

Newmark's Translation Methods in Indonesian Translation of NIKI's "La La Lost You"

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Abstract: Song lyric translation plays a crucial role in enabling audiences to access meaning and emotional expression across languages, particularly within digital platforms such as YouTube. Despite the extensive application of Newmark's translation methods in translation studies, limited research has specifically examined their use in Indonesian song subtitles distributed through online lyric channels. This study aims to identify the Newmark translation methods employed in the Indonesian subtitles of NIKI's song "La La Lost You" on the Indolirik YouTube channel and to analyze how these methods convey meaning and emotional nuance from English into Indonesian. Adopting a qualitative descriptive approach, the data were collected from the original English lyrics and their Indonesian subtitles and analyzed using Newmark's translation method framework. The findings indicate that communicative translation is the most frequently applied method, followed by free translation, semantic translation, and faithful translation. Communicative translation is predominantly utilized to render emotional expressions, idiomatic language, and implicit meanings, while free translation emphasizes emotional states by reducing surface textual elements. Semantic and faithful translations appear in lines with relatively straightforward meanings that require minimal modification. These findings suggest that the translator prioritizes audience comprehension and emotional accessibility, reflecting the influence of YouTube as a digital consumption context and highlighting communicative translation as an effective strategy in digital song subtitling.

Keywords: *Newmark Translation Methods, Communicative Translation, Song Lyric Translation, Indonesian Subtitles, YouTube*

INTRODUCTION

A song is a form of musical expression that combines lyrics and melody to convey ideas, experiences, and emotions. Sulistiyarini and Prasetyo (2024) state that language plays an essential role in all aspects of daily life, functioning as a primary medium through which people communicate ideas, emotions, and experiences. This communicative function of language is also realized through artistic forms such as song lyrics. Songs function as a medium of communication through which individuals express ideas, experiences, and emotions (Cahya et al., 2021, as cited in Joliastri et al., 2025). Given the significant role of song lyrics in conveying meaning, song translation is crucial for preserving a song's emotional message while adapting

it to new cultural and linguistic contexts (Sood et al., 2024). Translation refers to the process of transferring meaning from a source language into a target language (Fahmi & Arjulayana, 2023). Lyrics convey not only lexical meaning but also emotional, artistic, and cultural messages, which must be maintained when translated into another language. Song lyrics are more flexible than traditional poetry, enabling songwriters to convey emotions and messages creatively through both poetic and musical elements (Diva et al., 2024). Saragih et al. (2022) argue that translating Indonesian song lyrics into English is an interesting area of research due to the distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the two languages. Therefore, lyric translation constitutes an essential activity within translation studies.

In the digital era, the importance of translation quality has increased significantly, particularly as audiences access translated song lyrics through online platforms such as YouTube. Gunawan (2025) emphasizes that in an era of intensified globalization, translation serves as a crucial intercultural bridge, enabling audiences from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to engage with shared cultural products. Zebua et al. (2025) emphasize that platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and TikTok connect music to global audiences instantly, making skilled translation vital for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps. In this context, YouTube has emerged as a dominant medium for lyric dissemination, allowing audiences from diverse linguistic backgrounds to engage with music through subtitles provided by both professional and non-professional translators (Sitinjak et al., 2025). Consequently, the translation methods applied in such digital environments play a crucial role in shaping audience comprehension and emotional reception of foreign-language songs.

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks in translation studies is Newmark's translation method, which explains translation decisions in terms of communicative intent and the acceptability of meaning in the target language. Although Newmark's theory was developed decades ago, it continues to serve as a foundational framework in contemporary translation studies, offering valuable insights for translators working across various genres and contexts (Yong, 2024). Newmark (1988) explains that translation involves transferring the meaning of a text into another language as intended by the author. Translation is also a complex process that requires a deep understanding of cultural nuances, context, and communicative intent, rather than a mere word-for-word transfer (Tursunovich et al., 2024).

Previous studies have shown that song lyric translation often struggles to maintain essential meaning, emotional nuance, and stylistic features due to linguistic and cultural differences between source and target languages. Purba et al. (2022) found that word-for-word translation dominated Indonesian translations of Maroon 5's "Memories," yet this method often limited the transfer of deeper aesthetic meaning. Ramadhani and Djuharie (2025) analyzed the Indonesian translation of "Let It Go". They demonstrated that both free and adaptation methods could preserve the core message, though some cultural and lyrical nuances were lost. Similarly, Kriswesti et al. (2023) highlighted the role of adaptation and semantic translation in conveying emotional depth in the translation of Putri Ariani's "Loneliness." However, their analysis primarily focused on textual features rather than the broader digital context.

Despite these contributions, research on lyric translation has focused mainly on lyrics sourced from official websites or printed texts. At the same time, relatively little attention has been given to song subtitles distributed through digital platforms such as YouTube. In practice, YouTube channels that provide song subtitles, such as "Indolirik," function as public reference sources, potentially shaping how audiences interpret foreign songs. Aero and Noorman (2022) emphasize that subtitlers are responsible for rendering content in a form easily understood by global audiences, underscoring the importance of clarity and accuracy in subtitle translation. However, the translation strategies employed by non-professional subtitle providers on YouTube remain underexplored.

Furthermore, although Newmark's translation methods have been widely applied in translation studies, limited research has specifically examined how these methods are utilized in Indonesian song subtitles published on YouTube. In particular, no study has systematically analyzed the types of Newmark translation methods used and their application in the Indonesian subtitles of NIKI's song "La La Lost You" on the Indolirik YouTube channel, despite the song's popularity and emotional intensity. Released in 2019, "La La Lost You" portrays the emotional struggle of a romantic breakup, highlighting feelings of loss and lingering curiosity about a former partner's well-being (Hidayah & Bustam, 2023). This gap indicates a need for further investigation into how meaning and emotional nuance are conveyed through translation in digital lyric subtitles.

Although the material consists of song lyrics, the data were accessed in the form of YouTube subtitles. Accordingly, this study positions the material as audiovisual translation of lyrics, which involves constraints such as timing, line limitation, condensation, and segmentation. The subtitles are time-synced with the audio, typically limited to two lines per screen, and sometimes condensed to ensure readability. These subtitling conventions may partly explain the dominance of certain translation methods, even though Newmark's framework remains the primary analytical lens.

Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on the Indonesian subtitles of "La La Lost You" provided by the Indolirik YouTube channel to examine the application of Newmark's translation methods in a digital context. Therefore, this study aims to 1) identify the Newmark translation methods used in the Indonesian subtitles of "La La Lost You" by NIKI on the Indolirik YouTube channel; and 2) analyze how these translation methods facilitate the transfer of meaning and emotional nuance from English into Indonesian across different lyric lines. Through this focus, the study seeks to contribute to translation studies by extending the discussion of song lyric translation into contemporary digital media environments.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to investigate the translation methods used in the Indonesian subtitles of NIKI's "La La Lost You". A qualitative approach was appropriate because the data consisted of textual materials, namely the source language (SL) and their target language (TL) obtained from the Indolirik YouTube channel, a publicly accessible platform widely used by Indonesian audiences.

The data source was the YouTube video "NIKI - La La Lost You (Acoustic Version) Lirik Terjemahan Indonesia", uploaded on April 15, 2025, by the Indolirik channel available at <https://youtu.be/2eioGe5yAkA?si=Q2tm05HDMIKSaJc5>. The Indonesian subtitles were creator-provided, manually uploaded by the channel rather than auto-generated by YouTube. This ensures that the translation reflects deliberate subtitling choices rather than machine output.

Data were collected using a documentary technique by observing and documenting both the English lyrics and their Indonesian subtitles. Each SL-TL pair was treated as a single unit of analysis. Repeated lines such as chorus were counted each time they appeared to reflect audience perception. Contractions (e.g., don't, gettin') were transcribed as in the source text and translated normally into Indonesian. Segmentation followed the YouTube subtitle format, so each subtitle line was treated as one unit of analysis.

The translated lines were classified according to Newmark's (1988) translation methods word-for-word, literal, faithful, semantic, adaptation, free, idiomatic, communicative. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to identify dominant patterns, and representative examples were analyzed qualitatively to explain how each method conveyed meaning, emotional expression, and readability. Results were presented in tabular and narrative form, ensuring transparency and auditability.

To ensure reliability, the coding was rechecked after a two-week interval to confirm intra-rater consistency. Borderline cases were discussed with the supervisor to validate classification, and all coding decisions were documented to provide an audit trail. These procedures ensured that the analysis was consistent, transparent, and verifiable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Newmark's Translation Methods Used in the Indonesian Subtitles

After examining the English lyrics (SL) of the song “*La La Lost You*” and their Indonesian subtitles (TL) provided by the Indolirik YouTube channel, the researcher identified corresponding lyric lines from both versions for analysis. Each pair of source and target text units was analyzed using Peter Newmark's (1988) translation method framework, with particular attention to sentence structure, conveyed meaning, emotional expression, and cultural context.

The identification process involved matching each English lyric line with its Indonesian equivalent and determining the most appropriate translation method based on the form of the translation, the accuracy of meaning transfer, and the level of naturalness in Indonesian. Rather than focusing on individual lexical shifts, the analysis emphasized recurring patterns in how translation methods were applied across the lyrics. Based on this classification, a distribution of translation methods was identified, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Newmark's Translation Methods

Translation Method	Total	Percentage %
Communicative Translation	29	76%
Free Translation	5	13%
Semantic Translation	3	8%
Faithful Translation	1	3%
Literal Translation	0	0%
Idiomatic Translation	0	0%
Word-for-word Translation	0	0%
Adaptation	0	0%
Total	38	100%

The table above illustrates the distribution of translation methods according to Newmark's (1988) framework, as identified in the Indonesian subtitles of NIKI's song “*La La Lost You*” on the Indolirik YouTube channel. A total of 38 lyric lines translated from English as the source language (SL) into Indonesian as the target language (TL) were analyzed in this study. Each line was examined and classified according to the applicable translation method proposed by Newmark.

The findings show that four translation methods are used in Indonesian subtitles: communicative translation, free translation, semantic translation, and faithful translation. Communicative translation appears most frequently, occurring in 29 lyric lines (76%). Free

translation is found in 5 lines (13%), while semantic translation occurs in 3 lines (8%). Faithful translation is used least frequently, appearing in only 1 line (3%).

Other translation methods proposed by Newmark, including word-for-word, literal, idiomatic, and adaptation, are not identified in the data. The overall distribution shows a clear predominance of communicative translation over the other methods used in the Indonesian subtitles of the song. In the following section, only a few representative examples are presented for each translation method. These examples were selected because they illustrate the typical patterns identified in the dataset, while the full coding across all 38 lines ensured methodological transparency.

Application of Newmark's Translation Methods in the Song Lyrics

1. Communicative Translation

Communicative translation emphasizes conveying meaning clearly so the message is naturally understood in the target language. The translator may adapt form, structure, or word choice to enhance clarity and readability. This method prioritizes communicative function over strict linguistic form, while ensuring cultural appropriateness and logical flow so the translation sounds natural and accessible.

- **SL:** While I'm on Sunset, are you on the subway?
- **TL:** Saat aku di Sunset Boulevard Los Angeles apa kau lagi naik subway di New York?

This example demonstrates communicative translation because the subtitler adds explicit location markers "Boulevard Los Angeles" and "New York" to clarify cultural references. The adjustment prioritizes audience comprehension and readability over literal equivalence, ensuring that the intended meaning is accessible to Indonesian viewers unfamiliar with the original context.

- **SL:** You would know if you put up a fight
- **TL:** Kau pasti tahu kalau mau memperjuangkannya

The phrase "put up a fight" is translated as "memperjuangkannya" to emphasize emotional effort and commitment rather than physical confrontation. This choice makes the meaning clearer and more natural for Indonesian audiences, reflecting the principles of communicative translation.

- **SL:** All my demons run wild
- **TL:** Luka batin dan trauma semakin tak terkendali

The metaphorical "demons" is rendered as "luka batin dan trauma" to make the emotional meaning explicit. This adjustment prioritizes audience comprehension by clarifying implicit meaning, illustrating communicative translation.

2. Free Translation

Free translation focuses on conveying the source text's overall meaning without strictly preserving its form. The translator may paraphrase, expand, or simplify to ensure clarity for the target audience. As a result, the translation often appears more interpretative, with added explanations or restructured ideas. Though formal equivalence may be reduced, this method highlights emotional impact, contextual understanding, and message clarity, especially when literal translation would sound unnatural.

- **SL:** While I drive, are you gettin' on the L-train?
- **TL:** Saat aku menikmati kesendirian, kau lagi sibuk dengan rutinitas kan?

The cultural references "drive" and "L-train" are omitted, and the line is reinterpreted as a contrast between solitude and routine. This shift prioritizes emotional meaning over literal details, illustrating free translation.

- **SL:** In the city of angels
- **TL:** Meskipun aku telah ditinggalkan

The figurative place reference "city of angels" is omitted, and the line is reinterpreted as abandonment. This shift replaces imagery with emotional expression, showing how free translation prioritizes underlying meaning over literal form.

3. Semantic Translation

Semantic translation conveys contextual and emotional meanings while staying close to the source form. It is often used for figurative language, such as idioms or culturally specific expressions, requiring careful interpretation. Unlike communicative translation, it preserves nuances and stylistic features, yet still ensures accuracy, naturalness, and contextual appropriateness in the target language.

- **SL:** I mean, Manhattan's nice, but so are Malibu nights
- **TL:** Aku tahu Manhattan indah, tapi malam di Malibu juga tak kalah cantik

The translation preserves both place references and the comparative structure, with minor adjustments for Indonesian syntax "aku tahu". Meaning and nuance remain intact, showing semantic translation's balance of accuracy and naturalness.

- **SL:** Summer's endin' now and the nights are coolin' down
- **TL:** Musim panas hampir berakhir dan malam mulai terasa dingin

Seasonal imagery and atmosphere are retained with minimal changes. The translation follows the source structure while adapting verb forms, reflecting semantic translation's focus on preserving meaning and stylistic nuance.

4. Faithful Translation

Faithful translation seeks to reproduce the source text's meaning and intent with high accuracy while preserving its structure and nuances. Limited adjustments may be made for clarity and naturalness, but the translation remains loyal to the author's message and ensures the target text reflects the original content and intention.

- **SL:** And you sold your car, now you walk for miles
- **TL:** Kau jual mobilmu, sekarang harus jalan kaki jauh

The translation directly mirrors the source line, preserving meaning, structure, and causal sequence. Only minor grammatical adjustments are made for naturalness, showing faithful translation that remains loyal to the original message.

In addition to method classification, the analysis reveals a loss or gain pattern. Explication appears when implicit meanings are more clearly explained, such as "demons" becoming "luka batin dan trauma." Omission occurs when cultural references are omitted for readability, such as "L-train." Metaphor shift occurs when figurative imagery is replaced with emotional expression, such as "city of angels" becoming "ditinggalkan." This pattern confirms that

subtitling choices not only follow Newmark's method but are also influenced by the need for clarity and audience acceptance.

Discussion

This discussion interprets the study's findings in relation to the research questions and situates them within existing translation studies, particularly those on song lyric translation and Newmark's translation methods. The analysis reveals several significant findings regarding the translation strategies employed in the Indonesian subtitles of NIKI's song "La La Lost You" on the Indolirik YouTube channel.

The first finding directly addresses the first research question concerning which Newmark translation methods are used in the Indonesian subtitles of "La La Lost You." The results indicate that four of Newmark's translation methods are applied, namely communicative translation, free translation, semantic translation, and faithful translation. Among these methods, communicative translation emerges as the most dominant strategy. This dominance suggests that the translation process is primarily guided by the objective of making the lyrics understandable and emotionally accessible to Indonesian audiences. The use of multiple translation methods further demonstrates that the translator does not rely on a single rigid approach but instead selects different strategies to meet the linguistic and emotional demands of each lyric line.

The second finding addresses the second research question regarding how Newmark's translation methods are applied across different lines of the lyrics. The findings show that communicative translation is consistently used in lyric lines containing emotional expressions, metaphorical or idiomatic language, and relational meanings that require contextual interpretation. According to Newmark, communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership (Newmark, as cited in Astiti and Suhendar, 2019). Through this method, implicit meanings in the source language are rendered explicitly and naturally in Indonesian. In contrast, free translation is applied in lines where certain surface textual elements or locational references are omitted to emphasize emotional states and personal experiences rather than literal details. Meanwhile, semantic and faithful translation are employed in lines with relatively straightforward meanings, allowing the original message to be transferred with minimal modification while preserving clarity and nuance. This patterned application indicates that the translator strategically selects translation methods based on the function of each lyric line, particularly in conveying emotional depth within the context of digital subtitle consumption on YouTube.

Compared with previous studies, this research's findings show both similarities and differences in the use of translation methods in song lyric translation. Unlike Purba et al. (2022), who identified word-for-word translation as the dominant method and noted its limitations for conveying emotional depth, the present study reveals that communicative translation is the predominant approach in the Indonesian subtitles of "La La Lost You." This difference suggests a stronger emphasis on audience comprehension and emotional accessibility, enabling affective meanings to be conveyed more naturally in the target language. The contrast highlights the crucial role of translation method selection in determining the effectiveness of emotional meaning transfer in song lyrics.

Similarly, while Ramadhani and Djuharie (2025) reported that free translation and adaptation were effective in preserving the core message of “Let It Go,” they also observed that extensive cultural modification could reduce lyrical nuance. In comparison, the present study suggests that communicative translation offers a more balanced strategy by maintaining the original meaning without excessive cultural alteration. Furthermore, unlike Kriswesti et al. (2023), whose analysis focused primarily on textual features of translated lyrics, this study emphasizes the influence of digital consumption contexts. In particular, YouTube as a platform prioritizes clarity, immediacy, and emotional resonance, which shapes translation choices and reinforces communicative translation as an audience-oriented strategy in digital lyric subtitles.

These findings support Newmark’s assertion that communicative translation is particularly effective when the primary goal is audience comprehension and naturalness in the target language. The findings further suggest that communicative translation functions as a flexible strategy that accommodates the emotional and contextual nuances inherent in lyrical texts, rather than merely serving as an alternative to semantic translation.

The findings provide valuable insights for subtitle creators and non-professional translators on YouTube, particularly in selecting translation strategies that enhance emotional clarity and readability. An understanding of how communicative translation enhances emotional clarity may guide translators in making informed decisions that balance fidelity and readability. For non-professional translators managing public subtitle channels, this study highlights the importance of prioritizing audience interpretation while preserving the core message of the source text.

Based on the translation method variable, this discussion concludes that communicative translation functions as the central strategy in the Indonesian translation of “La La Lost You” on the Indolirik YouTube channel. The consistent application of this method demonstrates its effectiveness in conveying emotional meaning in song lyrics, particularly within digital platforms where accessibility and emotional engagement are essential.

CONCLUSION

This study addressed two research aims. First, the Indonesian subtitles of NIKI’s “La La Lost You” on the Indolirik YouTube channel employed several of Newmark’s translation methods, communicative, semantic, free, and faithful with communicative translation identified as the most dominant. This shows that subtitle translation prioritizes audience comprehension and emotional accessibility over strict formal equivalence.

Second, each method was applied strategically according to lyric function and emotional content. Communicative translation conveyed metaphorical and emotional expressions naturally, free translation emphasized affective states, while semantic and faithful translation preserved precise meanings. Overall, lyric subtitling on YouTube reflects flexible, context-sensitive choices that highlight communicative effectiveness and emotional resonance.

The findings imply that translators and subtitle creators, especially on digital platforms, should balance meaning transfer with readability and emotional impact. Academically, the study confirms the relevance of Newmark’s framework in digital contexts, showing that translation strategies are shaped by both linguistic and platform-specific factors.

Future research should examine more songs, genres, and platforms, comparing professional and non-professional subtitlers, and include audience reception to explore how translation methods affect emotional understanding.

This study was limited to one song and one subtitle provider, restricting generalizability and leaving reception analysis inferential. Methodologically, reliability procedures such as intra-rater checks, supervisor discussions, and an audit trail proved essential for ensuring consistency and credibility in method classification studies.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to Widhiyanto, M.Pd., Ph.D., as the supervisor of this study, for the guidance, support, and valuable input provided during the writing of this article.

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