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## A STUDY OF LEXICAL AND STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES IN MOBY DICK AND ITS INDONESIAN TRANSLATION

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### Abstract

This study investigates the lexical and structural differences between Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and its Indonesian translation, with a focus on preserving the novel's symbolic, philosophical, and stylistic complexity. Using a qualitative descriptive approach rooted in translation theory, the study critiques existing strategies such as literal translation, transcreation, adaptation, and omission, and introduces a new model, CLASTIC (Contextual Lexical and Structural Translation with Intercultural Calibration). This model addresses the shortcomings of conventional methods by emphasizing contextual interpretation, semantic layering, structural adaptation, and cultural negotiation. Findings reveal that literal translation often leads to a loss of narrative tone and symbolic depth, while uncalibrated adaptation risks distorting authorial intent. The CLASTIC Model successfully bridges linguistic accuracy and cultural sensitivity, offering a comprehensive and applicable framework for translating literary texts from English into Indonesian. The study concludes that effective literary translation demands both interpretive creativity and intercultural awareness, especially when dealing with canonical works marked by complex symbolism and narrative style.

**Keywords:** *cultural adaptation, intersemiotic translation, literary translation, Moby Dick*

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## Introduction

Translation helps people from different parts of the world understand each other. It lets ideas, stories, and knowledge move across languages and cultures. More than just changing words, translation helps us connect, share, and learn from one another (Inés, A., et. al., 2024). Translating from a source language to a target language involves both linguistic and cultural aspects. This process is known as translation, which includes not only the languages but also the cultures involved. One key concept in translation is 'equivalence', which refers to the need for a meaningful correspondence between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) (Imami T. R., et al., 2021). In this context, equivalence deals with how closely the meaning conveyed in the target text reflects that of the source text (Zokirova, 2024). Therefore, a translator must not only understand the language structures of both the source and target languages, but also be aware of their cultural contexts to achieve an accurate and meaningful equivalence. Transferring meaning should prioritize accuracy and clarity, even if translation differences make it hard to perfectly match the two texts (Sudirman, A., 2016).

Digital language learning tools and the translation profession have come into closer contact in recent years, especially in circumstances where English is being used as a foreign language (EFL). AI-based systems like ChatGPT and machine translation (MT) technologies like Google Translate have revolutionized how students interact with challenging literary materials, including classics like Moby Dick. Research has indicated that machine translation is becoming increasingly relevant as a teaching tool in foreign language instruction. For example, Lee (2023) carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis demonstrating that, when utilized strategically, MT tools can greatly enhance learners' vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. But even while these techniques are useful, they frequently lack the cultural nuance and semantic sensitivity needed for literary translation, which is still a very interpretive and context-driven activity (Urlaub & Dessein, 2022; Deng & Yu, 2022).

Additionally, learners' conceptions of what it means to translate meaningfully have evolved as a result of the incorporation of translation tools into both formal and informal learning environments. According to Soyoof et al. (2023), informal digital learning of English (IDLE) emphasizes how learners outside of the classroom usually use digital resources, including as MT platforms and e-books, to interpret culturally embedded phrases and idioms found in complex literary works. Jolley and Maimone (2022), however, warn that relying too much on machine translation could result in superficial comprehension, especially when it comes to metaphor,

symbolism, and narrative voice. When examining a text as complex and symbolic as *Moby Dick*, where even one incorrect translation might skew thematic interpretation, these issues are particularly pertinent.

The translation of literary texts also intersects with traditional language teaching methods. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM), once dominant in EFL classrooms, emphasizes literal translation and grammatical analysis. Although often criticized for being outdated, GTM still offers valuable insights for comparative studies, especially when analyzing structural equivalence between the source and target texts (Du, 2021; Al-Maamari, 2021). When applied carefully, GTM can reveal not only linguistic disparities but also shifts in narrative tone and textual rhythm. However, modern communicative approaches stress the importance of context and pragmatics in translation. As Nisha (2024) points out, a communicative approach in language teaching fosters cultural sensitivity and interpretive flexibility, skills essential for translating literature with emotional and symbolic weight.

Moreover, recent developments in artificial intelligence, like ChatGPT, have demonstrated promise as teaching aids for literary analysis and translation. According to İpek et al. (2023), when applied critically, AI platforms can assist students in interacting with the stylistic elements of intricate texts by providing real time feedback, explanations, and cross linguistic comparisons. However, these techniques ought to supplement the translator's cultural sensitivity and intuition rather than take their place. According to Gokgoz-Kurt (2022), human judgment is still essential when translating complex expressions, idioms, or cultural allusions. This entails realizing that the translator of *Moby Dick* must serve as both a linguistic bridge and a cultural interpreter in order to preserve the text's philosophical nuance, emotional resonance, and stylistic distinctiveness across languages.

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is widely regarded as a complex and richly layered novel that extends beyond the narrative of a whaling voyage. At its surface, the novel follows Ishmael, a reflective sailor, who joins the whaling ship *Pequod* under the command of Captain Ahab. However, the true focus of the story lies in Ahab's obsessive pursuit of *Moby Dick*, a massive white whale that previously cost him his leg. Melville combines adventure with philosophical reflection, using the whaling expedition as a framework to explore profound themes such as obsession, fate, the limits of human knowledge, and the relationship between humanity and nature. Through dense symbolism, detailed descriptions, and digressive essays embedded within the narrative, *Moby-Dick* challenges readers to consider not only the events of the story but also the deeper meanings behind them. Due to its

intricate language, cultural references, and use of rare vocabulary and idioms, the novel presents significant challenges for both readers and translators. As such, it serves as a rich subject for literary and translation studies alike.

*Moby-Dick* is a very difficult book to read and study. Only people with a very high level of English education can understand it without using dictionaries or notes. This is because almost every paragraph contains unusual idioms or rare words, the kind usually found in highly respected literature (Zeghar, H., et. al., 2022). When Melville tells the story, he doesn't just describe things simply. He makes events feel real and emotional. His big imagination and worldwide view pull readers into his story (Andayani, A., 2022). Translators must have strong skills when dealing with cultural aspects. It's also very important to consider the context in which the original text is used. In translation, the translator has to work with both languages and cultures at the same time. They need to carefully decide which words or images from the original can be carried over into the new language in a way that still makes sense and feels natural (Khudoyorovich, K. K., et. al., 2020).

Literary works often reflect the author's personal expression as well as their intended impression on the reader. These works are not merely structured around plots or characters, but are deeply rooted in the emotional and cultural experiences of the writer. Therefore, to fully convey the essence of a literary text, translators must pay close attention not only to the literal meaning of the words but also to the underlying layers of emotion, social values, historical background, and cultural symbolism embedded in the writing. Translating literature is far more than a word-for-word language transfer, it is an act of re-creation that seeks to carry the soul of the original text into a new linguistic and cultural environment. This requires the translator to be sensitive to both the explicit and implicit elements of the text, such as idiomatic expressions, tone, rhythm, and references that may not exist in the target culture. In this sense, literary translation becomes an interpretive act, one that demands a deep understanding of both the source and target languages and cultures. As noted by Navik et al. (2019), the process involves not only a bilingual skill set but also the ability to mediate between two different ways of seeing and experiencing the world.

This study aims to identify and analyze the lexical and structural differences between Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and its Indonesian translation. Specifically, it investigates how various translation strategies influence the preservation of the novel's symbolic depth, philosophical richness, and narrative style. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research draws data from selected textual excerpts of the original English version, its Persian translation, and a visual adaptation, focusing particularly on segments with idiomatic expressions, cultural references, metaphors, and

complex syntactic structures. The study critiques existing approaches such as literal translation, transcreation, adaptation, and omission, highlighting their limitations in conveying the narrative tone and cultural nuances of the source text. One of the key findings reveals that literal translations often result in a loss of symbolic resonance and emotional tone, while excessive adaptation can distort authorial intent. In response to these challenges, the study proposes the CLASTIC Model (Contextual Lexical and Structural Translation with Intercultural Calibration), which integrates techniques such as contextual anchoring, lexico-semantic mapping, adaptive structure modeling, and symbolic resonance translation. This model bridges the gap between linguistic fidelity and interpretive creativity, allowing translators to navigate both semantic precision and cultural sensitivity. The research concludes that literary translation, especially of canonical works, requires a methodical, interpretive, and culturally informed approach, and positions CLASTIC as a theoretically grounded and practically applicable framework for translating complex literary texts into Indonesian.

## **Research Methods**

### ***Research Design***

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design. The main goal is to explore how literary texts especially *Moby Dick* that are translated from English into Persian, and then to propose a more culturally sensitive model for translating such texts into Indonesian. A qualitative approach fits this purpose well because the study focuses on interpreting meaning, style, and cultural elements in the text, rather than measuring or testing variables.

### ***Source of Data***

Since this research does not involve human participants, the main data come from texts. These include the original English version of *Moby Dick*, the Persian translation by Dariush, and Franc Roddam's 1998 television adaptation. These versions were chosen because they reflect a range of translation techniques, from literal to symbolic to visual (intersemiotic). Academic studies and published works that discuss translation strategies also support the analysis.

### ***Research Instrument***

In this study, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, carefully analyzing and comparing selected passages using both established translation frameworks and the newly developed CLASTIC Model. Additional

tools such as annotation and references to scholarly literature help organize and sharpen the analysis.

### ***Data Collection***

The data were gathered through close reading and textual analysis of selected excerpts from the original and translated versions of *Moby Dick*. The focus was on parts of the text that include metaphorical language, cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and stylistically complex sentences. These segments were chosen because they highlight the key challenges and opportunities in literary translation.

### ***Data Analysis***

The analysis was carried out through a comparative and thematic approach. The researcher examined how different translation strategies, such as literal translation, adaptation, omission, and transcreation that were applied in specific contexts. Based on these observations, the study then builds the CLASTIC Model, a step-by-step framework that includes techniques like contextual anchoring, lexico-semantic mapping, adaptive structure modeling, and symbolic resonance. Each phase of the model is designed to preserve the meaning, style, and cultural depth of the original while making the translation accessible and resonant for Indonesian readers. Where relevant, the use of digital tools in the translation process is also acknowledged, though human interpretation remains central to the final product.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Results***

A number of significant lexical and structural issues that are ingrained in the philosophical, symbolic, and stylistic complexity of the original text are revealed by the examination of *Moby Dick* and its Indonesian translation. For example, emotional tone and symbolic nuance are sometimes lost in literal translations. Phrases such as “Call me Ishmael” or “the whiteness of the whale” lose their informal or nuanced sense when translated directly. Similar to this, Melville’s syntactic structures, which are thick with lengthy, contemplative sentences, tend to be simplified for reading in the target language, but at the price of rhythm and narrative coherence. Idiomatic phrases and cultural allusions, such as metaphors including religious or mythical ideas, also defy direct translation and necessitate adaptation or transcreation. These results lend credence to the use of the CLASTIC Model, which incorporates strategies for symbolic resonance, adaptive structure



modeling, lexico-semantic mapping, and contextual anchoring. This framework was helpful in expressing difficult ideas like "Promethean imagery" or "Leviathan" in ways that were both culturally acceptable and true to their meaning.

Significant vocabulary differences are shown by the comparative study of *Moby Dick*, its Persian translation by Dariush, and a few selected sections from the Indonesian version, particularly in terms of culturally specific expressions and idioms. The translation of metaphoric nouns such as "Leviathan," which has religious and mythical connotations in the original language but frequently appears in translations as a simpler form of "whale," is a prime example. Zokirova's (2024) idea that lexical alteration must maintain semantic density in addition to denotative meaning is confirmed by this, which shows a loss of intertextual and symbolic weight. Furthermore, generally phrases like "there is a wisdom that is grief" were particularly challenging to translate. The Indonesian version aimed toward literalness, flattening its illustrative potential, whereas the Persian version tried a lyrical rephrasing but changed the philosophical connotation. Melville's contemplative and fatalistic tone was only partially represented by the idioms in both versions. This supports Imami & Mu'in's (2021) belief that in order to acquire semantic accuracy, idioms need to be contextually and culturally recalibrated.

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In both target versions, Melville's famously lengthy, irrelevant sentences, which frequently covered several lines and contained rich

metaphors, were generally divided into shorter sections. This enhances readability and clarity, particularly for EFL students, but it also breaks Melville's prose's advance and weakens narrative immersion. Sudirman (2016) viewpoints out that while syntactic compression is an adaptation required for target language coherence, stylistic authenticity may be compromised. The 1998 adaption by Franc Roddam's visual analysis corroborates these textual conclusions. Melville's abstract themes of destruction, lunacy, and fate are vividly encoded through symbolic imagery like the stray dog, the gloomy ocean, and Ahab's burning death. According to Sobreira (2021), these symbols, such like particularly death, fire, and deadly animals, function as the cinematic parallels of Melville's philosophical ideas. So, while the medium transforms from verbal to visual, the symbolic substance remains translatable through careful visual strategy.

The results of the research are further supported by Roddam's 1998 adaptation's symbolic element. Melville's abstract themes are represented cinematically by visual elements like the stray dog, the fire-eating Pequod, and the whale's impending arrival. According to Sobreira (2021), the adaptation's recurrent themes, corpuses, fire, and hazardous mammals, maintain the novel's existential significance through visual analogies. These intersemiotic translations imply that it is possible to preserve symbolic integrity outside of the textual medium.

Lastly, a few translated paragraphs were successfully reanalyzed using the CLASTIC model, which was created as part of this work. Languages and complex idioms were reframed with the aid of contextual anchoring; tone was maintained by lexico-semantic mapping; and philosophical imagery was better represented with the use of symbolic resonance techniques. A more comprehensive translation approach was made possible by these components, which served as a link between language accuracy and cultural fluency.

## ***Discussion***

The outcomes highlight the need for literary translation to go beyond literal or grammatical accuracy, especially when translating philosophically charged works like Moby Dick. Rather, it necessitates a more profound interpretation that takes into account structure, metaphor, tone, and cultural allusion. This is particularly clear in Dariush's Persian translation, which Abdi (2025) analyzes using Pym's idea of directive vs natural translation. Abdi claims that the Persian translation has a tendency to domesticate the original text, which makes it simpler to read but also deviates from Melville's thematic and stylistic accuracy. Translations into Indonesian are probably subject to the same observation, necessitating the use of a model such as



CLASTIC to reconcile these conflicting demands. According to Sobreira (2021), the visual medium's symbolic integrity upholds the notion that form and medium should be modified rather than simply preserved in order to communicate a deeper meaning. Translation turns into a negotiation of culture and art as well as language transfer. The CLASTIC Model, which grounds translation tactics on both linguistic accuracy and interpretive originality, stands out as a workable method that honors this duality.

The raised discoveries directly deal with the main research question: What impact do translation techniques have on Moby Dick's lexical, structural, and symbolic aspects' preservation? The analysis shows that Melville's narrative's rich thematic currents and distinctive design cannot be adequately represented by a literal translation. When closely following surface-level equivalency, the translated versions frequently fall short of maintaining the narrative's ambiguity, tone, and philosophical investigation. Particularly pertinent is the criticism made by Abdi (2025) using Pym's theory of natural vs orders translation. With a strong emphasis on being naturalized, the Persian translation hijacks source-text authenticity while reaching for fluency in the target language. This criticism is reflected in the Indonesian translation's capacity for underscoring metaphor and structure, which could lead readers mislead about the complexity of the book. Pym's contention that translators must purposefully strike a balance between source-text ideology and design and target-language standards is thus supported by this investigation.

The conversation also touches on the intersemiotic translation techniques applied in the movie adaptation. By converting Melville's writing into visual metaphors, the TV adaptation manages to maintain essential philosophical ideas despite being limited by time and visual format. Ahab's spiral into insanity, for example, is presented through camera movement, lighting, and frequent themes rather than soliloquies—what Pintado Gutiérrez (2021) refers to as "symbolic convergence." This illustrates how multimodal translation can be used as an expressive and educational tool for EFL students studying iconic works. The results reported here are essential for EFL training and translation education. Jolley & Maimone (2022) point out that a heavy dependence on mathematical techniques might expose students to stylistic complexity and oversimplify literary works. Rather, future translators can be trained to balance linguistic accuracy and contextual depth by using a model like CLASTIC in conjunction with AI assistance, human imagination, and multicultural awareness. According to Soyoof et al.'s (2023) observations on Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), this method also supports the idea that contextual thinking, semiotic

literacy, and ethical decision-making in meaning rendering should now be taught in translation courses.

The results above have pedagogical significance for translation training and EFL instruction. Strict devotion to grammatical equivalency may make it more difficult for students to interact with literary literature. Rather, training in symbolic sensitivity, cultural calibration, and layered interpretation is required for both translators and students. This human-centered, creative translation model provides a comprehensive route to meaningful literary translation when used in conjunction with digital aids and AI tools, as covered in earlier sections.

All things considered, the conversation demonstrates that successful literary translation is a creative, cross-cultural, and moral process that involves striking a balance between various levels of meaning, audience expectations, and medium-specific tactics.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the translation of *Moby Dick* into Indonesian entails far more than a direct linguistic transfer. It requires a methodical and interpretive approach that balances accuracy, cultural nuance, and stylistic fidelity. The findings underscore the inadequacy of literal translation methods when applied to philosophically rich and symbolically dense texts. Instead, the translation must be approached as an act of intercultural negotiation and creative re-interpretation. The proposed CLASTIC Model, encompassing contextual anchoring, lexico-semantic mapping, adaptive structure modeling, symbolic resonance translation, tone tuning, intercultural calibration, and selective technological integration, proves effective in addressing the multidimensional challenges of literary translation. It allows translators to produce target texts that are both culturally appropriate and stylistically resonant with the original, while also supporting educational goals in EFL contexts. Therefore, the CLASTIC Model contributes both a theoretical and practical advancement in the field of translation studies, particularly for rendering canonical literary works like *Moby Dick* into Indonesian. Future research is encouraged to apply this model to other genres and languages, and to further explore the integration of AI tools within interpretive frameworks for literary translation.

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