

Bridging Language and Music: Examining the Translation Strategies in the Indonesian Subtitles of *The Greatest Showman's* (2017) Song Lyrics

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the translation strategies used in the Indonesian subtitles of song lyrics in the musical film *The Greatest Showman* (2017). Unlike translations intended for singing, subtitles prioritize readability and comprehension, requiring adjustments to meaning, structure, and cultural references. This research explores how the official Indonesian subtitles adapt the lyrics while maintaining coherence and accessibility for local audiences. Through a qualitative content analysis of selected lyrics, this study identifies dominant translation strategies using Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling framework and Vermeer's Skopos theory (1978). Findings reveal that only seven strategies are used in the Disney+ version, with transfer as the most dominant. Overall, the subtitles fulfill their communicative function, aligning with Skopos theory by preserving purpose, coherence, and fidelity within the target culture. This research contributes to audio visual translation studies by highlighting the challenges of translating non-singable song subtitles and the importance of strategic choices in producing functional and culturally appropriate translations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a vital tool for enabling communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries, allowing audiences to access diverse cultural perspectives (Ajtony, 2019). In a globally connected world, translators serve as key agents of intercultural understanding (Köksal & Yürük, 2020). Music and song lyrics represent intersecting forms through which language and culture are expressed, making them significant channels of cross-cultural communication. Music, as a verbal art form, conveys meaning, emotion, and narrative—elements that can transcend language through translation. When lyrics are translated, they become powerful vehicles for cultural exchange and offer pathways to deeper cross-cultural insight (Aronson & Box, 2021).

This affects the significant interest of individuals to engage with foreign content easily. The rise in foreign content libraries on streaming platforms has contributed to a reversal in traditional media flows, as the U.S. has been importing more audio visual material than it exports since 2020 (Chalaby, 2024). This is especially evident in the entertainment industry, where major streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Prime Video continue to expand their reach, enabling the production and distribution of films on a global scale. Non-English series represented 38% of Netflix's globally most-watched titles between mid-2021 and the end of 2022, typically attracting audiences in around 53 different countries (Neira, Clares-Gavilán, & Sánchez-Navarro, 2023). With this increasing demand for international content, audio visual translation (AVT) plays a crucial role in bridging language barriers, ensuring that films, series, and other media are accessible to audiences worldwide. Subtitling has become essential in adapting dialogue and song lyrics for diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, making it a key area of study in translation research. Subtitling involves presenting dialogue in written form, commonly used in movies and TV broadcasts (Simanjuntak & Basari, 2013).

There are some elements that need to be taken into account in subtitling. According to Diaz-Cinta (2012), subtitling must account for special factors like font style and character limit per line, temporal aspects such as timing and synchronization (including spotting, cueing, and originating), as well as linguistic accuracy to ensure

the subtitles reflect the original dialogue's meaning. However, the various elements in films and song lyrics present an additional layer of complexity in subtitling. Songs in musicals and movies frequently convey narrative information, such as character development and story details, that is impossible to overlook. According to Pidhrushna's (2021), the primary factor directing the translation of a song in a movie is its communicative aim.

Unlike general dialogue translation, subtitling song lyrics involves unique challenges such as maintaining meaning, readability, and cultural adaptation while considering lyrical structure as well as emotional impact. Many films incorporate song lyrics to enhance viewer comprehension and emotional connection to the narratives. However, translating song lyrics in audio visual translation (AVT) presents distinct challenges. Munday (2008) explains that translators must balance fidelity to the original text while preserving meaning, tone, and readability. Additionally, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) note that substituting constraints such as time limits, character limitations, grammatical accuracy, and cultural context further complicate the translation process.

Ramadhani (2023) conducted a study on the song translation strategies and quality for the soundtrack of *We Love Disney Indonesia* (2015). The researcher employed Dinda L. Gorlee's (2005) theory to analyze the strategy used in the song album and assessed the quality applying Peter Low's (2017) translation quality theory. The study revealed that even though out of 72 points, functional reinterpretation appears to be the most dominant strategy, accounting for the largest proportion (26 points), part of the assessments results in less singable, with 62 points indicating issues with singability, as the translation often prioritizes naturalness and rhythm over rhyme and accuracy of meaning. Another similar study was conducted by Drevvatne (2018) on the AVT translation of Disney songs into Norwegian using Skopos and Low Pentathlon Principles. It is concluded that both principles are applied differently in subtitling and dubbing, with an emphasis on sense in subtitling and prosody in dubbing, making it challenging to distinguish between translations and adaptations. Lastly, the study about subtitling strategy in the *All Too Well* song translation was conducted by Seran and Subianto (2023). Guided by Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategy, the study found that paraphrase is the most frequently used strategy (40%), followed by transfer (30%), with condensation and expansion being less frequently used, highlighting challenges in translating figurative expressions and preserving the poetic meaning. While many studies have explored song translation in musicals, research focusing specifically on non-singable subtitle translations remains limited.

The *Greatest Showman* (2017) was selected as the object of this study for several compelling reasons. First, the film delivers an inspiring and meaningful moral message, with its song lyrics playing a vital role in expressing themes such as acceptance, self-expression, and ambition. Second, its soundtrack achieved international acclaim, winning the Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media at the 61st Grammy Awards in 2019. This recognition highlights not only the musical strength of the songs but also their thematic depth, making them suitable for analysis within the field of translation studies. Additionally, the film received the Most Commendable Imported Film award at the 2018 Bandung Film Festival, reflecting its positive reception among Indonesian audiences and further validating its relevance as a subject of research.

As the film relies heavily on music and is widely accessed through platforms like Disney+ Hotstar, it presents a valuable case for translation studies. This research examines selected song lyrics to identify the dominant translation strategies and assess how they shape audience interpretation, emotional impact, and cultural relevance for Indonesian viewers. To guide the analysis, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What translation strategies are used in the Indonesian subtitles of the *Greatest Showman*'s song lyrics?
2. How do the applied strategies reflect meaning, cultural adaptation, and functionality in the Indonesian subtitles as assessed by the Skopos rule in terms of purpose, coherence, and fidelity?

This research holds significance in several ways. Firstly, it explores the complexities of translating song lyrics in subtitles, where meaning, readability, and cultural relevance must be balanced within the constraints of audio visual translation. Secondly, it provides insights into how Indonesian subtitles adapt song lyrics while preserving the intended message, which can be useful for both researchers and professional translators. Since musical films rely heavily on lyrics to tell their stories, understanding how these translations function is valuable. Lastly, this study examines how translation choices affect the local audience's experiences, highlighting the role of subtitles in shaping how viewers interpret and connect with the film.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. *Audiovisual Translation and Subtitling Constraints*

AVT includes a variety of translation techniques used in media that combine visual and auditory elements, such as films, television, and digital content. Subtitling stands out as the most often used method among other AVT modes, mainly due to its affordability and capacity to maintain the original audio while offering textual translation to the viewers. According to Kuo (2017), subtitling has become the most common method for translating audio visual content globally, largely because it is quicker and more affordable than dubbing, requiring less labour expenditure.

2.1.1. Subtitling

Subtitling presents spoken dialogue in written form for viewers who speak a different language from that used in the audio visual content (Ivarsson, 1992, p. 15). Effective subtitling demands synchronization with both visuals and dialogue, accurate meaning transfer, and display duration, ensuring readability for viewers (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007). As noted by Sánchez (2004, p. 9), subtitles are typically synchronized with the exact frames marking the start and end of speech, although minor adjustments may occur to accommodate scene changes or enhance readability within the constraints of the film's editing.

In musical films like *The Greatest Showman*, where lyrics are central to the narrative and emotional tone, subtitling involves more than literal or word-for-word translation. Translators must navigate poetic structure, figurative language, and cultural references, sometimes substituting culturally specific elements with more familiar ones, though this may risk losing the original nuance.

2.1.2. Constraints in Subtitling

Subtitling songs presents a unique advantage regarding readability, as lyrics are typically delivered more slowly than regular spoken dialogue. According to Low (2017, p. 52), this slower pace allows subtitles to remain longer on screen, providing more time for viewers to read and absorb the content.

Despite this benefit, translators still face complex decisions during the translation process. One of the primary difficulties encountered in subtitling lies in managing the limitations of time and screen space (Gottlieb, 2008, p. 219). As spoken language is translated into written subtitles, the translator must frequently shorten the text to ensure it remains readable and properly timed (Gottlieb, 1994). They must also determine which aspects of the source texts are essential for meaning and which can be omitted or condensed without losing the overall message (Mubenga, 2010). Lastly, linguistic choices must be made carefully to ensure the translated subtitles maintain clarity and coherence for the audience.

2.2. Gottlieb's Subtitling Strategies

Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategy model offers a practical framework for examining how translators adapt non-singable content. He is widely recognized for his taxonomy of the subtitling strategies (1992), which offers an extensive framework for examining how translators navigate the technical constraints of time, space, and synchronization to create concise and readable translations from spoken or sung content. According to Gottlieb, ten strategies can be employed depending on the linguistic context and audio visual limitations.

Expansion

According to Gottlieb, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, and Abbaspour (2022), expansion involves elaborating the original text to clarify meaning, particularly when addressing culturally specific content. For example, in the Malaysian sentence below, the subject is implied. The translator added "you" in the English version to clarify the speaker's intent.

SL: "*Membeli-belah?*" ("shopping?") (from *Ejen-Ali: The Movie*)

TL: "**You** shopping?" (Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022).

Paraphrase

As defined by Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan et al., 2022), paraphrase involves rewording language-specific elements while preserving meaning. It is often used to adapt sentence structures between languages (Sharif & Sohrabi, 2015). In the following example, the English sentence is rephrased to sound more natural in Indonesian.

SL: "Bill. We're good, buddy. **I got your money. It's right here in my hand.**"

TL: "*Bill. Hei, Tak masalah. Aku akan membayarmu. Uangnya ada padaku.*"

(Simanjuntak & Basari, 2013)

Transfer

Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022) defines transfer as a strategy that delivers a complete and accurate translation of both form and meaning from the source language to the target language. In the presented example, the phrase is translated directly and faithfully, with no structural or lexical changes.

SL: "Like yourself"

TL: "*Seperti dirimu*" (Ruminingsih & Sanjaya, 2023)

Imitation

As described by Gottlieb (1992) in Batmanathan, Amini, and Abbaspour's study, imitation is applied when translating items like names or greetings, keeping the original terms intact. Imitation is shown in the following example by retaining the proper noun "Jolly Old London" in the Indonesian translation.

SL: "Welcome to **Jolly Old London!**"

TL: "*Selamat datang di **Jolly Old London!***" (Kusumawardani, 2018).

Transcription

Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022) defines transcription as the strategy used to translate non-standard, foreign, or irregular expressions. It helps adapt distinctive terms into more familiar or culturally equivalent forms. For example, “amigo, a Spanish term embedded in an English sentence, is rendered as “*teman*” in Indonesian, maintaining meaning while using a locally appropriate equivalent.

SL: “This is our rule, **amigo**.”

TL: “*Ini adalah aturan kita, **teman**.*” (Hidayati, 2019).

Condensation

Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022) defines condensation as a strategy that conveys meaning more succinctly by eliminating redundancy. In the example of the use of condensation, the phrase “would finally” is omitted to streamline the sentence without altering the intended message.

SL: “Where mankind would finally destroy themselves.”

TL: “*Dimana manusia saling bunuh.*” (Kusumawardani, 2018).

Decimation

Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022) defines decimation as a strategy involving heavy reduction of content, often at the cost of meaning. Koponen (2018) notes it results in significant message loss. In the exemplified case, the original line expresses an intention to communicate, “*Aku saja!*” shifts the meaning to self-selection. This omission removes a key element of the message, thereby reducing the original communicative intent.

SL: “I want to tell her”

TL: “*Aku saja!*” (Aveline, 2015)

Unlike deletion or condensation, decimation involves the removal essential elements, making the translation less faithful the original message.

Deletion

Gottlieb (1992) defines deletion as the removal of less important elements, often due to fast speech, with audio visual context supporting meaning retention. Farista (2020) describes it as omitting parts that do not impact the overall message. In the provided example, the phrase “yeah, hi” is omitted, making the translation more direct without affecting the communicative intent.

SL: “**Yeah, hi**. I think i left my keys in here...”

TL: “*Sepertinya kunciku tertinggal disini....*” (Ruminingsih & Sanjaya, 2023).

Resignation

Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022) defines resignation as the inability to translate certain expressions due to audio visual or contextual constraints. This often results in omission or distorted representation. In the following example, the subtitle omits the spoken phrase entirely, possibly due to unclear articulation.

SL: “*Apa itu?*” (“what is that?”)

TL: (indistinct chatter) (Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022).

Dislocation

Gottlieb (1992, as cited in Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022) defines dislocation as altering the original message to recreate its emotional or stylistic effect. Nababan (2008) adds that the goal is to evoke a similar impact, even if the wording changes. In the example, a simple command is replaced with a more dramatic line to reflect the heightened emotion of the scene.

SL: “*Lari!*” (Run!) (from *Ejen Ali: The Movie*)

TL: “**Ah! We’re all gonna die!**” (Batmanathan, Amini, & Abbaspour, 2022).

2.3. Translation of Songs

Songs often reflect human emotions and everyday experiences, sometimes carrying moral messages that influence listeners (Andika, 2022). In audio visual content, translating songs involves more than converting lyrics into the target language—it requires interpreting creative expression, preserving emotional tone, and ensuring comprehension. In musical films like *The Greatest Showman* (2017), lyrics are central to advancing the narrative and conveying character emotions.

2.3.1. Singable and Non-Singable Song Translation

Approaches to song translation differ based on whether the lyrics are meant for performance or comprehension, often categorized as singable and non-singable translations. Singable translations must retain musical elements such as rhyme, rhythm, stress, and syllable count while conveying meaning (Low, 2005), which poses challenges as translators must fit lyrics to the melody without distorting the message. In contrast, Ma (2023) explains that non-singable translations prioritize clarity and meaning, as they are not intended to be performed. Franzon (2008)

refers to this as translation “for understanding,” focusing on helping listeners grasp the meaning rather than preserving musicality.

This study focuses on non-singable translations, where subtitles serve to help viewers understand the lyrics within the film’s narrative. As such, the translator is not expected to replicate rhythm or rhyme but to balance meaning, tone, and cultural adaptation in a readable format.

2.3.2. *Skopos Theory*

Skopos theory, introduced by Hans J. Vermeer (1989), offers a functionalist approach to analyzing translation decisions, emphasizing the communicative purpose over literal equivalence (Schäffner, 1998). Translators must consider cultural norms and audience expectations, which may lead to shifts from the source text (Venuti, 2000). In song translation, especially for non-singable subtitles, the goal is to support viewer comprehension of both lyrical meaning and emotional tone—often requiring modification, simplification, or omission of features like rhyme (Nord, 1997). This study applies Skopos theory as adapted by Du (2012), alongside Gottlieb’s subtitling strategies, to examine how and why specific translation choices were made in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* to fulfill their communicative function.

3. METHOD

The corpus of this study consists of all 9 soundtracks from *The Greatest Showman* (2017), using official English-to-Indonesian subtitles accessed via Disney+ Hotstar. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze how the subtitles convey meaning and adapt cultural elements, with Gottlieb’s (1992) subtitling strategies serving as the primary analytical framework.

Content analysis is applied to classify the strategies used—comprising expansion, paraphrase, transfer, condensation, deletion, decimation, resignation, dislocation, imitation, and transcription—and evaluate their effectiveness.

Data collection involved repeatedly viewing the film and manually transcribing both English lyrics and their Indonesian subtitles into a two-column table, allowing for direct comparison of the source text (ST) and target text (TT). This process ensured accuracy and facilitated the analysis of how meaning, style, and cultural references are rendered. Following that, each song would then be grouped into three proposed thematic elements based on their intended function from the lyrical content, which are as follows:

- **Emotional Expressions:** The category includes songs that express strong emotions or feelings such as hope, sadness, empowerment, love, etc. In this context, the translated lyrics are intended to shape the viewer’s affective experiences.
- **Idiomatic and Cultural References:** This category consists of songs whose lyrics feature idioms or metaphoric language rooted in Western culture and aims to communicate ideas that are culturally specific, often using idiomatic or metaphorical expressions that may not have direct equivalence across cultures.
- **Narrative Relevance:** This includes lyrics that serve an important narrative function within the film, such as lines that reveal character motivations, introduce plot points, or reflect major developments in lines. Further, this category serves as a story-driven Skopos that functions similarly to dialogue to advance the plot.

These proposed categories reflect the varied functions (Skopos) served by the song lyrics in this film. In addition to the thematic categorization, the data were analyzed through the lens of Skopos theory, focusing on the communicative purpose of the subtitles within the film’s context. The analysis draws on Skopos theory’s core principles:

- 1) **Skopos Rule:** Translation should be guided by the intended function of the target text.
- 2) **Coherence Rule:** The translated text must be understandable and appropriate within the cultural and linguistic norms of the target audience
- 3) **Fidelity Rule:** There must be a logical connection between the source and target texts.

Through the combined application of Gottlieb’s (1992) subtitling strategies and Skopos theory, this research evaluates how meaning, cultural relevance, and communicative function are conveyed. This integrated methodological approach provides the basis for the analytical discussion presented in the following chapter, addressing the study’s research questions.

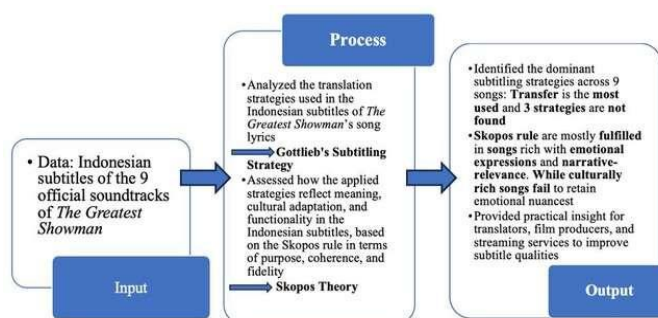


Figure 1. Data Processing Framework of the Subtitle Analysis

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis of the Indonesian subtitles of song lyrics from *The Greatest Showman* (2017), focusing on how all nine songs are translated from English to Indonesian. Guided by Gottlieb’s subtitling strategies and Skopos theory, the study identifies the strategies used and evaluates how effectively the subtitles convey meaning, cultural elements, and fulfill their communicative purpose for Indonesian audiences.

4.1. Results

Table 1 Findings of Gottlieb’s Strategies in *The Greatest Showman*’s song lyrics

No	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Transfer	292	52.90
2	Paraphrase	112	20.29
3	Condensation	70	12.68
4	Dislocation	44	7.97
5	Deletion	15	2.72
6	Decimation	12	2.17
7	Expansion	7	1.27
TOTAL		552	

The data presented in the Table 1 show that transfer is the most frequently used strategy, appearing 292 times (52.90%), indicating a strong emphasis on the original message. This is followed by paraphrase (19.93%) and condensation (12.68%), reflecting efforts to adapt or simplify lyrics. Less frequently used strategies such as dislocation, deletion, and decimation, suggest that the translator applies selective adaptation or reduction, particularly in culturally sensitive segments, where more faithful translations may not have been appropriate. Overall, the total frequency of the strategies used exceeds the number of lyric lines, indicating some lines employed more than one strategy.

4.2. Discussion

The Strategies Used in the Song Lyrics

This study has observed 540 lines of lyrics presented in the musical film *The Greatest Showman*. Seven strategies are employed in the subtitling. The most common strategy is transfer (52.90%), which covers slightly more than half of the lines, while the least used is deletion (0.74%), which is only found in 5 lines. The findings are then inserted into Table 1.

4.2.1. Transfer

Transfer is presented as the most used strategy in this film, accounting for more than fifty percent of the total strategy. Transfer is used to make a faithful translation, preserving the original meaning and the structure of the text without significant alteration or adaptation.

Table 2 Examples of the use of transfer in the song “The Greatest Show”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
It’s everything you ever want	<i>Ini semua yang kau inginkan</i>	This is everything you want

The example in Table 2 shows that the transfer strategy is employed in transferring the original meaning with minimal alteration. The Indonesian subtitles closely mirror and stay close to the English lines in terms of content, intent, and the length of the lines. Consequently, the message is preserved, maintaining the clarity and poetic rhythm of the source text.

Table 3 Example of the transfer strategy in the song “A Million Dreams”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
We can live in the world that we design	<i>Kita bisa hidup di dunia yang kita bentuk</i>	We can live in the world that we shape

The same goes for the example in Table 3, where the whole meaning and structure of the source text are preserved in the TT. Both versions convey the same concept and meaning of creating and living in their ideal world. Considering that the ST does not have complexity in its structure, the translator is allowed to directly transfer the whole message to the TT without significant modification.

4.2.2. Paraphrase

The second most used strategy in the film is Paraphrase. It is applied to modify the target text while preserving the intended meaning. This strategy allows translators to adjust sentence structures to produce clearer and more natural expressions for the target audience.

Table 4 Example of the paraphrase strategy in the song “Come Alive”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
But you can flip the switch and brighten up your darkest days	<i>Tapi kau bisa menekan sakelar, dan hari-hari gelapmu akan sirna</i>	But you can press the switch, and your dark days will disappear

In the example shown in Table 4, “flip” is translated into “*menekan*,” meaning “press.” This shift reflects differences in collocational usage between the two languages, where the phrase “*menekan sakelar*” (“press the switch”) is more commonly used and widely understood by the target audience than the literal translation “*membalikkan sakelar*.” This choice aligns the translation with common lexical combination in Indonesian, resulting in a more fluent and idiomatic expression.

Furthermore, the translation of “brighten up your days” shows adaptation in its translation to “*hari-hari gelapmu akan sirna*,” demonstrating a shift from phrasal verb to a more descriptive expression. This modification restructures the original phrase to convey similar meaning in a form that is more natural for Indonesian audiences.

Table 5 Example of the paraphrase strategy in the song “The Other Side”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
I don’t wanna chase you down but I know you can see it	<i>Aku tidak mau memaksa, aku tahu kau melihatnya</i>	I don’t want to force , I know you see it

A notable change can be seen in the first clause, where the phrase “chase you down,” which literally translates to “*mengejarmu*,” is paraphrased as “*memaksa*,” meaning “to force.” This substitution reflects a deliberate choice to enhance the naturalness and emotional appropriateness of the subtitles within the Indonesian culture. While “*mengejarmu*” suggests a physical pursuit, “*memaksa*” emphasizes psychological pressure. It strengthens the

emotional impact by reflecting the character’s internal struggle, helping the audience connect more deeply with the song’s context.

4.2.3. Condensation

Condensation is the third most used strategy, reducing redundancy by omitting unnecessary expressions, mainly due to space and time constraints.

Table 6 Examples of the condensation strategy in the song “A Million Dreams”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
They can say, they can say it all sounds crazy	<i>Mereka boleh bilang, bilang ini semua terdengar gila</i>	They can say, say it all sounds crazy
I don’t care, I don’t care if they call us crazy	<i>Aku tak peduli jika mereka bilang kita sinting</i>	I don’t care if they call us crazy

Presented in Table 6, the condensation strategy is applied by removing repetitive phrases such as “they can” and “I don’t care” in the English version. The removal of both repetitive phrases makes the TT more concise and better fit the time and space constraints that are inherent in subtitling translation. This condensation strategy effectively preserves the core message while ensuring the subtitles remain readable and manageable for viewers to follow the storyline.

Table 7 Example of the condensation strategy in the song “Come Alive”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
‘Cause once you see it, oh , you’ll never, never be the same	<i>Karena begitu kau melihatnya kau takkan pernah sama</i>	Because once you see it, you will never be the same

The same applies to the lyrics in Table 7, where condensation is used to simplify and shorten the original line without losing its essential meaning. The interjection “oh” is omitted to streamline the subtitle and maintain flow, as it does not significantly contribute to the overall message. Meanwhile, the repeated “never, never” is condensed into a single phrase, “*takkan pernah*,” which helps reduce redundancy while maintaining emphasis. This adjustments supports readability and ensures the subtitle fits within temporal and spatial constraints, while still reflecting the pacing with the original line.

4.2.4. Dislocation

Dislocation adjusts content for cultural relevance, conveying the intended message through different expressions. It is typically used when culturally specific phrases are adapted into more familiar terms in the target language.

Table 8 Examples of the dislocation strategy in the song “This Is Me”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
But I won’t let them break me down to dust	Tapi takkan kubiarkan mereka meremukanku	But I won’t let them crush me
Well, fire away , ‘cause today I won’t let the shame sink in	Silakan berbicara , Hari ini tak kubiarkan diriku merasa malu	Go ahead and speak , today I won’t let myself feel ashamed

In the example shown in Table 8, several figurative phrases and idiomatic expressions are rendered into more explicit form in the TT. The phrase “break me down to dust,” which conveys complete destruction, is translated as “*meremukanku*” (crush me), preserving the core meaning although reducing the imagery. Similarly, “fire

away,” an idiomatic expression that also implies sarcasm, is translated into “*silakan berbicara*,” a more neutral and polite form that removes its aggressive tone. In addition, “the shame sink in,” which metaphorically describes internalized shame, is rendered as “*diriku merasa malu*,” making the meaning more direct. These shifts reflect the use of dislocation, as the expressive and stylistic elements of the source text are modified into a more accessible and less figurative form in the TT.

Table 9 Example of the dislocation strategy in the song “The Greatest Show”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
Been searching in the dark, your sweat soaking through the floor	<i>Kau mencai dalam kegelapan, keringatmu bercucuran</i>	You search in the darkness, your sweat is pouring

Example in Table 9 shows how the dislocation strategy is employed to find a more culturally relevant phrase for “soaking through the floor,” which literally means “*meresap hingga ke lantai*,” and is translated into “*bercucuran*,” meaning “pouring,” which is much more relevant and improves readability for Indonesian audiences. Although this modification improves comprehension, it sacrifices the original phrase’s imagery, which conveys a deeper sense of struggle and persistence. The term “*bercucuran*” makes it more direct and less visually evocative, which could weaken the emotional impact of the original metaphor.

Table 10 Example of the dislocation strategy in the song “From Now On”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
When the glitter fades and the walls won’t hold	<i>Ketika ketenaran memudar dan dindingnya runtuh</i>	When the fame fades and the wall collapses

As presented in Table 10, dislocation is used to translate “glitter” as “*ketenaran*” and “won’t hold” as “*runtuh*,” shifting the original metaphors into expressions more familiar to Indonesian audiences. “Glitter,” literally referring to sparkling light, is translated to “*ketenaran*” (fame), capturing its denotative meaning of fleeting popularity. Similarly, “won’t hold” becomes “*runtuh*” (collapse), a stronger and more vivid term that conveys the loss of support or stability. These adjustments reflect the fragility of fame and instability in a way that resonates culturally and linguistically with the target audience.

4.2.5. Expansion

Expansion is used when information or context is added in the target text to clarify meaning and enhance comprehension for the target audience.

Table 11 Example of the expansion strategy in the song “A Million Dreams”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
But it feels like home	<i>Namun terasa seperti rumahku</i>	But it feels like my home

As presented in Table 11, expansion is used to provide additional context and clarification for the target audience. The Indonesian subtitle renders “But it feels like home” as “*Namun terasa seperti rumahku*,” adding a possessive element that is not explicitly stated in the source text. Since “home” can be interpreted broadly, the inclusion of “-ku”(my) makes the expression more specific and personal. This addition enhances the emotional nuance and strengthens the sense of personal connection conveyed in the line.

Table 12 Example of the expansion strategy in the song “Never Enough”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
Let is stay this way	<i>Biarlah tetap seperti ini adanya</i>	Letting things stay as they are

Additionally, in the example in Table 12, the translator adds “*adanya*” in the TS to provide additional emphasis and clarity, reinforcing the idea of accepting things as they are. This expansion adds nuance to the expression, strengthening the sense of acceptance and aligning with the song’s contemplative tone. The inclusion of “*adanya*” also contributes to a more natural expression in Indonesian.

Table 13 Examples of the expansion strategy in the song “Rewrite the Stars”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
I know you’re wondering why because we’re able to be	<i>Aku tahu bertanya kenapa karena kita bisa bersama</i>	I know you are asking why, because we can be together

In the third song, the subtitle includes the word “*bersama*” (“together”) to clarify the context of the actor’s speech. In the original line, the sense of togetherness is implied but not explicitly stated which may leave the relationship between the speaker and the addressee unclear. The addition of “*bersama*” makes the meaning explicit emphasizing the desire to be together. This clarification enhances comprehension, making the dialogue more accessible while maintaining narrative coherence.

4.2.6. Decimation

Decimation is used to make drastic cuts from the source texts, resulting in a loss of the intended message. Only 12 lines in the entire set of lyrics apply the decimation strategy.

Table 14 Examples of the decimation strategy in the song “The Other Side ”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
Stay in the cage or you’ll finally take the key	<i>Tetap dalam kurungan atau ambil kuncinya</i>	Stay in the cage or take the key

In Table 14, the translator omits the words “you will finally,” simplifying the target text and losing the nuances or feeling from the ‘decision-making’ process and the gradual build-up toward the choice. The original clause “you will finally take the key” is a positive and future-oriented clause. By removing “finally,” the Indonesian version feels more imperative and commanding for the phrase “*ambil kuncinya*.” This shift from a predictive statement to a more imperative one changes the tone, making the choice feel more immediate and forceful rather than reflective. As a result, this change in tone alters the audience’s perception of the character’s decision, reducing the impact of the moment compared to the English version.

Table 15 Examples of the decimation strategy in the song “Come Alive”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
To the world that you were livin’ in	<i>Ke duniamu yang dulu</i>	To your old world

Meanwhile in Table 15, decimation is employed to omit “you were livin’ in” (*kau pernah tinggal*). The Indonesian version, thus, simplifies the message, removing the substantial connection of the character’s past living situation and its connection to the present. This omission reduces the contextual background of the character, which is an important element in the original line. Thus, the TT becomes less reflective, as it no longer emphasizes character’s past experience or personal development.

4.2.7. Deletion

Deletion is employed to reduce fast speech and less important content (Gottlieb, 1992) by omitting expressions or nonverbal content. In this analysis, the use of deletion is relatively limited, with only a few instances identified in the data.

Table 16 Examples of the deletion strategy in the song “The Other Side”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation
Oh damn. Can’t you see I’m doing fine	Tidakkah kau melihat hidupku baik.	Don’t you see my life is fine

In the case shown in Table 16, the translator omits the exclamation “Oh damn,” which, although emotionally charged, does not contribute to the overall meaning of the sentence. Rather than replacing it with a similar interjection like “astaga,” the translator omits it to streamline the line. This strategy reduces non-essential elements, allowing the subtitle to fit within the temporal constraints and improving readability. As a result, the subtitle aligns more effectively with the pacing of the film.

Table 17 Examples of the deletion strategy in the song “Tightrope”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh	(No Translation)

Meanwhile, example in the Table 17 shows that deletion is applied to translate non-verbal content. The “Oh-oh-oh-oh” in the English version is a vocalization or sound effect that does not require translation, as it serves a purely musical function rather than conveying linguistic meaning. This strategy aligns with the understanding that such non-verbal expressions are not necessary in conveying the core message. Thus, the subtitles focuses on providing lyrics with actual meaning and a message.

The Reflection of Meaning, Cultural Adaptation, and Functionality Based on Skopos Theory

All 9 songs are classified into three proposed categories—Emotional Expression, Idiomatic and Cultural References, and Narrative Relevance. The analysis assesses how the subtitles fulfill the Skopos, Coherence, and Fidelity rules to enhance audience understanding and engagement.

4.2.8. Emotional Expressions

Songs whose lyrics contain or have an underlying message of one’s emotions or feelings are included in this category. These songs express personal experiences like hope, love, sadness, or struggle through their lyrical elements. The following example illustrates how the translation maintains the emotional impact of the original lyrics, ensuring that the Indonesian version evokes similar responses. This is achieved by adhering to Skopos theory, particularly the principles of purpose, coherence, and fidelity in translation.

Table 18 Examples of lyrics that contain emotional feelings in the song “Never Enough”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
Because, darling, without you	Karena, Sayang, tanpa mu	Because, without you	Darling, Transfer
Will never be enough	Tidak akan pernah cukup	Will never be enough	

As presented in Table 18, the underlying emotional message reflects longing for someone and dependency on someone. By applying transfer, the subtitle keeps its original meaning and emotion of the source text. Additionally, the simplicity of the lyrics also makes it easier to preserve both the coherence and fidelity for the Indonesian

audience. Through such translation, the communicative purpose is successfully achieved, thereby fulfilling the Skopos rule.

Table 19 Examples of lyrics that contain emotional feelings in the song “Rewrite the Stars”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
All I want is to fly with you	<i>Aku hanya ingin terbang Bersamamu</i>	I just want to fly with you	Transfer
All I want is to fall with you	<i>Aku hanya ingin jatuh bersamamu</i>	I just want to fall with you	

Examples in Table 19 present the lyrical content that highlight love and a deep desire to be with someone. By applying transfer, the subtitle preserves both the original meaning and emotional tone, allowing the intended message to be effectively conveyed to the target audience. This way, the translation fulfils the Skopos theory by achieving its communicative purpose. The simplicity of the lyrics enables a close rendering of the source text with minimal structural changes. However, there is a subtle shift in focus—the original text emphasizes more the action “All I Want,” while the Indonesian version focuses more on the subject “*Aku hanya ingin*” (I just want to). This adjustment clarifies the speaker’s intention and enhances emotional resonance by emphasizing personal desire. The applied strategy also results in a clear and natural expression, supporting readability and aligning with the coherence rule, while maintaining logical consistency with the source text in accordance with the fidelity rule.

Table 20 Examples of lyrics that contain emotional feelings in the song “Tightrope”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
But I’d follow you to the great unknown	<i>Tapi aku mengikutimu ke tempat yang tidak diketahui</i>	But I followed you to an unknown place	Transfer
So I risk it all just to be with you	<i>Maka kupertaruhkan segalanya agar dapat bersamamu</i>	So risked everything to be with you	

Transfer is also applied as shown in Table 20. The underlying tone of the lyrics revolves around trust, vulnerability, and determination to take risks for the sake of love. This deep emotional meaning is preserved through the use of transfer, in which the subtitle closely follows the meaning of ST with minimal modification. Minor adjustments, such as translating “great unknown” into “*tempat yang tidak diketahui*” (unknown place), make the meaning more explicit. While “great unknown” can be interpreted metaphorically, the Indonesian translation renders it as a concrete physical place, making the meaning more direct and easier to understand. This clarification supports coherence by ensuring that the subtitle is immediately comprehensible within the given context. Overall, the translation fulfills its communicative purpose and aligns with the Skopos rule.

Table 21 Examples of lyrics that contain emotional feelings in the song “A Million Dreams”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
A million dreams are keeping me awake	<i>Sejuta impian menghalangiku tidur</i>	A million dreams prevent me from sleeping	Paraphrase

The example in Table 21 shows the underlying emotion from the overall song, and the lyrics are about excitement and motivation to chase success. The translator uses a paraphrased expression in Indonesian, shifting the point of view from a positive clause (being awake due to excitement) to a more negative statement (hard to sleep because of the euphoria of imagining things). While the literal translation, “*sejuta impian membuatku terjaga,*” would have retained the tone of excitement, the paraphrased version offers a clearer representation of both excitement and tension of emotional states. This strategy helps evoke a stronger emotional state as it amplifies the feeling of frustration that comes with ambition and dreams, thus staying true to the song’s emotional core. This

then aligns with the main purpose of the text (Skopos rule), is logically relevant (fidelity rule), and is understandable for the Indonesian audiences (coherence rule).

4.2.9. Idiomatic and Cultural References

Songs that are rich with idiomatic or cultural references, like metaphors whose meaning cannot be translated literally, are included in this category. These often involve cultural-specific elements that require careful adaptation to convey the same intended meaning as the original while ensuring relevance to the target audience. The following examples illustrate the challenge in maintaining the original meaning (fidelity), ensuring clarity for the audience (coherence) and achieving the intended communicative purpose (Skopos) in the translation.

Table 22 Examples of lyrics that contain idiomatic phrases in the song “The Greatest Show”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
Colossal we come these renegades in the ring	<i>Kami menjadi luar biasa para pelarian dalam arena</i>	We became extraordinary, the runaways in the arena	Dislocation

In the Table 22, “colossal,” meaning “extremely large” or “giant,” is translated into “*luar biasa*” (extraordinary). While this adaptation is understandable (follows the coherence rule) and logically connected (follows the fidelity rule), it loses some of the original intent, as “colossal” implies not just ‘size’ but also the magnitude and great impact on the surroundings. Similarly, “renegades,” which refers to the marginalized community who have stepped out of the shadows and embraced their oddities, is translated as “*para pelarian*” (runaways). This shift changes the meaning from rebellion to merely escaping, diminishing the emotional weight and broader connotation of “rebellion.” As a result, the translation has failed to deliver its intended purpose to the target audience (Skopos rule).

Table 23 Examples of lyrics that contain idiomatic phrases in the song “This Is Me”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
Another round of bullets hits my skin	<i>Cercaan kembali menyakitiku.</i>	The taunts hurt me again	Dislocation

In the example in table 23, the metaphor “round of bullets,” which implies physical harm, is translated into “*cercaan*,” which means “taunt” or “insult,” a more verbal form of harm. This shift reduces the intensity of the original metaphor by replacing a vivid image of physical violence with a more abstract expression or verbal attack. Although the metaphor becomes less forceful, it still preserves the core meaning, fulfilling the communicative purpose (Skopos) and ensuring clarity for the target audience (coherence). Additionally, “hits my skin,” which flows naturally in the original context, is translated as “*menyakitiku*” (hurts me), maintaining emotional weight while avoiding literal physical imagery. However, the emotional impact of the original is lessened, as the source text conveys a stronger and more vivid sense of pain. Despite this, the translation still effectively delivers the core message and adheres to the coherence and fidelity rule.

Table 24 Examples of lyrics that contain idiomatic phrases in the song “Come Alive”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
Got your head hung low , your sky’s a shade of gray	<i>Kau merasa lelah, langitmu abu-abu</i>	You feel tired , your sky is gray	Dislocation

In the Table 24, the first clause contains the idiom “head hung low,” which means being unhappy, sad, embarrassed, or having unpleasant feelings. This phrase also evokes a strong visual image of a person lowering their head and body posture to show these emotions. However the idiom is translated into “*lelah*” (tired), which typically refers to physical or mental exhaustion rather than emotional distress. This shift indicates that the Skopos rule is not fully achieved, as translation does not convey the intended emotional nuance of the source text. Similarly, fidelity is not maintained, since “*lelah*” does not accurately reflect the original meaning expressed by the idiom. In addition, the visual element of a slumped posture is lost in the translation, reducing the expressive

impact of the line. Meanwhile, the coherence rule is still maintained, as the translation remains understandable although it deviates from its intended emotional tone of the original.

4.2.10. Narrative Relevance

Songs whose lyrics have direct connections to important character acts, plot points, or situations in the movie fall under this category. The translation of these songs is essential to preserving the narrative's coherence and flow since they highlight pivotal moments, explain character motivations, or progress the plot. The following instance shows how those narrative lyrics serve the communicative goals from the Skopos, Coherence, and Fidelity point of view.

Table 25 Examples of lyrics that connect to subsequent action in the song “The Other Side”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
Don't you wanna get away from the same old part you gotta play	<i>Tidakkah kamu ingin lari, dari peran yang sama yang harus kau mainkan</i>	Don't you want to run away from the same role you have to play	Transfer, Condensation

The example in Table 25 shows that the lyrics are translated faithfully with only minimal reduction to meet the time and space restrictions. While the source text is slightly longer, the target text is adjusted to ensure the subtitle remain readable within the available screen timeline. The use of the transfer, combined with slight condensation, preserves the intended meaning, emotional tone, coherence, and clarity of the original line. As a result, the translation fulfills its communicative purpose (Skopos), remains understandable (coherence), and stays faithful to the source text (fidelity). This demonstrates how the translation balances subtitling constraint without compromising the effectiveness or the implied meaning of the original text.

Table 2 Examples of lyrics that reflect character development in the song “From Now On”

Official Disney+ English Subtitles	Official Disney+ Indonesian Subtitles	Back Translation	Strategy
What's waiting till tomorrow starts tonight	<i>Apa yang menunggu di esok hari dimulai mala mini</i>	What awaits tomorrow begins tonight	Transfer
And let the promise in me start	<i>Dan biarlah janji dalam jiwaku dimulai</i>	And let the promise in my soul begin	Paraphrase

In Table 26, the narrative-driven lyrics show a pivotal moment of the main character's development, where he realizes the past mistakes of abandoning his family in pursuit of success, marking a shift toward self-realization and commitment. Although the first and second lines reflect the use of different strategies, the translation preserves the original meaning and emotional tone of the source text. In the first line, the subtitle uses a close rendering of the source text with minimal structural changes, helping maintain clarity and aligns with the coherence rule. In contrast, the second line shifts from “in me” to “dalam jiwaku,” (“my soul”) adding emotional depth making the expression more resonant within the Indonesian cultural context. This demonstrates how the subtitles balance meaning, cultural adaptation, and communicative function, in line with the principles of Skopos theory.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Indonesian subtitles of The Greatest Showman (2017) on Disney+ Hotstar employed various translation strategies across different types of lyrical content, reflecting meaning, cultural adaptation, and functionality. By applying Gottlieb’s (1992) subtitling strategies and Skopos theory, the research addresses both the strategies used and their purpose in rendering non-singable song subtitles.

For the first research question, transfer emerges as the most dominant strategy (52.90%), enabling faithful delivery of the message and emotional tone. Paraphrase (19.93%) and condensation (12.68%) are also frequently used, addressing linguistic and cultural challenges while preserving readability. Dislocation is key for adapting idiomatic expressions, though sometimes at the cost of emotional nuance. Less common strategies like decimation

and deletion are used to streamline non-essential content, while imitation, transcription, and resignation are not employed, suggesting they are unsuitable for the linguistic and cultural context of the film.

As for the second question, the results show that the strategies used across lyric categories reflect how meaning, culture, and function are conveyed in the Indonesian subtitles. For emotionally expressive lyrics, transfer is predominantly used in nearly 73% of 138 lines of lyrics, preserving tone and coherence. Narrative-driven lyrics also rely on transfer, often combined with other strategies to support plot clarity and character development. Idiomatic or culturally specific lyrics, however, pose greater challenges and often require dislocation, which, while aiding cultural relevance, can result in a loss of emotional nuance. Viewed through Skopos theory, the subtitles largely fulfill their communicative purpose by maintaining function (*Skopos rule*), ensuring clarity (*coherence rule*), and preserving the logical connection between ST and TT (*fidelity rule*). However, idiomatic translations sometimes fall short in fully conveying the intended meaning, highly impacting the delivery of the purpose within the target context.

Overall, this study highlights the intricate balance subtitlers must achieve in musical films: conveying meaning, emotion, and cultural nuances while adhering to strict audio visual constraints. The strategies used in *The Greatest Showman*'s Indonesian subtitles reflect a deliberate effort to adapt content appropriately for local audiences without losing the essence of the original lyrics. This study contributes valuable insights into the practice of subtitle translation for song lyrics in musical films, addressing a gap in previous research within this scope. By understanding translation strategies, translators and film producers can better convey meaning, emotion, and cultural nuance, especially in musical films where lyrics play a central role. For translators, this research shows that subtitling non-singable lyrics involves more than literal accuracy; it requires balancing cultural context, readability, and technical limitations. For film producers aiming for global reach, awareness of translation strategies helps ensure that content is accessible, culturally appropriate, and clearly communicated to international audiences. Major streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney+, whose international audiences rely on high-quality subtitles, stand to benefit from insights gained in this study. Emphasizing accurate and culturally sensitive subtitle translation, particularly for musical content, can improve viewer satisfaction, expand cross-cultural accessibility, and enhance their competitive advantage in the global entertainment market.

Thus, future studies are encouraged to extend or broaden similar research by exploring the translation of song lyrics, specifically non-singable ones, in other genres of films or across different cultural contexts. Such studies could hopefully provide a deeper understanding of the translation process and offer guidance for translators, as well as help enrich the field of audio visual translations and their application across various forms of media.

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