam terjemahan, mungkin aku terlalu menuntut	Communicative Translation	Adjusts phrasing; conveys original emotional nuance.
11.	I had my heart break in two	Hatiku hancur menjadi dua	Literal Translation	Literal translation works; preserves emotional intensity.
12.	Maybe we got lost in translation, maybe I asked for too much	Mungkin kita tersesat dalam terjemahan, mungkin aku terlalu menuntut	Communicative Translation	Adjusts phrasing; conveys original emotional nuance.
13.	Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it	Waktu tak berjalan, rasanya aku membeku karenanya	Semantic Translation	Adjusts metaphor naturally; preserves rhythm and emotion.
14.	You used to be a little kid with glasses in a twin-sized bed	Dulu kamu anak kecil dengan kacamata di ranjang kecil	Communicative Translation	Adjusts sentence structure; maintains meaning and imagery in Indonesian.

examples demonstrate how the translator adapts linguistic forms and expressions to maintain meaning, emotional nuance, and naturalness in the target language. In many cases, shifts are unavoidable due to structural and cultural differences between English and Indonesian.

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentage of Translation Methods

Translation Method	Frequency	Percent
Literal Translation	12	24 %
Semantic Translation	18	36%
Communicative Translation	20	40%
Total	50	100%

The findings show that communicative translation is the most frequently used method, followed by semantic translation and literal translation.

In terms of translation shifts, two major types were found in the data.

- Level Shift, which occurs when grammatical meaning in the source language is expressed lexically in the target language.
- Category Shift, which includes unit shift, structure shift, class shift, and intra-system shift.

Category shifts appear more frequently than level shifts, particularly structure shifts and unit shifts. This indicates that adjustments in grammatical structure are commonly required to achieve natural Indonesian subtitles.

## Discussion

The dominance of communicative translation suggests that the translator prioritizes clarity, naturalness, and emotional impact rather than strict word-for-word equivalence. This approach is particularly appropriate for song subtitles, as lyrics often contain figurative language, emotional expressions, and cultural nuances that may not be effectively conveyed through literal translation.

## Findings

Based on the analysis of the subtitle data, several translation methods were identified. The frequency and percentage of each translation method are presented in the following table.

Semantic translation is also frequently used to preserve the original meaning while allowing flexibility in wording. This method helps maintain the emotional depth of the song while adapting expressions to fit Indonesian linguistic norms. Literal translation appears less frequently, indicating that a direct translation is only applied when the source text structure and meaning can be naturally transferred into the target language.

The occurrence of translation shifts further supports the necessity of adaptation in subtitle translation. Structure shifts are commonly used to adjust English sentence patterns to Indonesian syntax, while unit shifts occur when phrases are translated into single words or vice versa. These shifts do not distort meaning; instead, they enhance readability and acceptability for the target audience.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that subtitle translation of All Too Well involves strategic use of translation methods and shifts to balance meaning, emotion, and linguistic naturalness. The translator's choices reflect an effort to convey the song's emotional intensity while ensuring that the subtitles remain understandable and culturally appropriate for Indonesian viewers.

What we found in this study shows how English-Indonesian

translation usually works. Translators often lean towards communicative and semantic methods, which shows they're really focused on making sure the audience gets it and feels something. You really see this a lot with lines that have metaphors or strong emotional feelings. If you just translate them word for word, they can sound really weird or lose their punch in the new language. It turns out that English and Indonesian are built differently, which we can tell by how often categories shift between them. English is pretty set in its ways with word order and needs clear grammar signals, but Indonesian is a lot looser with how you can put sentences together. So, things like changing how sentences are put together or how ideas are grouped become really important for making translations sound smooth and natural. These findings just go to show us that when we translate things, those little changes aren't because someone messed up. They're actually really important for making sure people understand each other, even when they speak different languages.

## Conclusion

This study examined the translation methods and translation shifts used in translating the song All Too Well (10 Minute Version) by Taylor Swift from English into Indonesian. Based on the analysis of the selected subtitle data, several important conclusions can be drawn.

First, the findings reveal that communicative translation is the most dominant method used in the song translation, followed by semantic translation and literal translation. This indicates that the translator prioritizes the delivery of meaning, emotional nuance, and natural expression rather than adhering strictly to word-for-word translation. Such an approach is particularly effective in song translation, where emotional resonance and audience understanding are crucial.

Second, the analysis shows that category shifts occur more frequently than level shifts. Among category shifts, structure shifts and unit shifts are the most commonly found. These shifts are mainly influenced by differences in grammatical structure and linguistic systems between English and Indonesian, making adjustments necessary to achieve clarity and naturalness in the target language.

From a theoretical perspective, this study supports established translation theories which emphasize that translation is not merely a process of transferring words, but also of transferring meaning, context, and emotion. The frequent use of communicative and semantic translation aligns with Newmark's theory, which highlights the importance of reader-oriented translation, especially for expressive texts such as songs.

Additionally, the presence of translation shifts confirms Catford's theory that shifts are inevitable in translation due to structural differences between languages. The findings demonstrate how level shifts and category shifts function as strategies to bridge linguistic gaps without altering the core message of the source text.

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