



Translation Shifts in the Short Story 'The Gift of the Magi': Analyzing Linguistic and Cultural Adaptations in Meaning

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Abstract. *This study examines the translation shifts in the short story *The Gift of the Magi*, which was translated from English to Indonesian under the title *Pemberian Sang Majus* by Maggie Tiojakin. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the types of translation shifts present in the short story. Data collection was carried out using the documentation method, with the data analyzed based on Catford's translation shift theory using a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings of this study reveal that several types of translation shifts are evident in the short story. These include shifts of level, shifts of structure, shifts of unit, and shifts of intra-system. Shifts of level occur when an item in the source language at one linguistic level has an equivalent in the target language at a different level. For example, a phrase in the source language may be translated as a word or clause in the target language. Shifts of structure refer to differences in grammatical structures between the source and target languages, such as changes in sentence construction or word order to ensure fluency in the translation. Shifts of unit happen when the translation equivalent of a unit in the source language at one rank is translated into a unit in the target language at a different rank, like changing a phrase into a single word. Finally, shifts of intra-system occur when the internal system of the source language is altered to align with the system of the target language, such as adapting tense, aspect, or other grammatical elements. In conclusion, this study illustrates how translation shifts help maintain the meaning and cultural relevance of the original text while adapting it to the target language's linguistic and cultural context.*

Keywords: *Category shift, Level shift, Linguistic adaptation, Translation, Translation shifts.*

Abstrak. Studi ini membahas pergeseran terjemahan yang terjadi dalam cerita pendek *The Gift of the Magi*, yang diterjemahkan dari bahasa Inggris ke bahasa Indonesia dengan judul *Pemberian Sang Majus* oleh Maggie Tiojakin. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis pergeseran terjemahan yang ditemukan dalam cerita pendek tersebut. Pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode dokumentasi, dan data dianalisis berdasarkan teori pergeseran terjemahan oleh Catford menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat beberapa jenis pergeseran terjemahan yang dapat diidentifikasi dalam cerita pendek ini. Jenis-jenis pergeseran tersebut antara lain pergeseran level, pergeseran struktur, pergeseran unit, dan pergeseran intra-sistem. Pergeseran level terjadi ketika sebuah unsur dalam bahasa sumber pada satu tingkat linguistik memiliki padanan dalam bahasa target pada tingkat yang berbeda. Sebagai contoh, sebuah frasa dalam bahasa sumber dapat diterjemahkan menjadi kata atau klausa dalam bahasa target. Pergeseran struktur mengacu pada perbedaan dalam struktur gramatikal antara bahasa sumber dan bahasa target, seperti perubahan dalam konstruksi kalimat atau urutan kata agar terjemahan tetap lancar dan akurat. Pergeseran unit terjadi ketika padanan dari suatu unit dalam bahasa sumber pada satu tingkatan diterjemahkan menjadi unit yang berbeda tingkatan dalam bahasa target, seperti mengubah frasa menjadi kata tunggal. Terakhir, pergeseran intra-sistem terjadi ketika sistem internal bahasa sumber diubah untuk menyesuaikan dengan sistem bahasa target, misalnya dengan menyesuaikan elemen-elemen seperti tense, aspek, atau bentuk kata. Kesimpulannya, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pergeseran terjemahan memainkan peran penting dalam mempertahankan makna dan relevansi budaya teks asli sekaligus menyesuaikannya dengan konteks linguistik dan budaya bahasa target.

Kata kunci : Perubahan kategori, Perubahan level, Adaptasi linguistik, Terjemahan, Perubahan terjemahan.

1. INTRODUCTION

As humans, language is very important because, with the existence of language, we can interact with other humans. With language, we can also express the things that are in our minds. According to (Sapir 1921) Language is “a purely human and noninstinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols”. In keeping with the statement, humans will never exist apart from language.

In this era of globalization, all types of people from different nations, religions, languages, and cultures can connect easily due to technological advances, so communication between each other is not as difficult as it used to be. This is where the importance of translation is to facilitate communication. Newmark (1988) defines translation as “the process of rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text.” In the process of translating, of course, there are several important theories and processes that must be considered by a translator in order to produce an equivalent and logical translation.

For this study, the author is interested in one of the translation theories, which is the translation shift theory by Catford. According to Catford (1965), “a shift is the departure from formal correspondence in the process of going from the source language to the target language.” He classified the translation shift into two major types: level shifts and category shifts. Category shifts can be divided into four types, namely structure shifts, class shifts, unit shifts, and intra-system shifts. Translation shift theory can be applied in various kinds of fields. In this project, a short story entitled *The Gift of the Magi*, which was translated from English into Indonesian, was selected for analysis.

Several studies have already explored the concept of translation shift, also known as category shift. The research done by Agung and Suastini (2022) analyzed the types of shift in the translation of a book entitled *The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down*. This research utilizes Catford’s (1965) theory on translation shift and Machali (2009). The findings of this study indicate that six types of shifts were identified: four types of category shift—structure shift, class shift, unit shift, and intra-system shift—along with two additional types. Among the six types of shifts discovered, the unit shift was the most dominant, followed by the class shift.

Another study related to category shift was conducted by Adipta and Amilia (2022). In this study, they identified translation shifts in a documentary movie entitled *The Social Dilemma*. Catford’s (1965) theory was also used in this research. Using a descriptive-qualitative method, they described the translation shifts occurring in the English-Indonesian subtitles. The result showed 56 level shifts (5%), 327 intra-systems shifts (30%), 243 unit shifts (22%), 83 class shifts (7%), and 392 structure shifts (36%).

The most frequently applied type of shift was the structure shift. This was due to the differences in grammatical structure between English and Indonesian, which resulted in both obligatory and optional shifts.

In addition, other scholars have emphasized that understanding translation shifts is crucial in literary, audiovisual, and technical translation (Munday, 2016; Hatim & Munday, 2004). Nababan and Nuraeni (2012) discussed the relationship between translation quality and shifts, especially in subtitle translation. Furthermore, Larson (1998) highlighted the importance of maintaining meaning despite structural differences. This shows that category shift theory not only helps in understanding linguistic transfer but also in improving translation quality across different text types (Baker, 2018). The third study was conducted by Nurhayati and Hastuti (2019) This study aims at analyzing translation shifts focusing on category shifts, in Indonesian translation of an English short story with title *The Backward Fall*. In this study, they use the theory of category shift by Catford (1965). The method used in this study is qualitative research. The result of this study is number of category shifts found in this analysis was seven (7) structure shifts (28%), three (3) class shifts (12%), nine (9) unit shifts (36%), and six (6) intrasystem shifts (24%). This research is expected to be useful for those who have an interest in learning translation.

All these three articles are relevant to this study since they discuss the translation shift proposed by Catford. However, this study will focus on the translation shift in the short story “*The Gift of the Magi*.” This study allows a more in-depth analysis of the translation shift in the short story that will show how these shifts affect translation accuracy and viewer comparison.

The aim of this research is to identify and analyze the translation shift that appears in short story “*The Gift of the Magi*”. The theory that will be used in writing this article is the translation shift theory, as proposed by Catford. This theory is commonly employed in the analysis of translation. In his book “*A Linguistic Theory of Translation*,” he introduced the concept of the translation shift.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (Catford 1965) a translation shift refers to a departure from formal correspondence when a message is transferred from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). This concept reflects the reality that no two languages are structurally identical, and shifts are often inevitable in the process of producing a grammatically and semantically appropriate translation.

Ariefyanti (2018) further supports this idea by stating that translation shifts occur when there are significant structural differences between the SL and TL, and that shifts are essential to maintain naturalness and accuracy in the TL. Catford categorizes these shifts into two main types: level shift and category shift.

Level Shift

A level shift occurs when meaning is transferred between linguistic levels—particularly from grammar to lexis or vice versa. For example, grammatical aspects such as tense or mood in the SL might be conveyed through lexical means in the TL, especially when the TL lacks a direct grammatical equivalent.

This type of shift is necessary when the target language expresses certain concepts differently, often relying on adverbs, auxiliary verbs, or additional words rather than morphological changes. Level shifts show how the grammatical structure of one language may require lexical compensation in another to preserve meaning.

Category Shift

Category shifts refer to structural changes that occur when translating elements from one grammatical category to another. According to Catford, category shift is divided into four subtypes:

a. Structure Shift

Structure shift involves a change in the grammatical arrangement of constituents in a sentence or phrase. It often occurs because different languages organize sentence components (such as subject, verb, object, modifier, or head) differently. In English, for instance, modifiers often precede the noun, whereas in many target languages, the head noun precedes the modifier. Such shifts highlight the necessity for translators to rearrange sentence structures to align with the syntactic rules of the TL, ensuring that the sentence sounds natural and coherent.

b. Class Shift

Class shift takes place when a word or phrase in the SL is translated into a different grammatical class in the TL. For example, a verb might be rendered as a noun, or an adjective as an adverb, depending on how the TL typically expresses the intended meaning. This shift often occurs because the equivalent meaning cannot be naturally expressed using the same word class due to differences in linguistic conventions or idiomatic usage. Class shifts reflect the grammatical flexibility required in translation to preserve the communicative intent.

c. Unit Shift

Unit shift, also known as rank shift, occurs when the rank of a linguistic unit in the SL differs from that in the TL. This means that a word in the SL may be translated as a phrase, clause, or even a full sentence in the TL, and vice versa. Unit shifts acknowledge the fact that languages do not always segment meaning at the same grammatical levels. Translators must adjust the unit of meaning to maintain clarity, coherence, and stylistic appropriateness in the TL, especially in literary or expressive texts.

d. Intra-System Shift

Intra-system shift happens when both the SL and TL have corresponding systems (e.g., number, tense, or article systems), but the translator selects a different item within that system due to contextual or grammatical reasons. For instance, the SL may use a plural noun where the TL uses a singular form, not because the concept of plurality is absent, but because the TL expresses it differently, either through repetition, context, or quantifiers. These shifts reflect internal choices within shared grammatical systems and often occur to ensure fluency and naturalness in the TL.

3. METHOD

The data source for this study is the short story “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry, which was later translated into Indonesian by Maggie Tiojakin with the title “Pemberian Sang Majus”. The short story tells the story of a young husband and wife who long to give each other special Christmas presents. Due to their restricted finances, the couple must give up something they value in order to afford a gift for the other.

The data were collected using the documentation method. A number of techniques including taking notes and detailed reading were used in this study. There were several steps taken in the data collection. The first step was to read the short story in both the source and target languages to fully comprehend it. After understanding the contents of the short story, note down the sentences that contained different types of shifts in the story. And then selected five data points that will be the main analysis of this study.

The data were analyzed using the descriptive qualitative method. Using Catford’s theory of translation shifts to categorize the many types of category shifts that occur in the data. The data will be presented in a table, with their analysis following.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Level Shift

A shift of level occurs when an item in the source language at one linguistic level has an equivalent in the target language at a different level.

Table 1. Level shift

SL	TL
I hunted all over town to find it	Aku sudah mencari benda ini kemana - mana

This translation shows a shift in level between the source language and the form of the word the language has verb 2 which means an event that has already happened which says “**hunted**” which is then translated into the target language which means ‘**sudah**’. This shows a shift from grammar to lexis.

Structure Shift

When linguistic units from the source language are translated into the target language, there is a change in their grammatical patterns known as structure shift. It is the translation’s shifting of modifiers and head words into different positions.

Table 2. Structure shift

SL	TL
The other was Della’s hair	Kedua rambut Della

“Della’s hair” in the source language text is constructed of modifier (Della’s) + head (hair). Meanwhile, in the target language, it becomes rambut Della which is constructed of the head (rambut) + modifier (Della). Therefore, it can be concluded that the word Della’s modifies the word “hair”, while in the target language, the word rambut is modified by the word “Della”.

Unit Shift

Unit shifts happen when the translation equivalent of a unit in the source language at one rank is a unit in the target language at a different rank. Changes from morpheme to word, word to phrase, clause to sentence, and vice versa are all included.

Table 3. Unit shift

SL	TL
“I want you to understand me, Dell,” he said. ”	“Jangan salah sangka dulu kepadaku, Dell,” katanya. ”

From the translation above, it can be seen that the clause “he said” in the source language is translated into the word “katanya” in the target language. In source language “he said” was a clause because it had a subject “he” and the predicate “said”. Meanwhile, the clause “he said” was translated into the word “katanya”, if the translator translated “he said” into “dia berkata”, it would have the same unit. Because “dia berkata” has the same form as “he said”. However, the translator for this short story preferred to translate the clause “he said” into “katanya”. The unit shifts in the example above are from higher level to lower level.

Table 4. Unit shift

SL	TL
“Della went to him. ”	“Della menjauh dari meja dan menghampiri suaminya. ”

From the translation above, it can be seen that the simple clause “Della went to him” in the source language is translated into a longer sentence “Della menjauh dari meja dan menghampiri suaminya” in the target language. The original clause in English only contains one subject (“Della”) and one verb (“went”), making it a simple unit. However, in the translation, the action is elaborated and split into two actions: moving away from the table and approaching her husband. This translation involves a unit shift from a lower level (clause) to a higher level (compound sentence).

Class Shift

Table 5. Class shift

SL	TL
“Jim, dear,” she cried , “don’t look at me like that.”	“Jim, sayang,” tangisnya , “jangan menatapku begitu.”

From the translation above, it can be seen that the verb “**cried**” in the source language is translated into the noun “**tangisnya**” in the target language. In the source language, “**cried**” is a verb in the past tense and functions as the predicate of the clause. It indicates an action performed by the subject. However, in the target language, this verb is translated into “**tangisnya**”, which is a **noun** meaning “her cry.”

Intra-system shift

Intra-system shift refers to the process of shifting a source language’s internal system to match the internal system of the target language.

Table 6. Intra-system shift

SL	TL
<p>Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair.</p>	<p>Sisir yang yang amat cantik, terbuat dari tempurung penyu, dengan pinggiran yang dibubuhi bebatuan permata –hiasan sempurna untuk rambut panjang yang kini sudah sirna.</p>

The word *combs* in the source language are a plural form. It is translated into *sisir* in the target language in a singular form. It is possible to draw the conclusion that the translation above exhibits an intra-system shift of the plural to the singular phenomena.

Discussions

This research identified all five types of translation shifts as classified by Catford, namely level shift, structure shift, unit shift, class shift, and intra-system shift in the translation of the short story *The Gift of the Magi* from English into Indonesian. These shifts occur due to differences in linguistic systems between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL), necessitating changes to maintain naturalness, accuracy, and coherence in the TL. The level shift can be seen in how the word “hunted” is translated into “sudah mencari.” In English, “hunted” is a single word in the past tense. But in Indonesian, “sudah mencari” uses two words: “sudah” (which shows the action is finished) and “mencari” (which means "to search" or "hunt"). This shows a shift from using verb tense (in English) to using an extra word to show time (in Indonesian), which is a common difference between the two languages. In the structure shift we can see that the structure of the phrase in SL changes when translated into TL. In the SL, the structure is modifier + head (M+H), which is turned into head + modifier (H+M) in the target language. From the data above, it is clear that the structure of the sentence was change when it undergoes the translation process. In the SL the structure of the phrase is M+H; “**Della’s hair**” translated into “**rambut Della**” in TL, the structure change into head + modifier (H+M). This is happened because of the differences of the grammatical rules in these two language, English and Indonesia. In English, the grammar structure of a phrase is the modifier followed by the head of the phrase (M+H), but in Bahasa Indonesia the structure is the head of the phrase is followed by the modifier (H+M). It emphasizes the need for the translator to adapt phrases to maintain clarity and coherence in the TL. The second one is the unit shift. The unit shift is divided into two types: the lower-to-higher level and the higher-to-lower level. This indicates that in the translation process, the sentence can be translated into phrase form, or a

phrase can be translated into a word in the SL. The lower-to-higher-level shift is the inverse of the higher-to-lower-level shift. It changes the word in SL into a phrase in TL and a sentence into a phrase. From the data example above, the first is the example of a lower-to-higher unit shift. The clause **“went to him”** in the SL is translated into **“menjauh dari meja dan menghampiri suaminya”** in the TL. The second data example shows the higher-to-lower unit shift. The phrase **“he said”** turns into **“katanya”**. **“Katanya”** is a compound word in the TL. The rank of these data examples changes when it is translated into the TL but still holds the meaning even if it is translated into the TL. The third type is the class shift, which involves notable changes in grammatical categories. This shift occurs when a word or phrase in the source language is translated into a different grammatical class in the target language. It highlights the translator's need to adjust the grammatical structure to fit the norms of the target language while preserving the original meaning. The class shift in this study demonstrates a shift in grammatical category, such as from verb to noun. For instance, the verb **“cried”** in the SL is translated into **“tangisnya”** in the TL, which is a noun. This change reflects differences in how emotions or actions are often expressed in Indonesian, where nominalization is commonly used to convey expressive meaning. Such shifts underline the grammatical and stylistic preferences of the TL and the translator's effort to align the translation with the natural usage of the Indonesian language. The final type of category shift is the intra-system shift. This shift reflects the difficulties in translating plural forms from the source language into singular forms in the target language. It demonstrates the translator's linguistic decisions and the structural differences between languages in expressing plurality. In English, pluralization is typically formed by adding the suffix **“-s”** to the end of a word, while in Bahasa Indonesia, it is commonly achieved through word repetition or by adding a quantifying word. Take a look at the data above the word **“combs”** into **“sisir”** If translated into the target language, Indonesia, it would be **“sisir-sisir”** However, instead of doing that, the translator just translated it into **“sisir”** to make the translation result look natural.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusions can be derived from the study on the translation shift discovered in the short story "The Gift of the Magi" which was translated into Indonesian. The shift occurrences that can be identified in the short story are shifts of level, shifts of structure, shifts of unit, and shifts of intra-system. There are multiple occurrences in this study; level shifts (when an item in the source language at one linguistic level has an equivalent in the target language at a different level), structure shifts (the difference in grammatical structure of the source language and the target language), unit shifts (when the translation equivalent of a unit in the source

language at one rank is a unit in the target language at a different rank, for the example, changing from phrase to word), and intra-system shifts (when a source language's internal system to match the internal system of the target language).

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