



IMPACT OF TRANSLATED RELIGIOUS SONGS ON UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCING SPIRITUAL VALUES

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Abstract

This research seeks to explore the use of religious music in interpreting and conceptualizing spiritual values. Moreover, religious songs tend to become integrated into religious rituals and are a component of one's spiritual life. Nevertheless, when such songs are translated from their original language, they run the risk of having meaning and emotions altered, which in turn influences the spiritual experience of those listening. For this research, the researchers uses qualitative research, aiming at church congregations through interviews with members who had experienced translated religious songs in the church community. This research assumed that translated spiritual lyrics involve not just linguistic changes but also cultural and theological nuances. The study examined the effectiveness of translations in preserving the original spiritual message by conducting interviews with listeners and translators to explore how these translations convey the spiritual experience across languages and cultures. The results of this research show that faithful translation and maintenance of the original meaning's essence are necessary so as to convey appropriately spiritual values. The findings of this research emphasize taking into account linguistic and cultural factors in the translation of religious texts to enhance the spiritual involvement of the people to the greatest extent.

Keywords: comprehension, experiential knowledge, spiritual values, influence, translation of religious songs

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual music plays a significant part in the religious life of communities and individuals. Through its melodies and unique religious messages, spiritual music conveys deep emotional and spiritual values, touching literally one's heart and shaping one's faith. S. Suharto and E. Subroto (2014) of *Harmonia: Education of Arts Research and Journal* assert that spiritual music in other regions of the world, like Samparbon, possesses a tremendous emotional power to promote religious values.

However, issues arise when spiritual songs are translated from one language to another. According to most studies, such as a study carried out by Tira Nur Fitria in *JETLEE: (2023)* also Nugraha, A. F., & Adika, D. (2024), translating does not involve exchanging words from one language to the other. Translating also requires understanding the depths of meaning, cultural significance, and the spiritual background embedded in the original lyrics. For example, when a devotional song originally in English is translated into Indonesian, the melodic beauty and the emotional depth of the message are lost. This serves to show that translating religious music is not only a language but a spiritual and cultural endeavor. The interest in this topic came from my own experience in working for a church, where I discovered that translated spiritual songs had a varying impact on the congregation. These were observed in terms of how the listeners interpreted the message and felt the spiritual value of. And this case will differ with another journal like Aziz, K., & Adika, D. (2024). These aspects were observed in terms of how the listeners interpreted the message and perceived its spiritual value. This case differs from another study, such as Aziz, K., & Adika, D. (2024), which analyzed songs. This made me reflect on how the quality of translation can influence the communication of spiritual values.

Overall, this topic is relevant in the sense that there is more production of religious literature, that is, Sufi literature. Scholars such as Hadi (2006) and Alawode, A. O. (2024). Understanding Christian translation and its missiological relevance, attest that Sufi music is a means to feel and achieve divine presence. Targeting spiritual music also, those songs filled with religious and spiritual values can also be translated well to maintain their originality. Hermans (2014) and Walter, Y., & Altorfer, A. (2022) in *Translation in Systems*, emphasizes the importance of systemic methods of translation, particularly in translating religious and literary texts.

The importance of this study lies in the fact that incorrect translation of spiritual songs may result in the intended messages being manipulated and lose their theological implications. Such songs are not just art—they're a method of internalizing spiritual realities. For example, if a statement in the original lyrics reflects total surrender to God, the translation must reflect the same degree of commitment and emotional resilience so it can resonate with the hearts of the people. This study aims to test the impact of translation of spiritual song lyrics on listeners' knowledge and internalization of spiritual values. The qualitative approach based on a case study design was used, and data were collected through in-depth interviews of individuals who listen regularly to spiritual songs both before and after translation. The findings are poised to provide a better understanding of how accuracy of translation affects listeners' theological knowledge and internalization of spiritual values

The benefits of this study are both theoretical and pragmatic. Theoretically, it contributes to the fields of linguistics, translation studies, and religious studies. Practically, it offers suggestions to translators, religious leaders, and the spiritual music community in creating and applying translated spiritual songs as an efficient means of spiritual development. This study is also unique in that, unlike others, it not only takes into account the effect of translation but also the linguistic and cultural translation choices that have a direct effect on how spiritual values are interpreted and appreciated in song lyrics.

METHOD

This research uses the qualitative method with the case study approach, which is appropriate with the focus on interpretation, understanding, and internalization of spiritual values in the translated spiritual song lyrics. As previously discussed in the introduction, this research aims to explore the personal sentiments of individuals when listening to spiritual songs in both their original and translated versions. Therefore, a qualitative method is chosen to capture the intensity and complexity of such spiritual and emotional responses that cannot quantitatively be captured using numbers.

According to Yoo, J., & Lee, H. (2022) qualitative research is an approach to learning and understanding the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human concern. This makes qualitative methods highly appropriate for studying richly contextualized and subjective personal, spiritual, and emotional experience. Qualitative methodology in this research can facilitate critical analysis of human behavior and perception through the use of methods such as narrative inquiry, phenomenology, document analysis, observation, interviews, and case studies. A case study approach is selected because it allows one to deeply examine a certain phenomenon in real life. Stake (1995) emphasizes that "the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization," what proves to be its suitability to understand complex, context-related human experience, such as spiritual engagement through music.

The study employs a qualitative approach, emphasizing purposeful sampling to select a few information-rich respondents whose insights illuminate the research questions, as supported by Patton (2002). Unlike quantitative methods that rely on statistical procedures and larger sample sizes, this research focuses on the spiritual and experiential dimensions of engaging with translated spiritual music, where depth of understanding is prioritized over quantity. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants who regularly interact with spiritual songs, allowing for personal and introspective interpretations of their experiences. This aligns with Van Manen's (1990) phenomenological perspective, which seeks to describe and interpret lived experiences to uncover their meaning, thus reinforcing the study's aim to explore how individuals internalize spiritual messages from translated lyrics.

The case study approach within the qualitative paradigm serves as the most suitable framework for analyzing the religious and linguistic nuances involved in translating religious song lyrics. This research is based on the assumption that translated spiritual lyrics encompass not only linguistic revisions but also cultural and theological undertones. To conduct this study, I will first identify and select a sample of translated spiritual songs. Next, I will perform in-depth interviews with listeners and translators to gather insights on their perceptions of the spiritual substance and cultural significance of these translations. This qualitative data will be analyzed to understand how

effectively the translations preserve the original message and recreate the spiritual experience in a new language and culture. The relationship between spirituality, culture, and language will guide the data analysis and interpretation of results, providing valuable information for translators and listeners.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research were in line with interviews and open-ended questions given to ten English-speaking members of the church congregation with frequent interaction with both original and translated spiritual songs. The respondents were selected via purposive sampling since they were familiar with spiritual music and could reflect upon lyrical meaning. Thematic analysis of the responses unearthed three general themes: (1) the preservation of spiritual meaning, (2) cultural and linguistic applicability, and (3) emotional resonance.

Participants were also asked to indicate their preference for the original or translated version of spiritual songs.

Summary of Respondent Feedback

Respondent	Spiritual Meaning (Originalvs Translated)	Cultural& Linguistic Relevance	Emotional Response	Preferred Version
Respondent 1	Spiritual meaning is retained in Translation	Translated version is easier to understand	Touched,though original feels deeper	Original
Respondent 2	Some nuance is lost in translation	Translation feels more relatable locally	Moved when singing the translated version	Translated
Respondent 3	Core message remains intact	Translated lyrics are less poetic	More emotional response to the original version	Original
Respondent 4	Translation helps in understanding the meaning	Translation is more communicative	Goosebumps when sung collectively	Translated
Respondent 5	Original version feels more spiritually profound	Translation feels too literal	Less emotionally engaging	Original

Respondent 6	Both versions convey similar messages	Original lacks local cultural context	Equally emotional depending on mood	Both
Respondent 7	Spiritual message is preserved in both versions	Original matches international worship tone	More emotionally moved by the original	Original
Respondent	Spiritual Meaning (Original vs Translated)	Cultural & Linguistic Relevance	Emotional Response	Preferred Version
Respondent 8	Some spiritual values are altered in translation	Translation feels stiff and unnatural	More emotionally engaged with the original	Original
Respondent 9	Translation helps those not fluent in English	Cultural context enhances comprehension	Stronger emotions when understanding the lyrics	Translated
Respondent 10	Spiritual message is strong in both	Translation fits better for local worship	Equally moving in both versions	Both

Translation is better for local worship. Equally moved in both versions.

Graph: Respondents' Most Preferred Version of Spiritual Songs:

•\tOriginal : ■■■■■■ (6 respondents)

•\tTranslated : ■■■ (3 respondents)

•\tBoth Versions : ■■ (2 respondents)

This pattern indicates that the majority of the respondents (6 out of 10) preferred the original version of the songs, primarily due to the emotional richness and poetic structure. For example, the original lyrics of "Because He Lives" convey rich themes of hope and faith:

Original Lyrics Excerpt:

"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow; Because

He lives, all fear is gone; Because I know

he holds the future

And life is worth the living just because He lives."

Some of the respondents (3 out of 10) preferred the translated versions because they were clearer and easier to understand. A sample of a translated excerpt is:

Translated Lyrics Excerpt:

" Sbab Dia hidup, Ada hari hari esok Sbab Dia
hidup ku tak gentar
Karna ku tahu Dia pegang hari esok Hidup jadi
berarti sbab Dia hidup"

A small number (2 out of 10) appreciated both versions equally, depending on worship context and personal emotional state.

Discussion.

Findings from the ten members of the congregation also affirm the primary research problem concerning the impact of translation on spiritual richness and cultural appropriateness of spiritual songs. The majority of participants (6 out of 10) would rather listen to the original versions of the songs, as they reported higher spiritual connection, more poetic layers, and greater emotional engagement. These responses unite with Van Manen's (1990) lived experience concept that religious meaning is not merely derived from lexical semantics but also from rhythm, tone, and delivery included within the original language.

However, three of the participants favored the translations and claimed the requirement for clarity, linguistic accessibility, and cultural familiarity. This supports the theoretical underpinning that translation operates not only at the linguistic level, but as a cultural practice. Stake (1995) emphasizes the requirement for contextual and particular knowledge in qualitative research, specifically in operating on spiritually charged material.

Notably, two of the respondents liked both versions by mood and context, indicating that translation, well done, can still capture theological richness and affective depth. This gives credence to Creswell's (2013) argument that qualitative research is best suited to capture the richness of personal meanings. Emerged as well is the significance of cultural resonance. Some of the respondents noted that translation of lyrics played a part in increasing a sense of ownership in worship because the songs became more understandable and relatable in local settings. Such a discovery is congruent with Patton's (2002) information-rich cases where individual voices speak to rich, qualitative spiritual experiences.

In sum, findings affirm that the influence of translated spiritual songs lies not in linguistic exactness but in their capacity to retain emotional, theological, and cultural integrity. These elements are core to developing the richness of spiritual engagement, hence addressing the very question at the core of this study.

CONCLUSION

This study puts into perspective the powerful impact of translated religious song on listeners' understanding and internalization of spiritual values. From the results, it appears that the majority of the participants prefer the original versions since they are emotionally dense and poetically profound. Others prefer the translated versions since they are understandable and culturally significant. Importantly, this means that the value of a translation is not solely determined by linguistic accuracy but by its ability to maintain theological significance, emotional resonance, and cultural pertinence.

Translated religious hymns, when properly constructed, can be useful tools of spiritual engagement across language boundaries. Therefore, translators should come to spiritual songs not just as texts to be translated, but as religious songs which require attention to language, culture, and religion. Ultimately, well-translated spiritual songs can potentially bridge cultures while preserving the integrity of spiritual realities.

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