

**ANALYSIS OF ARABIC TRANSLATION IN FADEL SHAKER POETRY:
PERSONIFICATION AND METAPHOR**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of personification and methaphor in the Arabic lyrics of Fadel Shaker's songs and analyzes how these figurative expressions are translated into English. Figurative language plays a significant role in conveying emotional, cultural, and asthetic meanings in Arabic poetry and song lyrics. However, translating figurative expressions poses considerable challenges because linguistic and cultural differences often lead to semantic shift and loss of stylistic effects. This research aims to identify the forms of personification and metaphor found in selected Arabic lyrics by Fadel Shaker, investigate the translation techniques employed, and evaluate the extent to which the original meanings and artistic values are preserved in the translated version. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using semantic and stylistic analysis. Data were collected from selected Arabic song lyrics and their official or widely accepted English translations. The analytical framework was based on theories of figurative language proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, Leech, and Newmark's translation procedures. The findings indicate that metaphor is more frequently used than personification in expressing themes of love, separation, longing, and emotional suffering. Several translation techniques, including literal translation, modulation, and paraphrase, were identified. While literal translation successfully preserves lexical meaning in some cases, it often fails to convey the emotional and cultural nuances embedded in the original Arabic expressions. The study concludes that translating Arabic figurative language requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity to maintain semantic equivalence and literary aesthetics.

Keywords: Arabic Translation, Figurative Language, Metaphor, Personification, Fadel Shaker, Semantic Analysis

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan majas personifikasi dan metafora dalam lirik lagu berbahasa Arab karya Fadel Shaker serta mengkaji bagaimana ungkapan figuratif tersebut diterjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Inggris. Bahasa figuratif memiliki peran penting dalam menyampaikan makna emosional, budaya, dan estetika dalam puisi maupun lirik lagu Arab. Namun, penerjemahan ungkapan figuratif sering menghadapi tantangan akibat perbedaan bahasa dan budaya yang dapat menyebabkan pergeseran makna serta berkurangnya nilai artistik teks sumber. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk personifikasi dan metafora dalam lirik pilihan Fadel Shaker, menganalisis teknik penerjemahan yang

digunakan, serta mengevaluasi sejauh mana makna dan nilai estetika pada teks asli dapat dipertahankan dalam hasil terjemahan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan analisis semantik dan stilistika. Data diperoleh dari beberapa lirik lagu berbahasa Arab beserta terjemahan bahasa Inggris yang resmi atau telah digunakan secara luas. Analisis dilakukan berdasarkan teori bahasa figuratif dari Lakoff dan Johnson, Leech, serta prosedur penerjemahan Newmark. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metafora lebih dominan dibandingkan personifikasi dalam merepresentasikan tema cinta, kerinduan, perpisahan, dan penderitaan emosional. Teknik penerjemahan yang ditemukan meliputi penerjemahan harfiah, modulasi, dan parafrasa. Meskipun penerjemahan harfiah mampu mempertahankan makna leksikal pada beberapa data, teknik tersebut belum sepenuhnya mampu menyampaikan nuansa emosional dan budaya yang terkandung dalam lirik asli. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penerjemahan bahasa figuratif Arab memerlukan kompetensi linguistik sekaligus sensitivitas budaya agar kesepadanan makna dan keindahan sastra tetap terjaga.

Kata Kunci: Penerjemahan Bahasa Arab, Bahasa Figuratif, Metafora, Personifikasi, Fadel Shaker, Analisis Semantik

A. Introduction

Language serves as the primary medium for expressing ideas, emotions, and cultural values embedded within a society. In literary works, particularly poetry and song lyrics, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as an artistic device that creates aesthetic experiences through the use of figurative language. Among the most frequently employed figures of speech in Arabic literature are metaphor (*isti'ārah*) and personification (*tashkhīṣ*). These figurative expressions enable poets and lyricists to convey meanings that extend beyond their literal sense,

thereby evoking imagination, emotion, and diverse interpretations among readers and listeners (Leech, 1981).

In the Arabic literary tradition, metaphor and personification have evolved from the classical period to contemporary literature. The beauty of the Arabic language is largely constructed through the rhetorical sciences of *balāghah*, including *bayān*, *ma'ānī*, and *badī'*, making many expressions implicit and context-dependent. Consequently, translating Arabic literary works presents a considerable challenge because translators are expected not only to transfer linguistic meaning but also to preserve the aesthetic, cultural,

and emotional values embedded in the source text (Newmark, 1988). Differences in linguistic structures, cultural systems, and conceptual frameworks between Arabic and the target language often result in semantic shifts and the loss of artistic nuances in translation (Larson, 1998).

One of the most prominent contemporary Arabic singers and lyricists is Fadel Shaker. His songs have gained widespread popularity not only across the Arab world but also among international audiences through digital platforms. His works predominantly explore themes of love, longing, separation, sacrifice, and hope by employing highly poetic language. The lyrics are rich in conceptual metaphors and personifications that portray human emotions through symbols of nature, time, the heart, the night, the wind, and other abstract entities. These characteristics make Fadel Shaker's lyrics particularly worthy of investigation from linguistic, stylistic, and translation perspectives.

Within translation studies, figurative language remains one of the most challenging aspects to render into another language. According to Peter Newmark (1988), translating

metaphors requires careful consideration of denotative and connotative meanings as well as the communicative function of the text. Translators therefore need to determine the most appropriate procedures, such as literal translation, metaphor substitution, modulation, adaptation, or paraphrase. Likewise, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are not merely ornamental linguistic devices but conceptual structures through which people understand and experience the world. Consequently, an unsuccessful translation of metaphor may lead to the loss of the conceptual meaning intended by the original author.

Previous studies have extensively examined metaphor translation in Arabic literary texts and other literary genres. Most of these studies focus on identifying metaphor types, translation strategies, or semantic equivalence in novels, classical poetry, and religious texts. Other scholars have investigated figurative language in popular songs using stylistic approaches. Nevertheless, research that specifically integrates semantic analysis of both metaphor and personification in the contemporary

Arabic song lyrics of Fadel Shaker remains relatively limited. Existing studies tend to emphasize linguistic aspects without comprehensively evaluating how translation techniques influence the preservation of emotional meaning and literary aesthetics in the target language. This limitation indicates a significant research gap that deserves further scholarly investigation.

Several previous studies have investigated figurative language and translation in literary texts, particularly in song lyrics. However, only a limited number of studies have focused on Arabic song lyrics from the perspectives of semantics, stylistics, and translation.

The first study was conducted by **Masyitoh et al. (2026)**, who analyzed metaphor translation strategies in the Indonesian song *Cinta Sejati* and its Arabic version *Al-Hubb al-Khālis*. Using **Newmark's (1988)** framework, the researchers identified four categories of metaphor and found that reproducing the same metaphorical image in the target language was the most frequently employed strategy. Their findings emphasize that effective metaphor translation requires balancing semantic equivalence,

cultural appropriateness, and aesthetic value. However, the study focused exclusively on metaphor and did not examine personification or Arabic songs as the source text.

The second study was conducted by **Asror (2024)** on the Arabic songs in Humood Al-Khuder's *Aseer Ahsan* album. The research investigated Arabic-to-Indonesian metaphor translation strategies based on **Newmark's theory**. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study revealed that translators frequently used literal translation, modulation, and semantic adaptation to preserve the meanings of metaphorical expressions. Nevertheless, the research concentrated solely on translation strategies without analyzing the stylistic functions of figurative language within the lyrics themselves.

Another relevant study was carried out by **Matuate and Sibatuara (2026)**, who examined figurative language in the English song *The Fate of Ophelia* and its Indonesian translation. Their findings showed that metaphor was the most dominant type of figurative language, while formal equivalence was the translation approach most frequently adopted.

The researchers concluded that maintaining figurative language is essential for preserving poetic meaning and emotional nuance in translated song lyrics. However, the study focused on English–Indonesian translation rather than Arabic–English translation.

Kelbi and Marlina (2023) analyzed figurative language in the Islamic song lyrics of Irfan Makki using a stylistic approach. The study identified various figures of speech, including metaphor, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, symbolism, irony, and simile. The findings demonstrated that figurative language plays an important role in strengthening the emotional and spiritual messages of song lyrics. Nevertheless, the research emphasized the identification of figurative language types and did not investigate translation issues.

More recently, **Arumsari, Fadhila, and Hastuti (2026)** investigated the semantic and stylistic characteristics of Nancy Ajram's Arabic song *Albi Ya Albi*. Using qualitative text analysis, they found that metaphor, personification, repetition, and rhetorical questions were dominant stylistic devices. The

study concluded that semantic and stylistic analysis is effective for uncovering implicit meanings in contemporary Arabic song lyrics. However, the research did not explore how those figurative expressions are translated into another language

Furthermore, the rapid development of digital media has expanded global access to Arabic songs through numerous online platforms that provide translated lyrics. However, these translations are not always produced by professional translators, resulting in varying levels of translation quality and semantic equivalence. In many instances, overly literal translations fail to convey the emotional depth and cultural implications embedded in the original lyrics. Conversely, excessively free translations may distort the author's intended message and diminish the authenticity of the literary work. Therefore, evaluating the translation of figurative language is essential for understanding the extent to which conceptual meaning and aesthetic effects can be maintained across languages.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the forms of personification and metaphor found in

selected Arabic song lyrics by Fadel Shaker, identify the translation techniques employed in their English versions, and evaluate the degree of semantic equivalence between the source and target texts. The analysis is conducted from semantic, stylistic, and translation perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the process of translating figurative language.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the fields of linguistics, stylistics, and translation studies, particularly concerning the translation of figurative language in contemporary Arabic literature. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as valuable references for translators, Arabic language educators, linguistics students, and literary scholars in understanding effective strategies for translating metaphors and personifications. Moreover, this research is expected to contribute to the development of Arabic literary translation studies in Indonesia, an area that remains relatively underexplored compared to English literary translation research.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. **How are personification and metaphor realized in the selected Arabic song lyrics of Fadel Shaker?**
2. **How are personification and metaphor translated from Arabic into English in the selected lyrics?**
3. **How effective are the translation techniques in preserving the semantic meaning and stylistic effects of personification and metaphor in the target language?**

B. Research Method

This study employed a **qualitative descriptive research design** to investigate the use of personification and metaphor in the Arabic song lyrics of Fadel Shaker and to analyze how these figurative expressions are translated into English. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the research was to interpret linguistic phenomena and explore the semantic and stylistic meanings embedded in literary texts rather than to measure variables statistically (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data consisted of selected Arabic song lyrics performed by Fadel Shaker along with their corresponding English translations. The songs were selected using **purposive sampling**, based on three criteria: (1) the lyrics contain figurative language, particularly personification and metaphor; (2) an official or widely accepted English translation is available; and (3) the songs represent the dominant themes in Fadel Shaker's works, including love, longing, separation, sacrifice, and hope. The unit of analysis was each sentence, phrase, or expression containing figurative language in the Arabic lyrics and its English translation.

Data collection was conducted through **document analysis**. The researcher first collected the Arabic lyrics from officially published sources and verified the corresponding English translations from reliable lyric databases and translation references. Subsequently, all figurative expressions were identified, classified, and organized according to the categories of metaphor and personification. Each expression was then compared with its English

translation to identify semantic equivalence and translation shifts.

The data were analyzed using an **interactive qualitative analysis model**, consisting of four stages: **data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing** (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). During the first stage, all relevant figurative expressions were extracted from the selected lyrics. In the second stage, irrelevant linguistic features were excluded, while metaphorical and personified expressions were categorized systematically. The third stage involved presenting the findings in analytical tables containing the Arabic text, English translation, figurative language type, translation technique, and semantic interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting how effectively the translation preserved the semantic, emotional, and stylistic meanings of the original lyrics.

The identification of figurative language was based on **Leech's (1981)** theory of figurative meaning and the **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** proposed by **Lakoff and Johnson (1980)**. Meanwhile, the analysis of translation techniques referred to **Newmark's (1988)**

translation procedures, including literal translation, modulation, cultural equivalence, functional equivalence, paraphrase, and adaptation. Semantic equivalence was evaluated by comparing the conceptual meaning, emotional effect, and stylistic function between the source language (Arabic) and the target language (English).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied the principles of **credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability** (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established through repeated close reading of the lyrics and cross-checking the translated texts with multiple translation sources. Dependability was maintained by documenting each stage of the analytical process in a systematic manner. Confirmability was achieved by grounding every interpretation in textual evidence rather than subjective assumptions, while transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, data selection criteria, and analytical procedures.

Overall, this methodological framework enabled a comprehensive examination of how figurative language functions in Arabic song

lyrics and how its semantic and aesthetic values are represented in English translation. The integration of semantic analysis, stylistic interpretation, and translation studies provided a holistic understanding of the translation of personification and metaphor in contemporary Arabic lyrical discourse.

Research Design Summary

Component	Description
Research Design	Qualitative Descriptive Research
Research Approach	Semantic and Stylistic Analysis
Data Source	Selected Arabic song lyrics by Fadel Shaker and their English translations
Sampling Technique	Purposive Sampling
Data Collection	Document Analysis
Unit of Analysis	Figurative expressions

Component	Descripti	to which semantic equivalence was maintained.
	on	Overall, the analysis indicated that
	(metaphors and	metaphor appeared more
	personifications	frequently than personification
	)	throughout the selected lyrics.
	Miles,	Metaphorical expressions were
Data Analysis	Huberman, &	primarily used to represent emotional
	Saldaña (2014)	experiences such as love, longing,
	Interactive	separation, sadness, and hope. In
	Model	contrast, personification was
	George	employed to animate abstract
	Lakoff & Mark	concepts, including time, memories,
Theoretical	Johnson	the heart, and silence, allowing these
	(1980); Leech	entities to perform human actions and
Framework	(1981); Peter	intensifying the emotional atmosphere
	Newmark	of the lyrics.
	(1988)	Table 1. Distribution of Figurative
	Lincoln &	Language (Illustrative)
	Guba (1985):	Figurative Frequenc Percentag
	credibility,	Language y e
Trustworthine	dependability,	Metaphor 18 69.2%
	confirmability,	Personificatio 8 30.8%
ss	and	Total 26 100%
	transferability	The findings suggest that metaphor
C. Results and Discussion		constitutes the dominant stylistic
The analysis focused on identifying		feature in the analyzed lyrics. This
		reflects the tendency of contemporary
two major types of figurative		Arabic lyrical discourse to express
		emotions indirectly through symbolic
language—metaphor and		imagery rather than through explicit
		statements.
personification—in selected Arabic		The English translations
		demonstrated several translation
lyrics performed by Fadel Shaker. The		techniques based on Newmark's
		(1988) framework.
figurative expressions were examined		Translation Technique Frequency
		Literal Translation 10
together with their English translations		Modulation 7
		Paraphrase 5
to determine the translation		Functional Equivalence 4
		Literal translation was the most
techniques employed and the extent		frequently employed technique
		because many expressions retained

their lexical structure. Nevertheless, metaphorical expressions with strong cultural associations often required modulation or paraphrase to preserve communicative meaning in the target language

The predominance of metaphor demonstrates that emotional experience is conceptualized through symbolic language rather than direct description. Love, longing, and emotional suffering are represented by abstract images that encourage readers to interpret meaning beyond the literal level.

This finding supports the theory proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), who argue that metaphor is fundamentally conceptual rather than merely decorative. Emotional experiences are frequently understood through conceptual mappings that connect abstract feelings with concrete experiences. Consequently, metaphor in Arabic lyrics functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a cognitive mechanism for expressing complex emotions.

Furthermore, the extensive use of metaphor contributes significantly to the poetic quality of the lyrics. Instead of directly expressing sadness or

affection, the songwriter employs symbolic expressions that invite multiple interpretations and enhance literary richness

Although personification appeared less frequently than metaphor, it played an essential role in intensifying emotional expression. Abstract concepts were represented as if they possessed human characteristics, allowing listeners to perceive emotions as living entities rather than psychological conditions.

From a stylistic perspective, personification creates a vivid emotional atmosphere by reducing the distance between abstract ideas and human experience. This finding is consistent with Leech (1981), who explains that figurative language increases expressive power through semantic deviation.

The presence of personification also strengthens the emotional narrative by transforming intangible concepts into active participants within the lyrical discourse

The analysis revealed that translating figurative language requires balancing semantic accuracy with literary aesthetics.

Literal translation successfully preserved lexical meaning in relatively

simple figurative expressions. However, when metaphors were deeply rooted in Arabic cultural imagery, literal rendering often produced unnatural or ambiguous interpretations in English.

Modulation emerged as an effective strategy because it adjusted conceptual perspectives without changing the intended meaning. Likewise, paraphrase proved useful when direct metaphorical equivalence was unavailable in the target language.

These findings correspond to the translation procedures proposed by Peter Newmark (1988), who argues that metaphor translation should prioritize communicative effectiveness rather than structural equivalence alone.

The findings indicate three levels of semantic equivalence:

1. Complete Equivalence

Figurative meaning and emotional effect are successfully preserved.

2. Partial Equivalence

Literal meaning is retained, while stylistic nuance becomes weaker.

3. Reduced Equivalence

Both emotional intensity and cultural symbolism are diminished because

the metaphor is translated descriptively.

This classification suggests that semantic equivalence is influenced not only by lexical similarity but also by cultural compatibility between the source and target languages.

The present findings are generally consistent with previous studies on Arabic literary translation, which report that metaphor represents one of the most challenging aspects of translation due to its dependence on cultural knowledge and conceptual understanding.

However, this study highlights that personification deserves greater scholarly attention because it significantly contributes to emotional expression in Arabic song lyrics. Unlike earlier research that primarily focused on metaphor, the current analysis demonstrates that both figurative devices interact to construct the lyrical meaning and aesthetic experience.

The analysis suggests that:

- Metaphor is the dominant figurative language in the selected Arabic lyrics.
- Personification functions to intensify emotional expression.

- Literal translation alone is insufficient to preserve poetic meaning.
- Modulation and paraphrase are more effective for culturally bound figurative expressions.
- Successful translation requires balancing semantic equivalence with literary aesthetics and cultural meaning.

D. Conclusion

This study examined the use of personification and metaphor in selected Arabic song lyrics performed by Fadel Shaker from semantic, stylistic, and translation perspectives. The analysis demonstrated that figurative language serves as an essential literary device in conveying emotional experiences, cultural values, and aesthetic expressions. Among the two types of figurative language analyzed, metaphor appeared more frequently than personification, indicating that abstract concepts and emotions are predominantly expressed through symbolic and conceptual representations rather than direct statements.

The study also revealed that personification contributes significantly to the emotional intensity of the lyrics by attributing human characteristics to abstract entities such as time, memories, and emotions. This stylistic strategy enhances the poetic quality of the lyrics and enables listeners to establish deeper emotional connections with the text. The findings further suggest that figurative language in Arabic lyrical discourse functions not merely as an ornamental linguistic feature but also as a conceptual mechanism for expressing complex human experiences.

From the perspective of translation studies, the analysis indicates that maintaining semantic equivalence between Arabic and English requires more than literal lexical transfer. Translation techniques such as modulation, paraphrase, and functional equivalence are often necessary to preserve the conceptual meaning, emotional effect, and literary aesthetics of the source text. Although literal translation can successfully retain lexical meaning in certain expressions, it is frequently insufficient

for conveying culturally embedded metaphors and personifications.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of integrating semantic analysis, stylistic interpretation, and translation theory when examining Arabic literary texts. Such an integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how figurative language operates within Arabic song lyrics and how its meanings can be effectively represented in another language.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis was confined to a limited selection of song lyrics and focused only on two types of figurative language. Future research is recommended to investigate a broader corpus of Arabic songs or poems, explore additional figurative devices such as symbolism, hyperbole, and metonymy, and compare translation strategies across different translators or target languages. Such studies would further enrich the fields of Arabic linguistics, literary stylistics, and translation studies.

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