



Research Article

From “Sajak Orang Gila” to “Ballad of a Crazy Man”: A Study of Translation Techniques and Pragmatic Shifts in Poetry Translation

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Abstract

Literary translation, especially poetry, demands a sophisticated balance between linguistic accuracy and the preservation of aesthetic, cultural, and pragmatic nuances. This study examines the translation techniques and pragmatic shifts in the English version of Sapardi Djoko Damono’s poetry, “*Sajak Orang Gila*”, translated by John H. McGlynn as “*Ballad of a Crazy Man*.” Integrating a dual-layered approach, the study first analyzes the poems’ linguistic features using Molina and Albir’s framework, identifying ten techniques with literal, modulation, and transposition as the most dominant. Second, it evaluates the aesthetic and interpretative features through Lefevere’s strategies, revealing a preference for literal, interpretative, and free translation. Data validity was ensured through inter-rater validation by translation experts. The analysis of pragmatic shifts reveals significant transformation: socio-cultural elements were adapted for target-culture readability, implicatures were frequently made explicit, and politeness strategies underwent modifications that altered interpersonal dynamics. These findings suggest that the translator consistently prioritizes covert translation to balance fidelity with accessibility. This study underscores the necessity of pragmatic awareness in literary translation, providing deeper insights into effectively rendering Indonesian poetry for a global audience.

Keywords: *implicature; politeness strategies; pragmatic equivalence; pragmatic shifts; translation techniques*

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Introduction

Literary translation, especially poetry, is a very complex linguistic and aesthetic practice because it requires more than just a language skill. Poetry as a dense and imaginative form of literary expression often uses figurative language, rhyme, rhythm, and distinctive features that are particularly difficult to transfer into another language without sacrificing its meaning or aesthetic beauty (Wolosky, 2008; Awan & Khalida, 2015). The biggest challenge in poetry translation lies in how to maintain a balance between fidelity to the original meaning and the creative freedom to adapt it to cultural norms and literary conventions in the target language (Venuti, 2017; Nguyen & Ho, 2025). A translator must be able to deeply understand the cultural context, emotions, and implicit intentions of the source poem so that the meaning contained remains intact to the reader in the target language (Imami et al., 2021). In addition, differences in cultural values and symbolisms can also influence how a poem is interpreted, so translators need to make adjustments without losing the substance and poetic power of the literary work (Gentzler, 2016; Raffel, 1988).

As a country with extraordinary cultural richness and literary traditions, Indonesia has many exceptional literary works that have not been fully recognized on the world literary stage. Although Indonesian poetry expresses a variety of local values, reflections of identity, and emotional depths, international readers' access to these works is still quite limited due to limitations in translation (Cole, 2010; Roza et al., 2024). In this context, translators play an important part as cultural bridges. One figure who has made a major contribution is John H. McGlynn, one of the founders of the Lontar Foundation, who has dedicated his career to translating and promoting Indonesian literary works, including the poems of Sapardi Djoko Damono. His work allows global audiences to recognize and appreciate the distinctive nuances of Indonesian poetry, while expanding the influence and international recognition of Indonesian literature (Silalahi et al., 2022).

One of the poems translated by McGlynn is "*Sajak Orang Gila*" by Sapardi Djoko Damono, which in English is titled "*Ballad of a Crazy Man*." This poem was originally created in 1961 and displays a wealth of complex and dense meanings, and contains many pragmatic and cultural contents, such as social values, irony, and the choice of diction that reflects the psychological and existential conditions of the character (Isdiati, 2020). The challenge in translating this poem lies not only in transferring its form or sound, but also in maintaining the depth of the implied meaning and the inherent cultural

nuances. Analysis of this poem and its translation opens up space to understand how translation techniques and pragmatic shifts play a role in conveying literary intent across languages and cultures.

Although many studies on poetry translation focus on linguistic and stylistic aspects, there are still few studies that systematically examine translation techniques integrated with pragmatic shifts that occur, especially related to changes in implicit meaning, cultural context, and politeness strategies in the process of poetry translation. This gap is important considering the complexity of poetry that contains hidden meanings and cultural values that are not easily transferred to other languages without losing their essence. Therefore, this article focuses on the analysis of translation techniques and pragmatic shifts in John H. McGlynn's translation of the poem "*Sajak Orang Gila*" by Sapardi Djoko Damono.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative content analysis method to explore translation techniques and pragmatic shifts in poetry translation. The primary data source is the poem "*Sajak Orang Gila*" by Sapardi Djoko Damono and its English version, "*Ballad of a Crazy Man*", translated by John H. McGlynn. To enhance the representativeness and validity of the findings—addressing the need for a broader analytical scope—the researcher incorporated two additional iconic poems by the same author and translator: "*Aku Ingin*" (*I Want*) and "*Pada Suatu Hari Nanti*" (*The Day Will Come*). These supplementary texts serve as a comparative corpus to verify the consistency of the translator's techniques and the recurring patterns of pragmatic shifts.

The analysis was conducted through a two-fold approach to distinguish between linguistic and aesthetic features. First, the poems were analyzed for their linguistic features as written texts using Molina and Albir's (2004) classification to identify micro-level translation techniques. Second, they were evaluated for their aesthetic and interpretative features as literary texts using Lefevere's (1975) poetry translation blueprints. To ensure organized data management, the researcher utilized comprehensive data sheets to categorize source and target text excerpts, techniques applied, and the resulting pragmatic shifts.

For the pragmatic analysis, the study integrated several frameworks: House's (2015) Pragmatic Equivalence for socio-cultural contexts, Grice's (1975) Theory of Implicature for hidden meanings, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Strategies. The analysis was performed per stanza to maintain the structural and contextual integrity of the poems. To



eliminate personal bias and ensure inter-rater reliability, the findings were validated by two experts in the field of translation studies. Both inter-raters are senior lecturers with extensive publication records in translation journals, ensuring that the data classification and interpretation align with established academic standards.

Results and Discussions

The poem “*Sajak Orang Gila*” consists of 6 stanzas with a total of 40 lines. The language used in the original version is Bahasa Indonesia with Sapardi’s typical poetic style: dense, metaphorical, and often containing implicit meanings and existential nuances. Meanwhile, McGlynn’s translated version uses English with diction that tends to be literal but still tries to maintain the poetic nuances and emotional atmosphere of the original poem.

In the process of translation, this poem shows a number of linguistic and pragmatic phenomena that are interesting to study. Each stanza contains cultural, emotional, and social elements that require special handling in translation. Therefore, the analysis is carried out by considering the poem as a written text as well as a literary work, in order to observe how the meaning, style, and poetic message are transformed from the source language to the target language.

Linguistic-Level Analysis: Translation Techniques in “Ballad of a Crazy Man”

When the poem is analyzed for its linguistic features as a written text, the researcher applied the framework proposed by Molina and Albir (2004), which encompasses 18 distinct translation techniques. This micro-level analysis focuses on how the translator handles the formal and structural elements of the language. Using this framework, it was identified that the translator employed 10 out of 18 proposed techniques across the translated stanzas. To provide a broader perspective on the translator’s consistency, similar linguistic patterns were also observed in the supplementary poems, “*I Want*” and “*The Day Will Come*”. The frequency and distribution of the techniques used in the primary text, “*Ballad of a Crazy Man*”, are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of Techniques Used in Molina and Albir’s Framework

| Name of Techniques | Frequency |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Literal | 23 |
| Modulation | 21 |
| Transposition | 19 |
| Amplification | 13 |
| Reduction | 10 |
| Adaptation | 2 |
| Generalization | 2 |
| Description | 1 |
| Particularization | 1 |
| Equivalence | 1 |

Using this framework as the basis of analysis of translation techniques, it is discovered that the techniques in translating the poetry used by McGlynn tends to be less varied and focuses on the level of words, phrases, and clauses. This causes some meanings in each line not to be fully conveyed back in the target language. Since McGlynn applies more translation techniques at the word, phrase, and clause levels than at the whole line level, there is often more than one technique employed simultaneously to adapt the meaning and structure to the target language in a single line of the poetry. For instance:

ST : *Sehari muput menangis tersedu-sedu*
 TT : All he does is cry and sob the whole day
 (Stanza 2, Line 4)

In this line, the translator integrates several techniques to adapt the meaning and structure to the target language. The modulation technique is used by changing the descriptive statement into a form that emphasizes action, as in the phrase “*All he does ...*” In addition, the equivalence technique is applied to translate the idiomatic expression “*sehari muput*” into a more natural form in English, which is “*the whole day.*” Amplification is also used by adding the word “*and*” between “*cry*” and “*sob,*” thus strengthening the emotional impression in the translation.

From the analysis, it is found that there are ten techniques used by McGlynn in translating the poem according to Molina and Albir’s framework. Out of the ten techniques, the most dominant techniques are literal, modulation, and transposition. These three techniques consistently appear in almost every stanza and line and play a major part in shaping the nuance and final meaning of the poem in the English version. Among the three, literal translation occupies the highest frequency with 23 times of usage, indicating the translator’s tendency to maintain



the original form and structure of the text as close as possible, especially at the word and phrase level.

For example:

ST : *Kalau hari ini aku tak makan lagi*
 TT : If today I don't eat again
 (Stanza 4, Line 3)

In this line, each word in the source language is transferred to the target language while maintaining its original structure and meaning without significant changes. The word such as “*kalau*” is translated into “*if*”, “*hari ini*” into “*today*”, and “*aku tak makan lagi*” as “*I don't eat again*.” This technique ensures that the content of the message in the source text is accurately conveyed in the target language without any alterations in terms of structure and meaning. However, while this technique maintains fidelity to the original text, in some cases this kind of word-for-word translation can result in a translation that feels stilted or less natural in the target language. Other than that, the dominant use of this technique in poetry translation can result in the loss of poetic rhythm, metaphorical subtlety, or emotional power of the original text (Asghar, 2021).

This pattern of high-frequency literal translation is consistently observed in McGlynn's other translation of Sapardi's works, such as in the poem “*I Want*” (*Aku Ingin*). For instance, the iconic line:

ST : *aku ingin mencintaimu dengan sederhana*
 TT : I want to love you simply
 (Stanza 1, Line 1; Stanza 2, Line 1)

This line corroborates the finding that the translator prioritizes maintaining the original's minimalist diction and structural simplicity across different poetic texts.

In addition to literal translation, modulation technique is also found quite a lot in this translation, with a total usage of 21 times. This technique allows the translator to change the point of view or the way of conveying meaning without losing the original essence. An example of its application can be seen in the line:

ST : *Sebab terlalu berat menafsir makna dunia*
 TT : From trying too hard to understand the meaning of the world
 (Stanza 2, Line 7)

The line “*Sebab terlalu berat menafsir makna dunia*” is translated into “*From trying too hard to understand the meaning of the world*.” The change form “*sebab*”, which in the source language expresses a clear cause-and-effect relationship,

to “*from trying too hard*”, which emphasizes the aspect of excessive effort, shows a shift in perspective that is more explicit for English readers. This kind of adjustment reflects how the translator tries to maintain readability in the target language without sacrificing the main meaning of the source text (Baker, 2018).

In addition to modulation and literal, the technique of transposition is also frequently used, which appears 19 times. This technique allows a shift in a word class or syntactic structure to match the rules of the target language. transposition is often used in literary translation because of its flexibility in adjusting the form without losing semantic content (Madkour, 2016; Dusi, 2010; Mauladiana & Juniardi, 2024). For example:

ST : *Aku bukan orang gila, saudara*
 TT : I am not crazy, my friend
 (Stanza 1, Line 1)

The use of transposition technique shows that McGlynn often makes grammatical adjustments to make the translated text feel more natural in English. Transposition allows the translator to change the word class, position, or syntactic structure of the source text to better fit the grammatical norms in the target language. The transposition technique in this translation is seen in the change of word class in the phrase “*orang gila*.” In Bahasa Indonesia, this phrase is a noun phrase, where the word “*orang*” serves as the main component and “*gila*” acts as an adjective that describes the main component (noun). However, in the translation, the translator turns it into an adjective by translating it as “*crazy*.” This change was made to conform to the more natural structure in English, where adjectives are generally placed before nouns or stand alone in certain contexts. By removing the noun “*orang*”, the translator simplifies the phrase to better fit the pattern of the target language without changing the main meaning of the line.

A similar syntactic adjustment via transposition is also consistently evident in McGlynn's translation of another work by Sapardi, “*The Day Will Come*” (*Pada Suatu Hari Nanti*). In this poem, the translator frequently alters the word class or grammatical structure to achieve a more idiomatic flow in English. For example:

ST : ... *tapi dalam bait-bait sajak ini*
 TT : ... but in the lines of this poem
 (Stanza 1, Line 3)

In this example, the Indonesian noun phrase “*bait-bait sajak*” (literally ‘stanzas of poem’) is transposed into “*the lines of this poem*.” Syntactically, the translator shifts the focus from the



formal unit of “stanza” to the more fluid “lines”, while also employing a prepositional “of” construction to create a natural English possessive form. This further illustrates McGlynn’s consistent strategy of restructuring Indonesian noun-heavy phrases into more idiomatic English constructions. By doing so, he ensures that the poem does not sound like a rigid translation, but rather like a natural piece of English literature, while still preserving the core semantic weight of Sapardi’s original imagery.

In addition to the previous three techniques, amplification (addition) and reduction techniques are also found in this poem translation, albeit with a lower frequency. Amplification is used 13 times, while reduction appears in 10 cases. Both techniques serve to adjust the level of clarity and directness of the text in the target language by adding or removing certain elements from the source text. The amplification technique is applied when the translator adds words or phrases that are not present in the source text to clarify the meaning or conform to English norms. The example can be seen in:

ST : *Ke mana aku mesti pergi, ke mana lagi*
 TT : Where is it that I must go, where must I go
 now
 (Stanza 4, Line 7)

In this line, the translator added the phrase “*is it that*” in the translation and it becomes “*Where is it that I must go, where must I go now*”. This addition does not change the main meaning of the sentence, but it helps to strengthen the structure of the question in English to better fit the prevalent grammatical pattern. In Bahasa Indonesia, the question “*ke mana aku mesti pergi*” is readily understood without the need for additional structural elements, whereas in English, the form “*where is it that I must go*” gives stronger emphasis to the aspect of confusion or direction-seeking experienced by the character in the poem. Additionally, the translator also adds the word “now” at the end of the sentence to give a more explicit sense of urgency, even though the time element is not directly mentioned in the source text.

Reduction, on the other hand, occurs when the translator omits certain elements from the source text that are considered less important or already implied in the target language. An example can be seen in this line:

ST : *Berkata pelan: orang itu sudah jadi gila*
 TT : Mutter: that man is crazy
 (Stanza 2, Line 6)

The reduction technique in this line can be seen from the omission of the phrase “*sudah jadi*” in the source text, which

leads to the simplification of the sentence structure in the target language. In the line “*berkata pelan: orang itu sudah jadi gila*”, the translator changed it into “*Mutter: that man is crazy*”, without including the element “*sudah jadi*”, which in Bahasa Indonesia indicates a change or process that has occurred. In the source text, the phrase “*sudah jadi gila*” implies that the character’s state of madness is something that develops over time, rather than something that happens immediately. However, in the translated text, this sense of change is removed, so the English sentence simply states that the person is crazy, without indicating the process that preceded it. While this omission simplifies the sentence structure in the target language, the reduction technique in this case also removes the nuance of the development of the character’s condition found in the source text.

Consistent with the reduction found in “*Ballad of a Crazy Man*”, McGlynn also employs a subtle reduction in “*I Want*”. The line “*yang tak sempat disampaikan*” is simplified into “*not expressed*”, omitting the temporal aspect of “*sempat*” (had the chance). This confirms that the translator frequently sacrifices minor temporal nuances in favor of maintaining the brevity and rhythmic flow of the English stanzas.

In addition to the more dominant techniques, adaptation technique is also used in this translation, although with a lower frequency of 2 times. This technique is applied when the concept in the source text has no direct equivalent in the target language, so the translator needs to adapt or replace it with an expression that is more familiar to English readers. For instance:

ST : *Aku menangis di bawah trembesi*
 TT : I cry beneath a shade tree
 (Stanza 2, Line 1)

In this line, the word “*trembesi*” in the source text refers to a certain type of tree known in Indonesia, *pohon hujan* or the rain tree (*Samanea saman* or *Albizia saman*). However, since the name of this tree may be less familiar to English readers, the translator replaced it with a more general phrase, namely “*shade tree*”. This choice falls under the domestication strategy, where cultural elements in the source language are adapted to make them more familiar to the target language audience. Although this substitution removes the specification of the type of tree, the use of “*shade tree*” still maintains the main meaning, which is that the character in the poem is crying under a tree that provides shade. This shows how adaptation is used to ensure smooth comprehension in the target language without compromising the essence of the original text.



Besides adaptation, the translator also uses generalization technique 2 times in this translation. This technique is applied when the translator replaces specific words or phrases in the source text with more general terms in the target language. In this case, generalization helps to simplify certain concepts without losing the main meaning of the poem. Here is an example of how this technique is applied.

ST : *Ku dengar berkata seorang ibu:*
 TL : I hear a woman say to her children:
 (Stanza 6, Line 1)

In the source text, the phrase “*seorang ibu*” specifically refers to a mother, either in a general context or as someone’s mother. However, the translator chooses to replace it with the broader term “*a woman*”, which does not explicitly indicate that the figure is a mother. This shift shows that the translator uses generalization to simplify the meaning to be more flexible in the target language context. Although the details of the woman’s role as a mother are not directly mentioned, the overall meaning can still be understood, especially with the addition of the phrase “*to her children*”, which provides further context in the translated line.

Besides the more frequently used techniques, the translator also applies equivalence, description, and particularization, each once in this translation. The equivalence technique is used to replace idiomatic expressions in the source language with natural equivalents in the target language that have similar meanings. Description is applied when the translator explains a concept in the source language that may not have a direct term in the target language. Meanwhile, particularization is used by replacing a general term in the source text with a more specific or detailed expression in the target language, narrowing the scope of meaning to better fit the context. Although these techniques are only used once, it shows how the translator adjusts certain aspects of the poem so that it can still be well received by the English audience. The following are examples of the application of each technique in the translation.

ST : *Sehari muput menangis tersedu-sedu*
 TT : All he does is cry and sob the whole day
 (Stanza 2, Line 4)

One example of the application of equivalence in this translation can be found in the line “*Sehari muput menangis tersedu-sedu*”, which translates to “*All he does is cry and sob the whole day*”. In the source text, the phrase “*sehari muput*” is an idiomatic expression in Bahasa Indonesia that means doing something all day without stopping. Instead of translating

it literally, the translator uses the more natural English phrase “*the whole day*”, which has a similar meaning. This equivalence technique allows the idiom in the source language to be conveyed in a way that is more familiar to English readers, so that the meaning is still conveyed without losing the original essence.

ST : *Orang kota semua telah mengada-ngada, aduhai*
 TT : City people make up things, utterly fantastic
 (Stanza 6, Line 4)

The description technique is used in translating the expression “*aduhai*” found in the source text. In this line, the term “*aduhai*” in Bahasa Indonesia is an exclamation that can convey feelings of surprise, admiration, or even sarcasm, depending on the context. However, since English language has no direct equivalent that can accurately represent the meaning of this expression, the translator chose to replace it with the descriptive phrase “*utterly fantastic*”. This change transforms the exclamatory expression into a more explicit descriptive form in the target language, so that the reader can still understand the emotion that the poem is trying to convey.

ST : *Kunyanyikan lagu tentang lapar yang menarik*
 TT : I sing pop songs about hunger
 (Stanza 4, Line 2)

In this line, the particularization technique is used when the translator replaces the phrase “*lagu tentang lapar*”, which is more general, with “*pop songs about hunger*,” that is more specific as it includes a certain type of genre. In the source text, there is no indication of the type of the song in question, so the phrase could refer to a variety of music genres. However, in the translation, the translator chooses to add the element “*pop*”, which narrows the scope of meaning and gives the English reader a specific picture. This shift shows that the translator not only translates directly but also adjusts certain details to better suit the understanding of the target audience.

The minimal use of these three techniques indicates that most of the meaning in the poem can be transferred without the need for explicit meaning through description or narrowing of concepts. However, in certain lines that contain idioms, abstract concepts, or cultural meanings that are difficult to transfer, these techniques are used selectively to maintain the power of the message delivery and ensure that the target reader's understanding is not disturbed by language or cultural barriers.



Overall, the translation of the “*Sajak Orang Gila*” into “*Ballad of a Crazy Man*” demonstrates that although McGlynn predominantly employs literal techniques, he also shows adaptability by applying more flexible and context-sensitive techniques when necessary. This combination indicates his effort to stay faithful to the source text while ensuring clarity and naturalness in the target language. The use of various techniques reflects a careful consideration of both linguistic and cultural elements, suggesting that the translator aims not only to transfer meaning but also to preserve the stylistic and emotional resonance of the original work.

Aesthetic and Interpretative Analysis: Poetry Translation Strategies

In addition to the linguistic-level analysis, this study applies Lefevere’s (1975) blueprint for poetry translation to assess the aesthetic and interpretative features of the translated texts. This framework is crucial for evaluating the extent to which McGlynn succeeded in artistically transforming the source poems into their English versions while preserving the elements of beauty, rhythm, and literary style. By analyzing the poem as literary works, the researcher can identify how the translator maintains the distinctiveness poetic characteristics that go beyond literal meaning. Table 2 presents the quantified data on the frequency of each technique from Lefevere’s framework as applied in the primary poem.

Table 2. Distribution of Techniques Used in Lefevere’s Framework

| Name of Technique | Frequency |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Literal Translation | 18 |
| Interpretative Translation | 17 |
| Free Translation | 5 |

The blueprint itself consists of 7 poetry translation techniques, but not all of them are used in the translation. Out of 7, only 3 techniques are identified, which are literal translation, interpretative translation, and free translation. Unlike the analysis using Molina and Albir’s framework, where one line of poetry can apply more than one technique at a time, in Lefevere’s framework, each translation technique only applies to one line of the poetry. This means that in one of translation, only one technique is used, with no combination of multiple strategies in one line as found in the previous analysis, where one line can apply two to four techniques at once.

The most dominant technique identified in McGlynn’s work, based on Lefevere’s framework, is literal translation with 18

times of appearance. This technique involves rendering the source text as closely as possible to its original form, both syntactically and lexically, while still maintaining grammatical correctness in the target language. For example:

ST : *Tapi anak-anak kecil mengejek*
 TT : But children mock me
 (Stanza 1, Line 2)

In this line, the original structure and meaning are retained without major changes. The phrase “*anak-anak kecil*” is changed into “*children*”, because in English, the word “*children*” already inherently contains the meaning of young children, so there is no need for additional words such as “*small*” or “*young*”. Also, the verb “*mengejek*” is translated directly into “*mock*”, which is a lexically equivalent with no change in meaning or nuance. Although there is a slight difference in the length of the subject structure, where the source text uses a longer phrase “*anak-anak kecil*” while the target text simply uses “*children*”, this change does not affect the main message in the line. Therefore, the technique used still falls under the category of literal translation, as the translator does not make any additional interpretations or major modifications to the content of the original text.

Baker (2018) and Scott (2017) stated that the frequent use of literal translation can be understood as it is often regarded as the most direct and formal strategy in literary translation, aiming to preserve the linguistic elements and structures of the source language as closely as possible. According to Lefevere (1975), while translation is inevitably shaped by cultural, ideological, and poetic considerations, literal translation represents an attempt to minimize these influences by focusing on the surface-level features of the source text. This strategy highlights the translator’s intention to prioritize fidelity to the original form and linguistic texture over cultural adaptation or creative rewriting (Lefevere, 1975; 2016). This is in line with the findings of studies such as Nababan et al. (2012), who note that literal translation is commonly used in literary works when the translator aims to reflect the poet’s worldview and stylistic trait.

The preference for literal translation as an aesthetic choice is further evidenced in McGlynn’s rendering of “*Aku Ingin*” (*I Want*). He maintains the minimalist and parallel structure of the poem to preserve its meditative rhythm. For example:

ST : *dengan kata yang tak pernah diucapkan*
 TT : In words not spoken
 (Stanza 1, Line 2)



By choosing a literal approach here, McGlynn ensures that the ‘silence’ and ‘simplicity’ which are central to Sapardi’s poetics are not disrupted by unnecessary linguistic ornamentation. This reinforces the finding that literalness in McGlynn’s work is not merely a default linguistic choice, but a deliberate literary strategy to mirror the source text’s brevity.

The next technique used in the translation is interpretative translation, with a total usage of 17 times from the 40 lines analyzed. This technique is applied when the translator not only translates literally, but also adjusts the meaning to make it more natural and understandable in the target language. In some cases, McGlynn uses interpretative translation to convey a meaning that is more appropriate to the cultural context of the English reader, even if this leads to changes in structure or diction compared to the source text. This approach allows the translator to keep the essence of the original poem while providing flexibility in conveying the meaning.

For example:

ST : *Aku menangis di bawah trembesi*
 TT : I cry beneath a shade tree
 (Stanza 2, Line 1)

In general, the phrase “*aku menangis*” is translated directly into “*I cry*”, with no significant change in meaning. However, the main difference lies in the word “*trembesi*”, which in the source text refers to a specific type of tree, namely rain tree. Instead of translating it directly as “*rain tree*”, the translator chose to use the more general term like “*shade tree*”. This change shows the translator’s interpretation to make the poem easier to understand for English readers who may not be familiar with “*trembesi*”. By changing the specific term to a more descriptive one, McGlynn ensures that the overall meaning is still conveyed, despite the slight shift from the original text. This shows how interpretative translation is used to adapt cultural elements to make them more relevant to the target language audience.

The use of interpretative translation reflects the translator’s effort to balance fidelity to the original work with the readability and cultural accessibility of the target text. According to Lefevere (1975), interpretative translation is used when a translator retains the core meaning of the text but adapts stylistic elements and structures to fit the target language norms. This strategy also aligns with dynamic equivalent concept by Nida (1964), where the goal of translation is to evoke a similar response in the target reader as the source text does in its original audience. Furthermore, some studies emphasize that

interpretative translation is often necessary in literary texts where metaphors, idioms, or culturally bound terms appear frequently (Venuti, 2009; Lederer & Larché, 2014).

McGlynn’s use of interpretative translation to bridge cultural and emotional gaps is also prominent in *‘That Day Will Come’ (Pada Suatu Hari Nanti)*. In this poem, the translator interprets abstract temporal markers to evoke a more visceral sense of longing for the target audience:

ST : *kau tak akan letih-letihnya kucari*
 TT : I will never tire of looking for you
 (Stanza 3, Line 4)

Here, the repetition of “*letih-letihnya*” is interpreted through the use of the adverb “*never*” and the continuous gerund “*looking for*.” This interpretative shift captures the ‘eternal’ quality of the original poem’s devotion. It demonstrates that the translator prioritizes the poem’s emotional resonance over a strict word-for-word reproduction, ensuring the target reader experiences the same depth of feeling as the source audience.

The last technique used in the translation of this poem is free translation, with a total usage of 5 times from the 40 lines analyzed. Unlike literal or interpretative translation, this technique allows the translator more freedom in reorganizing the meaning of the source text without being too attached to the structure or wording of the original work. In some lines, McGlynn appears to take liberties in translating by choosing more idiomatic phrases or adjusting expressions to better fit the English rules. For instance:

ST : *Kunyanyikan lagu tentang lapar yang menarik*
 TT : I sing pop songs about hunger
 (Stanza 4, Line 2)

In this translation, the translator took liberty of reordering the meaning of the source text, resulting in a fairly significant change in the nuance and interpretation of the line. The verb “*kunyanyikan*”, meaning “*I sing*”, is translated directly without change. However, the phrase “*lagu tentang lapar yang menarik*” which in Bahasa Indonesia can be interpreted as “*hunger-themed songs that is interesting*”, is changed to “*pop songs about hunger*”, which explicitly mentions the genre of pop music, even though there is no indication of a specific genre in the source text. This shift makes the originally broader meaning become more specific, where “*lagu*” in the source text can be interpreted as songs that talks about hunger in an interesting way, while in the translation, they are assumed to be pop songs. Changes like this reflect how free translation allows the translators to reorder meaning more flexibly, even if it



sometimes results in a different interpretation from the original text.

The use of free translation is often encouraged in literary translation to maintain naturalness and poetic effect, especially when the source language contains metaphors, cultural references, or ambiguous expressions (As-Safi & Ash-Sharifi, 1997; Boase-Beier, 2023). Free translation may also offer a creative latitude that enables the translator to reconstruct poetic meaning while staying true to the poem's emotional core. Although this may lead to a shift in detail or tone, the broader intention of the original text remains accessible.

Overall, McGlynn did a good job of retranslating the poem as a poem, but with some compromises. The stanza form and line structure are maintained, and most of the metaphors and imagery can still be found in the English version. However, some aesthetic elements have shifted, making the experience of reading the poem in English slightly different from the original version.

Pragmatic Shifts in “Ballad of a Crazy Man”

Pragmatic shifts refer to changes in the delivery of meaning that occur due to differences in communication norms, cultural backgrounds, and language conventions between the source and target language (House, 2015). In the context of literary translation, especially poetry translation, pragmatic shifts are often unavoidable because poetry not just conveys messages explicitly, but also relies on implied meanings, tones, and emotional effects to create a poetic experience for the reader (Capone, 2023).

In this study, pragmatic shifts are analyzed through three main aspects: (1) Social and Cultural Context (House, 2015), (2) Implicature (Grice, 1975), and (3) Politeness Strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The Table 3 below presents a summary of the pragmatic shifts identified in the translation, categorized into three main aspects: social and cultural context, implicature, and politeness strategy.

Table 3. Summary of Pragmatic Shifts

| Pragmatic Aspect | Type of Shifts Identified | General Implications in the Translation |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Social and Cultural Context | Collectivism → Individualism Loss of cultural symbolism Neutralization of Socio-economic Context Softening of social criticism | The translation tends to omit or neutralize local cultural elements and the original Indonesian social context. |
| Implicature | Individualization of collective meaning Loss of poetic and philosophical subtlety Simplification of metaphors and symbols Neutralization of irony | Implicit meanings, ambiguity, and irony in the source text become more explicit and direct in the target text. |
| Politeness Strategies | Loss of mitigation and indirectness Neutralization of empathetic tone Shift from inclusivity to personal expression Loss of soft parental tone | Politeness strategies in the original poem shift into more direct, firmer, or neutral forms in the English version |

The word “*trembesi*” in the source text is translated into “*shade tree*” which in McGlynn’s translation loses its social meaning. In the Indonesian social and cultural context, “*trembesi*” is often associated with providing protection for those marginalized by the society. However, McGlynn’s translation of the term as “*shade tree*” renders it more literal, stripping away its metaphorical depth and altering the reader’s emotional experience and interpretation of the poem. Based on the analysis using Molina and Albir’s framework, this term is translated using the adaptation technique, where the translator tries to find an equivalent word that fits the cultural context of the target language without losing the essence of the meaning of the source language. Unfortunately, in this case, McGlynn was not fully able to deliver the implied meaning from the Indonesian socio-cultural context to English.

From a practical reader-response perspective, the shift from “*trembesi*” to “*shade tree*” significantly alters the target



reader's cognitive map. While an Indonesian reader might visualize a specific, giant tree that evokes a sense of local mysticism and protection to the poor, an English-speaking reader perceives a functional and generic object. This 'functionalization' of imagery ensures that the poem is practically accessible to a global audience, but it creates a 'sanitized' emotional experience where the specific cultural 'sadness' of the Indonesian landscape is replaced by a universal, yet flatter, imagery.

The tendency to prioritize pragmatic equivalence over formal literalness observed in "*Ballad of a Crazy Man*" is also evident in the work of "*I Want*." For instance, the choice of the word "*tinder*" to replace Indonesian term "*kayu*" (wood) demonstrates a socio-cultural adjustment to evoke a more intense poetic resonance for the English-speaking audience, while maintaining the core implicature of self-sacrifice.

The analysis of shifts in social and cultural contexts suggests a tendency toward covert translation, where the target text readers as if originally written in the target language (House, 2015). This is evident in McGlynn's preference for diction familiar to Western readers rather than preserving culturally specific concept. This is aligned with Lefevere's (2016) view that literary translation often involves rewriting to suit the norms of the target audience. However, while covert translation enhances readability, it may diminish the source text's cultural depth. Baker (2018) states that excessive conformity to target norms can erase the foreignness of the original, altering the reader's experience. In this poem, such shifts risk reducing the emotional resonance embedded in the source text's cultural contexts.

The next aspect of analysis of pragmatic shifts is implicature, which arises from conversational maxims, where a speaker conveys meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words (Grice, 1975). In literary texts, especially poetry, implicature plays a crucial role in enriching the reader's understanding, creating layers of interpretation that contribute to the poem's depth and emotional impact. However, in translation, these implicit meanings may undergo shifts, become diluted, or even disappear, affecting the reader's perception of the poem.

One significant change can be seen in the line:

ST : *Kalau hari ini aku tak makan lagi, jadi genap sudah berpuasa dalam tiga hari*

TT : If today I don't eat again, it will be three straight days I've fasted

(Stanza 4, Line 3 and 4)

The lines "*Kalau hari ini aku tak makan lagi*" and "*jadi genap sudah berpuasa dalam tiga hari*" utilize irony within the Indonesian cultural framework, as "*berpuasa*" or fasting is typically associated with religious devotion. However, in this context, it denotes involuntary starvation, adding a tragic layer to the character's suffering. In McGlynn's translation, "*it will be three straight days I've fasted*" retains the literal meaning but omits the cultural irony, making the statement less impactful.

This loss of irony has a direct impact on reader interpretation. For the source audience, the word "*berpuasa*" triggers a complex emotional response—a mix of religious piety and the tragic reality of poverty. However, the English reader likely interprets "fasted" as a mere chronological marker of not eating. Consequently, the pragmatic effect of the character's insanity becomes more 'clinical' and less 'sacred' in the translation, potentially leading the target audience to miss the deep socio-religious critique intended by Sapardi.

In "*The Day Will Come*", a pragmatic shift via explicitation occurs when the ambiguous Indonesian verb "*kusiasati*" is rendered as "*watch over you*". This shift ensures that the target readers grasp the underlying implicature of eternal protection, which might otherwise be lost if translated literally.

While McGlynn's translation retains the general meaning of the original text, subtle implications and hidden meanings embedded within the source language are often lost or altered. As previous studies (e.g., Leppihalme, (1997); Buden et al. (2009)) suggest, pragmatic shifts in translation are sometimes inevitable due to linguistic and cultural disparities. However, in poetry translation, where every word carries layered significance, these shifts can have a profound effect on the way a poem is perceived and interpreted.

Other than socio-cultural contexts and implicature, in translating poetry which is rich in emotional and contextual nuances, politeness strategies are important to maintain the implicit meaning and interpersonal relations built by the original author. In the context of translation, these strategies may shift due to differences in cultural values and language structures, which ultimately affect the relationship between the speaker and the audience in the target text.

In the translation, it is found that some changes occur in politeness strategy. Bahasa Indonesia often uses mitigation, indirect structures, or softer word choices to convey certain intentions. However, in the English translation, many lines shift to be more direct, neutral, or lose their empathic nuances. This



reflects the difference in cultural communication between the two languages, where Bahasa Indonesia tends to be more indirect in expressing things, while English is more explicit and to the point. For example:

ST : *Kasihannya orang yang dulu terlampau sabar itu*
 TT : with pity for that man who was once so self-possessed
 (Stanza 3, Line 5)

The word “*kasihan*” in the source text is shifted to “*with pity*” in the target text. The word “*kasihan*” in Indonesian cultural context has an ambiguous meaning—on the one hand it shows empathy, but on the other hand it can demean the subject. The politeness strategy used in the source text is a form of mitigation or off-record strategy, as it conveys sympathy indirectly. However, in the translated text, this meaning becomes more explicit and objective through the phrase “*with pity*”. This shift removes any ambiguity that may have been intentional in the original text and changes the relationship between the reader and the subject of the poem. In other words, the translator takes a more direct approach and makes the meaning explicit, thus reducing the room for interpretation and lowering the potential for deeper emotional impact.

In terms of communicative effectiveness, the move toward a more direct politeness strategy in English reflects the translator’s attempt to align with Western communicative norms, which favor clarity over ambiguity. However, for a reader seeking the ‘soul’ of Indonesian poetry, this explicitness might feel overly sentimental. By removing the ‘off-record’ ambiguity of ‘*kasihan*,’ the translation dictates the reader’s emotion rather than allowing the reader to navigate the subtle tension between sympathy and mockery present in the original text.

This finding is in line with Mills and Kádár (2011) statement that politeness strategies depend not only on the language used, but also on the underlying cultural norms. In Indonesian culture, politeness is often not explicit and is conveyed through the choice of diction and intonation, whereas in English-speaking culture, statements are often more explicit and direct.

Conclusions

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of translation techniques and pragmatic shifts in Sapardi Djoko Damono’s poetry as translated by John H. McGlynn, focusing on “*Sajak Orang Gila*” and supported by a comparative analysis of other

poems from the same author and translator. By employing a dual-layered approach that examines both linguistic features (Molina & Albir) and aesthetic-interpretive strategies (Lefevre), the research reveals that while literal, modulation, and transposition techniques dominate the technical landscape, systematic pragmatic shifts occur within socio-cultural contexts, implicatures, and politeness strategies to ensure target-reader accessibility. These findings suggest that McGlynn acts as a strategic cultural mediator; his lean toward covert translation often renders original cultural nuances more explicit or simplified, ensuring that the poetic essence remains practically and emotionally resonant for a global audience.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

The primary data analyzed in this study are derived from publicly available literary works: the poetry collections of Sapardi Djoko Damono and their English translation by John H. McGlynn. All specific excerpts, stanzas, and comparative data used for the analysis are included within this manuscript as part of the Results and Discussion sections.

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