



THE TRANSLATION OF METAPHORS FROM ENGLISH INTO TOBA BATAK IN OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE

Jon Piter Situmorang¹, Ayu Rista Sihotang²

Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas

Email : jpsitumorang@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the translation of metaphors from English to Toba Batak. The data were from the Old Testament Bible. The article aims at exploring how metaphors are translated and adapted into the Toba Batak language. The researchers categorized them into four types anthropomorphic image metaphors, animal image metaphors. Abstract metaphors, and synesthesia imagery metaphors. The research uses Parera's theory of metaphor as the analytical framework. The results show that most metaphors are translated metaphorically, yet there are cases where the translation deviates to fit the cultural context of the Toba Batak language. The findings highlight the linguistic and cultural challenges in translating metaphors across languages with different cultural references and religious interpretations. This research contributes to a better understanding of the complexities involved in metaphor translation, especially in religious texts.

Keywords: Metaphor, Translation, Kinds of Translation, Kinds of Metaphor

I. Introduction

The discipline of translation serves as a bridge between different languages, allowing ideas and stories to pass from one language to another. According to Larson (1984), translation is the process of changing from one form to another in different languages, while Nida and Taber (1982) emphasize that translation involves the reproduction of meaning and style from the source language to the target language. It is crucial for cultural exchange as it facilitates access to texts that cross linguistic boundaries. Translation becomes more complex when dealing with ancient texts, as time differences add to the challenge. So, translation is not just about changing words from one language to another but also about overcoming cultural differences, including context, idioms, and nuances.

In translating a text from one language to another, the translator can choose between literal and idiomatic translation. Literal translation means transferring the meaning directly from the source language to the target language. However, if the translation is done word-for-word, the result

can be a form that sounds strange or unnatural to speakers of the receiving language. For example, "I had spaghetti and meatballs for dinner last night" if translated literally in Indonesian would be "Saya memiliki spaghetti dan bakso untuk makan malam tadi malam. Although the grammatical structure is correct, this sentence sounds less natural in Indonesian. However, if translated idiomatically, the meaning in Indonesian could be "Saya makan spaghetti dan bakso untuk makan malam tadi malam." From this example, it can be seen that effective translation requires understanding the meaning in the source language and conveying that meaning in a natural way in the target language.

Language is the main focus in translation, and its scope is very broad, making it difficult to cover all aspects in this thesis. Therefore, this study focuses on one aspect of language, namely figurative meaning. Figurative meaning includes various forms such as personification, irony, simile, metaphor, and hyperbole. This research specifically focuses on metaphors, particularly in the context of translating



metaphors from English into Toba Batak. Metaphors are an essential and challenging element in English literature, serving not only as an aesthetic device but also as a bridge between linguistic expression and depth of thought. Lakoff and Johnson (1981) explain that in a literary context, metaphors allow writers to convey complex ideas and emotions in a way that is more concrete and connects with the reader or listener, often creating rich and layered images that add dimension to a literary work.

The main functions of metaphors include explanation, description, expression, evaluation, and entertainment, by utilizing concrete meanings to express abstract concepts, thus facilitating the communication of ideas that are difficult to express directly (Knowles & Moon, 2005). This makes metaphor an invaluable tool in literature, allowing writers and poets to convey nuanced emotions and abstract concepts in a more intuitive and engaging way. A metaphor is a style of language that uses a term or phrase to replace another object or action to show a similarity or analogy between the two things. In translating metaphors, we can take the meaning literally or non-literally. Depending on the figurative context, this use of figurative meaning can enhance the appeal of the text and make the sentence more profound and interesting.

The objective of this study is to analyze how metaphors in the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms, are translated from English into Toba Batak. The focus is on examining how the metaphors are adapted and whether their original meanings are preserved or altered in the translation process. This research aims to uncover the translation strategies used to maintain the metaphorical meaning within the cultural and linguistic framework of Toba Batak. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight the challenges and complexities involved in translating figurative language, particularly

in religious texts, where the spiritual and emotional impact of the metaphors is paramount.

This research focuses on texts containing metaphors found in the Old Testament Bible, particularly the Psalms, which are rich in figurative language used to convey complex spiritual messages and moral teachings. The Psalms utilize analogies, parables, and symbols to describe spiritual concepts, and metaphors in the Old Testament not only convey messages directly but also encourage readers to reflect on deeper meanings according to their personal experiences. Analyzing the metaphors in these texts helps reveal how meanings may vary depending on the cultural, linguistic, and religious background of the reader, enriching the understanding and interpretation of the scriptures.

The scope of this study is limited to the analysis of metaphors in the Psalms, focusing on their translation from English into Toba Batak. The research will categorize metaphors into four main types: anthropomorphic image metaphors, animal image metaphors, abstract metaphors, and synesthesia imagery metaphors. The study examines how these metaphors are rendered in Toba Batak, investigating the translation techniques employed and how the cultural context of the Toba Batak language influences the interpretation of these metaphors. By focusing specifically on these four categories, the study aims to provide a detailed examination of metaphor translation between English and Toba Batak.

This study aims at analyzing how metaphors from the English Old Testament are translated into Toba Batak. The focus is on how metaphors are translated and adapted in the context of the Toba Batak language and culture. Through this research, the translation process of metaphors from English to Toba Batak will be explored, providing insights into the cultural and linguistic implications of metaphor



translation between these two languages. Ultimately, the findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the translation of metaphors in religious texts, of preserving metaphorical meaning while adapting it to fit the cultural norms of the target language.

1.1 Translation

Translation is more than just transferring words from one language to another; it involves conveying meaning, intent, and cultural nuances. In literary and religious texts, where figurative language such as metaphors plays a crucial role, the task of translation becomes even more complex. Metaphors, in particular, are challenging to translate because they involve not only linguistic elements but also cultural and conceptual frameworks that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. In this study, we focus on the translation of metaphors from English to Toba Batak in the Old Testament, specifically the Psalms, and the theoretical foundation guiding this research draws from both translation studies and metaphor theory.

Translation theory offers various approaches to how meaning can be transferred between languages. According to Nida and Taber (1982), translation is not just a matter of word-for-word substitution but a dynamic process where meaning, style, and cultural elements must be considered. They introduced the concept of dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes translating ideas and meanings rather than focusing strictly on the formal structures of the source text. This concept is particularly relevant in translating metaphors, as it encourages the translator to capture the metaphors' underlying meaning, even if the literal form must be altered to fit the cultural and linguistic context of the target audience.

Newmark (1988) distinguishes between two main approaches in translation: literal (or word-for-word) translation and free (or

sense-for-sense) translation. In translating metaphors, a literal approach may result in a loss of meaning, especially if the metaphorical image does not resonate with the target culture. On the other hand, a free translation that adapts the metaphor to fit the target culture risks straying too far from the original text's intent. The challenge for translators is to find a balance between these two approaches, preserving the metaphor's meaning while making it understandable and relatable to the target audience.

1.2 Metaphor

Metaphor theory also plays a critical role in understanding how metaphors function and how they can be translated across languages. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are not just linguistic embellishments but are fundamental to how we understand and experience the world. They propose that metaphors are based on conceptual mappings between two domains: the source domain (from which the metaphor draws) and the target domain (to which the metaphor applies). For example, in the metaphor "The Lord is my shepherd," the source domain is the shepherd, and the target domain is God's role in providing guidance and protection. In translating such metaphors, the translator must consider whether the source domain is culturally relevant in the target language or whether it requires adaptation.

In translating metaphors from the Bible, especially from English to Toba Batak, cultural and religious differences between the two languages must be taken into account. Many metaphors in the Bible are drawn from the natural environment, agriculture, and pastoral life, reflecting the cultural context of the biblical world. In Toba Batak, similar cultural references may exist, but the specific connotations and emotional resonance of certain images may differ. For instance, the metaphor "The Lord is my shepherd" may resonate differently in Toba Batak, where pastoral life might not



hold the same significance as it does in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In such cases, the translator may choose to modify the metaphor or replace it with a culturally equivalent image that conveys the same meaning.

1.2.1 Kinds of Metaphor

Parera (2004) classifies metaphors into several types. Anthropomorphic metaphors, animal metaphors, abstract metaphors, and synesthesia imagery metaphors. Each type presents unique challenges in translation. Anthropomorphic metaphors, which attribute human characteristics to non-human entities (e.g., “God’s hand”), may require adaptation depending on how human traits are culturally assigned in the target language. Animal metaphors, such as those found in Psalms (e.g., “the wicked are like chaff that the wind blows away”), can also pose difficulties if the target culture does not share the same symbolic associations with certain animals. Abstract metaphors, which describe intangible concepts in concrete terms, often need cultural reinterpretation to make sense in the target language. Lastly, synesthesia metaphors, which blend sensory experiences (e.g., “a bitter truth”), may lose their effect if the sensory experiences do not align with those in the target culture.

This study employs Parera’s metaphor classification to analyze how metaphors in the English Psalms are translated into Toba Batak. By examining how each type of metaphor is handled in translation, the study seeks to identify patterns in the translation strategies used and assess how effectively the metaphors are adapted to fit the cultural and linguistic context of Toba Batak. Additionally, the study explores how the cultural and religious background of Toba Batak influences the translation choices, particularly in maintaining the spiritual message of the biblical metaphors.

III. Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research method, following the approach outlined by Sugiyono (2020), which emphasizes understanding phenomena based on the meanings people attribute to them. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of how metaphors are translated from English into Toba Batak in the Psalms. According to Strauss and Corbin (1997), qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing data in the form of words and human actions, making it ideal for examining linguistic elements like metaphors in religious texts.

The data for this research were collected from two primary sources: the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible published by Crossway Bibles in 2001 and the Toba Batak translation published by HKBP and Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (LAI) in 2021. These texts were chosen due to their authoritative status and relevance within their respective language communities. The study specifically focuses on the Psalms, which are known for their rich use of metaphorical language, making them an ideal source for examining how metaphors are rendered in translation.

The data collection process follows the documentary method, as described by Nazir (2011), which involves systematically reviewing written texts to gather relevant data. In this case, the researcher first reads the Psalms in both the English and Toba Batak versions. The next step is identifying sentences containing metaphors in the English text and then finding their corresponding translations in the Toba Batak version. This method ensures a focused and comprehensive collection of data that directly relates to the study’s objectives.

For the data analysis, this study employs descriptive qualitative analysis. As explained by Sugiyono (2020), qualitative analysis involves interpreting data by understanding the underlying meanings within their specific context. In this study, the researcher



classifies the identified metaphors into four categories as proposed by Parera (2004): anthropomorphic metaphors, animal metaphors, abstract metaphors, and synesthesia imagery metaphors. This classification helps structure the analysis, allowing for a detailed examination of how each type of metaphor is translated from English into Toba Batak.

The analysis also follows the steps outlined by Nazir (2011), beginning with identifying whether the metaphor is translated directly (metaphorically) or if it has been adapted into non-metaphorical language in the Toba Batak version. Additionally, the study explores the cultural and linguistic factors that may influence the choice of translation strategies, particularly in cases where a direct metaphorical translation might not resonate with the target audience due to cultural differences.

IV. Result and Discussion

This chapter presents an analysis of the metaphors found in the Psalms of the Old Testament Bible and their translation from English into Toba Batak. The analysis focuses on how the metaphors are translated and the strategies used by translators to maintain, adapt, or transform metaphorical meanings across languages and cultural contexts. The analysis follows the classification of metaphors into four types: anthropomorphic image metaphors, animal image metaphors, abstract metaphors, and synesthesia imagery metaphors.

3.1 Anthropomorphic Image Metaphors

Anthropomorphic metaphors are metaphors in which human attributes are given to non-human entities. One of the most prominent anthropomorphic metaphors in the Psalms is found in Psalm 23:1

English Text "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." In this verse, the term "shepherd" is used metaphorically to describe God as a caretaker, protector, and guide for His people, just as a shepherd cares for and

leads a flock of sheep. The metaphor conveys the intimate relationship between God and His followers.

Toba Batak Translation. "Jahowa do Siparmahan ahu, ndang tagamon hurangan ahu In the Toba Batak translation, the term shepherd is translated as Siparmahan, which retains the metaphorical meaning of protection and guidance In Toba Batak culture the concept of a Siparmohan aligns closely with that of a leader or protector, making the metaphor culturally and linguistically relevant This demonstrates that the metaphorical meaning is preserved in the translation without significant alteration.

Another example of anthropomorphic metaphor is found in Psalm 91:4:

English Text. "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge"

Here, "feathers" and "wings" are metaphorical representations of protection, symbolizing God's shelter and care Toba Batak Translation: "Sai ulosanna do ho dohot habongna jala marhaporusan tu toru na hatirna i do ho tau lombulumbu."

In the Toba Batak version, "feathers" is translated as habongna and wings as hatirna Both terms carry similar symbolic meanings in Batak culture, where wings and feathers represent safety and protection. Thus, the metaphor remains intact in the translation, reflecting the protective nature of God.

3.2 Animal Image Metaphors

Animal metaphors involve the use of animal characteristics to describe human traits or actions. An example of this type of metaphor appears in Psalm 22:12:

English Text "Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me" The bulls of Bashan metaphorically represent powerful enemies surrounding the speaker. Toba Batak Translation. "Sai dihaliangi angka horbo panguge do ahu jala torop do angka jonggi Basan mangalele ahu. "The translation retains the metaphor with



horbo panguge (strong bulls), maintaining the metaphorical meaning of strength and threat. The cultural understanding of bulls in Toba Batak similarly conveys power and dominance, thus the metaphor is successfully preserved.

Another example is found in Psalm 91 13, English Text: "You will tread on the lion and the cobra, you will trample the great lion and the serpent." Here, lion and cobra symbolize dangers and enemies. Toba Batak Translation: "Bolusonmu do singa dohot hala degedegeonmu do singa dohot buea." The translation of lion to singa and cobra to hala retains the metaphorical representation of danger and threat. However, the use of buca (crocodile) for serpent introduces a cultural adaptation, as crocodiles are a more culturally relevant symbol of danger in Batak culture. While the metaphorical meaning is retained, the imagery is slightly adjusted to better fit the target audience.

3.3 Abstract Metaphors

Abstract metaphors use concrete imagery to explain intangible concepts such as emotions, time, or spirituality. In Psalm 23:4, the phrase English Text: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Here, the valley of the shadow of death is an abstract metaphor for a period of great danger or distress. Toba Batak Translation: "Ai nang pe mardalan ahu di rura linggoman ni hamatean." In this translation, the valley of the shadow of death becomes ruro linggoman ni hamatean, maintaining the metaphorical meaning of extreme danger. The concept of a valley (rura) is preserved, aligning with Batak geographic and cultural understandings of life-threatening situations, thereby successfully translating the metaphor into the target language.

Another abstract metaphor is in Psalm 119:105 English Text: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The metaphor of a lamp and light symbolizes guidance and divine wisdom. Toba Batak

Translation "Hatami do sulusulu na pathu jala hatiuron di dalanku. Here, lamp is translated as sulusulu, and light as hatiuron. The metaphorical meaning of guidance and illumination is maintained with both metaphors successfully adapted to convey spiritual guidance in the Toba Batak language.

3.4 Synesthesia Imagery Metaphors

Synesthesia imagery metaphors blend sensory experiences to describe an abstract concept, often linking two or more senses. One example is in Psalm 34:8

English Text: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." In this metaphor, taste and see are used figuratively to represent experiencing and understanding God's goodness. Toba Batak Translation: "Dai jala ida hamu denggan basa Jahowa." The translation retains the metaphor by translating taste as dat and see as ada. Both senses are maintained, effectively conveying the spiritual experience of recognizing God's goodness. This metaphor remains fully intact in the translation.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the analysis of the translation of metaphors from English into Toba Batak, specifically focusing on the Old Testament Psalms. The findings from this study show that the majority of metaphors in the English source text are retained in the Toba Batak translation, though some adjustments and adaptations were made to better align with the cultural and linguistic context of the target language.

The analysis identified four types of metaphors: anthropomorphic image metaphors, animal image metaphors, abstract metaphors, and synesthesia imagery metaphors. It was found that approximately 90% of the metaphors from the English Psalms were successfully translated into metaphorical expressions in Toba Batak, preserving their original figurative meaning. However, in 10% of the cases, the



metaphors were metaphorically due not translated to cultural differences or linguistic constraints, especially in the case of anthropomorphic metaphors that do not exist in the target culture

One significant finding is that metaphors deeply rooted in the cultural context of the source language, such as those involving animals or natural phenomena unfamiliar to the Toba Batak culture, were often adapted. For example, the metaphorical representation of “snow” in the English Psalms, symbolizing purity and divine protection, was translated to *ambolas* (rain) in Toba Batak, which emphasizes the physical attributes rather than the metaphorical implications. This shift highlights the importance of cultural familiarity in ensuring the metaphor retains its intended meaning for the target audience

In conclusion, while metaphors were most preserved, some required adaptation to ensure relevance and understanding within the Toba Batak cultural framework. This study underscores the complexities and nuances involved in translating metaphors, especially in religious texts, where figurative language carries significant spiritual and cultural weight. Translators must navigate the balance between maintaining the original intent of the metaphor and ensuring clarity and cultural relevance for the target audience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. (1912) *A Glossary of Literary Terms* New York
Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc
- Beekman, J and John Callow (1974)
Translating the Word of God Michigan.
Zondervan Publishing House
- Chase, S (1978) *The Tyranny of Words* New York
Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Creswell, J W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design. Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed)

- Thousand Oaks, CA Sage Publications.
- Crossway Bibles-English Standard Version (2001).
- Departemen Pendidikan Indonesia (2008)
Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia.
Jakarta : Balai Pustaka.
- Dirven, R. (1985) *Metaphor and Metonymy in Language and Thought* Amsterdam
John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Eco, U (1984) *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* Bloomington
Indiana University Press.
- Edgar, A., & Sedgwick, P (2008) *Cultural Theory The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.).
London: Routledge.
- Ginsang, et al (2023) *Exploring Synesthetic and Metaphorical Imagery in Language*. Yogyakarta Kanisius.
- Halliday, MA.K. (1985) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* London Edward Arnold.
- HKBP publisher or Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (LAI)-Bibel dobot Ende HKBP (2021).
- Keraf, G. (1994) *Diksi dan Gaya Bahasa* Jakarta Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Knowles, M. & Moon, R. (2005)
Introducing Metaphor London
Routledge.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1981) *Metaphors We Live By* Chicago University of Chicago Press.
- Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-Based Translation A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence* Lanham
University Press of America.
- Midor, D (2012) *Exploring Abstract Metaphors in Language and Thought*
New York: Routledge.
- Newmark, P (1982). *Approaches to Translation* Oxford Pergamon Press.
- Newmark, P (1988). *A Textbook of Translation* London. Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R (1974). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*.
Leiden. E.J Brill.



- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1982). *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (2nd ed.). Leiden. EJ Brill.
- Nugrahanı, Farida. (2014) *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Penelitian Pendidikan Bahasa Solo* Cakra Books
- Nazir (2011). *Metode Peneliti* Bogor Penerbit Ghalia Indonesia.
- Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary.
- Parera, J D (2004). *Teori Semantik* Jakarta Erlangga.
- Resi, I, & Adrallisman, A. (2021). *Anthropomorphic Metaphors in Linguistic Expression*. Yogyakarta Kanisius
- Strauss and Corbin (1997). *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Procedures, Techniques, and Theories* Surabaya. Development of Offset Science.
- Sugiyono. (2020). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* Alfabeta CV.
- Tarigan, H G. (1980). *Metafora dalam Bahasa Indonesia* Bandung Angkasa.
- Ullmann, S. (1972). *Semantics An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.