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The application of House's Quality Assessment Model on literary translation, a case study of Robert Frost "The Road not Taken" poem and its Indonesian translation by Atifah Khoiriyah

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Abstract

This study examines the application of Juliane House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) Model to analyze Robert Frost's poem The Road Not Taken and its Indonesian translation Jalan Yang Tak Ku Arungi by Atifah Khoiriyah. Rooted in functional equivalence, House's model evaluates linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic alignment between the source text (ST) and target text (TT). The analysis investigates structural fidelity, thematic depth, and stylistic nuances to assess the quality of the translation. The findings reveal that while cultural and linguistic adaptations such as transforming "yellow wood" into "hutan kegundahan," enhance accessibility for Indonesian readers, certain symbolic nuances and rhythmic qualities are diminished, limiting interpretative depth. This research underscores the utility of House's model in identifying translation mismatches and balancing fidelity with cultural adaptation, particularly in the context of literary translation. The study offers insights into the complexities of poetry translation and proposes strategies for mitigating challenges, contributing to the broader discourse on translation quality assessment.

Keywords: Translation Quality Assessment TQA; Juliane House's Model; Poetry Translation; Cultural Adaptation

1. Introduction

The term "translation" has multiple meanings: it can refer to the overall topic field, the outcome (the translated text), or the process. To translate between two written languages, the translator converts the source text (ST) in the original language (SL) to the target text (TT) in the target language (TL). House argues that translation is a linguistic phenomenon that can be described, analysed, and assessed as such. However, she distinguishes her model of quality assessment from text-based approaches like Reiß's and Koller's, which compare source and target texts to identify syntactic, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic transfer patterns (p.150). Jakobson (2003) argues that literary translation is distinct from language class translations. Literary translation studies have historically focused on source-target text relationships. Literary translation is one of the most important subfields in translation studies, sparking theoretical and practical conflicts among researchers. Literary translation studies have historically focused on the relationship between source and target texts. Theoretical debates focus on two linked issues: equivalence and communicative intent. Another difficulty is style translation (Parks, 1998, 2007; Boase-Beier, 2006a). Literary translators must consider the aesthetics of the text, including its beauty and style, as well as its marks (lexical, grammatical, or phonological). It's important to keep in mind that stylistic marks in different languages can differ significantly. In the 20th century, the first two sonnets of Shakespeare (numbers 18 and 60) were translated into Hebrew. The year 1916 marks a period of significant Jewish immigration to the United States, primarily from Eastern Europe, which was still a center of Hebrew literature at the time (p.147).

According to Newmark, "literal translation is usually condemned in the field of poetry translation, where the majority of emphasis is placed on the creation of a new independent poem." (page 70). Of the four types, poetry is the most intimate and focused; it lacks phatic language and repetition, and each word is more significant as a whole than in any other kind of text. One

of the most difficult and demanding responsibilities for any translator is translating poetry. Poetry “must be translated by a poet,” according to Eghishe Charents. Poetry, in the words of T.S. Eliot, “is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.” Poetry is the timeless truth, according to Percy Bysshe Shelly. A poem is “the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.”

To Robert Frost “Poetry is a way of life”. He purposefully avoids using the word “philosophy” when he describes poetry in this way. Robert Frost (1969) asserts that the primary feature of poetic discourse that sets it apart from everyday discourse is the inability to separate form from substance. Poetry translation is more challenging than other translation categories because of its extremely language-bound content. In conclusion, Robert Frost once said, “The figure a poem makes: it begins and ends in wisdom.” Any translator who wants to recognize the true value of the work he does must be aware of this. The term “art” is frequently used to describe translation. Therefore, a translator’s job is to create art out of art while preserving the piece’s visual appeal. Poetry, according to American poet Robert Frost, is “what gets lost in translation.” Naturally, he meant that a poem’s unique characteristics—its tone and rhythm, its metre, grammar, and connotations—cannot be transferred from one language to another. One of the characteristics that sets literary texts apart from ordinary utterances, according to Jakobson (1987), in a seminal work published in 1960, is that they “focus on the message” (by which he means the speech and not its content) which can be expressed as follows: a literary work describes its own shape (p. 448). Dante believed that “all poetry is untranslatable” (quoted in Brower, 1966, p. 271). According to some critics, “translators betray them, inevitably turning the translation into something which at best may approximate, but which invariably distorts, the original” while translating poems. However, translators have continued their challenging but crucial work despite this viewpoint. According to Nobokov (quoted in Brower, 1966), “the clumsiest of literal translation is a thousand times more useful than prettiest of paraphrase.” According to Brower (1966, p. 271), Longfellow and Martindale appear to support foreignizing the original tongue or far more accurate translation. In his paper on poetry translation, Lazim (2007) notes that poetry raises questions and reservations about its potential for translation. In order to promote awareness and understanding between various cultures and countries, translation is crucial. In particular, literary translations facilitate the compromise between these disparate cultures.

The increasing focus on literary translation has brought about a heightened interest in examining translations critically through theoretical models. One such approach is House’s Quality Assessment Model, which provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of translations in preserving the source text’s meaning, function, and style. Applying this model to a literary case study, such as Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” and its Indonesian translation by Atifah Khoiriyah, offers valuable insights. This analysis not only highlights the intricacies of translating poetry, where form and meaning are deeply intertwined, but also sheds light on the translator’s interpretative choices in conveying Frost’s contemplative tone and thematic nuances to an Indonesian audience. The application of House’s Quality Assessment Model serves as a valuable tool for evaluating literary translations. This study focuses on Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” and its Indonesian translation by Atifah Khoiriyah, analyzing the translation’s quality through the lens of House’s Revised Model (1997). By comparing the source and target texts, the study investigates how the translator preserves the poem’s thematic essence, stylistic elements, and communicative purpose, offering a comprehensive evaluation of the translation’s effectiveness.

Translation quality assessment has been a popular topic in translation studies, particularly since the 1990s (Lauscher 150). According to Rui Rothe-Neves (114), the key challenge is expressing quality and determining appropriate measures for assessing translation quality. The assessment of translation quality is influenced by the assessor’s theoretical approach (Hönig 6; House 1; Schäffner 1; Rothe-Neves 114), as different perspectives on what constitutes translation contribute to the evaluation process. According to Williams (2004), TQA involves evaluation processes that can be categorized into two main types: 1) models with a quantitative approach and 2) qualitative, text-based models like House’s (1998) framework for translation quality assessment. House’s model, in particular, focuses on analyzing the text logically and contextually rather than relying on numerical metrics which can be distinguished in general approaches to quality assessment. One is source-oriented, based on the relation between the translation and its source text. The second approach is target-language oriented. The third approach has to do with the assessment of translation effects- on clients, teachers, critics and readers.

Scholars have devised quality assessment methods to evaluate translations in a systematic manner, allowing for “reproducible, intersubjective judgement” (Lauscher 151). According to Christina Schäffner (5), the true value of a translation model lies in its practical use, regardless of the technique or assessment method used. Translation quality assessment approaches are sometimes accused for not offering practical guidance (Lauscher 158). Excessive intricacy in a model can hinder its practical application and intersubjective dependability (Rothe-Neves 116). In order to overcome this, many authors (Hönig 6; McAlester 232; Waddington, “Different Methods” 312; Rothe-Neves 117; Williams, Translation Quality Assessment 18) suggest that a more extensive application of the models is needed as they complain of a lack of empirical evidence and the restricted type of texts they have been used on.

Lynne Bowker highlights the need for models to evaluate translation quality and offer insightful feedback to the various parties involved in the translation process, despite the subjective nature of the concept of quality, the absence of universally recognized standards, and the anecdotal evidence offered by the literature (183). In 1977, House published her first translation quality assessment model, which she later updated to answer some of the criticisms it had received (Munday, *Introducing Translation*

Studies 91). The revisited model was published in 1997 and can be circumscribed within discourse analysis, incorporating Halliday's influential systemic functional model but also "Prague school ideas, speech act theory, pragmatics, discourse analysis" (House 247) amongst others, and the 2014 version is still based on textual and contextual analysis. House's model requires the analysis and comparison of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) at three levels: Language/Text, Register and Genre, the last two being "situational dimensions" (House 37).

At the situational dimension level, the analysis of the Register—examining the text within its context—is further divided into Field (the subject matter or topic), Mode (the communication channel and the level of interaction between the writer and reader), and Tenor (the social distance between the addresser and addressee). The final situational aspect is Genre, which refers to the "cultural discourse type" (House 106). Jeremy Munday (Introducing Translation Studies 92–93) summarizes how the model operates: first, a profile of the ST Register is created, along with a description of its Genre to establish a "statement of function." According to House (29), equivalence is the core criterion for evaluating translation quality, not only at the linguistic level but also at the semantic and pragmatic levels. This equivalence requires the reproduction of the function of the ST in the translation, though House applies a pragmatic understanding of function, where the text and context are seen as interconnected (House 37). The same process is then applied to the TT, and a comparison of both ST and TT profiles identifies mismatches or errors, which can be categorized as covert errors (at the Register and Genre levels) or overt errors (at the text's denotative meaning level). Christopher Waddington (Estudio comparativo 48) views this distinction between covert and overt errors as a pioneering and significant one. It is at the end of this process that a statement about the quality of the translation can be made.

After identifying errors in the translated text, House explains that the final qualitative assessment involves "listing both covert and overt errors and evaluating the relative match of the ideational and interpersonal functional components of the textual function" (46). However, her concept of function goes beyond simple text typologies, which she views as a useful but overly simplistic and imprecise tool for classification. Instead, she utilizes the cognitive and emotive meanings of language, focusing on the ideational and interpersonal functions to determine the specific function of a text. Drawing primarily on Halliday's 1973 work *Explorations in the Functions of Language*, House differentiates between the description of the external world, the presentation and evaluation of arguments and explanations—ideational functions—and the expression of internal states of the individual—interpersonal functions (House 36). The errors identified during the text analysis are assigned relative weight depending on the individual text and their impact on either function. However, Malcolm Williams ("The Application of Argumentation Theory" 334) points out that the model does not provide a specific method for weighting and quantifying these errors, making it impossible to determine whether a TT meets a specific standard of quality. Waddington points out that this issue is typical of non-quantitative models. He emphasizes that, from an academic standpoint, the model does not clarify how to transition from the statement of quality to a specific grade (Estudio comparativo 160). House (119) appears to acknowledge this, as she concedes that the concept of quality in translation is "problematical" and that reaching a final judgment that meets the "demands of objectivity" is challenging, since judgments are inherently subjective.

Overall, the main contribution of House's model seems to be the combination of a linguistic approach with textual, situational and cultural aspects (Schäffner 2) and one that provides useful tools to judge the quality of a translation by applying register theory to translation quality assessment (Hatim and Munday 293). Its application, however, is limited due to its complexity and not having a process to quantify errors, and these became factors to consider when analyzing the case study.

This paper focuses on the theory of translation quality assessment House's model on English translation to be known "The Road Not Taken" poem by Robert Frost. Robert Frost (1874–1963) was a renowned American poet known for his profound exploration of nature, rural life, and human emotion. His accessible yet deeply reflective poetry, such as "The Road Not Taken" and "Mending Wall," often delves into themes of choice, isolation, and existential reflection. A four-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Frost's use of simple language to convey complex ideas has cemented his place as one of the most influential poets in American literature.

2. Methodology

In order to evaluate the quality of translation, the current study may compare the source and target texts using House's approach. A philosophy of translation is necessary in order to assess the quality of a translation, according to House (1997, p.1). As a result, various perspectives on translation give rise to various notions of translation quality and, consequently, to various methods of evaluating it. Lexical, syntactic, and textual tools were offered by this analysis. These characteristics are implied to be related to both the writer and the reader in the following study. "A translation and its original text are compared textually as part of the analysis of translated texts." (Page 6 of Williams and Chesterman, 2002). "Halliday's terms ideational and interpersonal as labels for the referential and non-referential functional components" are what she uses (1977, p. 36). Additionally, the ST genre, as realised by the register, was described in the translation quality assessment. Overt and covert translation were finally identified as the two main categories of translation. According to House, a researcher should look for discrepancies throughout a thorough examination that could result in a mistake.

After collected the data, this paper concern to analyze the data to find out the approach and type of the translation. House's model of quality assessment (QA), for example, draws on Halliday's notions of ideational and interpersonal functions and involves

three steps: drawing a textual profile which characterizes the function of the source text, drawing a similar profile for the translated text, and comparing the two to identify any shifts in function.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Comprehensive Analysis of “The Road Not Taken” and Its Indonesian Translation “Jalan Yang Tak Ku Arungi”

Using House’s Translation Quality Assessment Model (TQA), this analysis evaluates the translation of Robert Frost's poem and its Indonesian adaptation. The analysis is conducted at various levels—Language/Text, Tenor, Mode, and Function—to assess the quality of the Target Text (TT) relative to the Source Text (ST).

1. Language/Text Level Comparison

Table 1. Comparison of ST and TT analysis at level of Language/Text

Levels	ST	TT	Differences (NO)	Differences (%)
Words	144	130	14	9.7%
Clauses	20	19	1	5%
Sentences	4	4	0	0%
Paragraphs	4	4	0	0%

According to Table 1 the Target Text (TT) is slightly shorter than the Source Text (ST), reflecting potential condensation or linguistic adjustments during translation. This difference may be attributed to the translator’s choice to simplify expressions or omit certain nuances to align with Bahasa Indonesia's linguistic characteristics. Moreover the slight reduction in clauses shows a tendency toward streamlining while retaining the overall structure and meaning of the poem. The TT largely preserves the ST’s flow and imagery. Both texts retain the same sentence and paragraph count, indicating structural fidelity.

2. Register Level of Comparison

House’s model examines register using Field, Tenor, and Mode. Here, we compare how these aspects are conveyed in both texts.

Table 2. ST analysis of tenor

Author’s Stance:	In the ST, Robert Frost adopts a reflective and philosophical stance, exploring the theme of life’s choices with subtlety. The poet refrains from overt emotionality, allowing readers to interpret the underlying message.
Social Role Relationship:	The ST assumes a symmetrical relationship with the reader, treating them as equals capable of introspection. Frost presents the narrator as an everyman figure, making the poem universally relatable.
Social Attitude:	The tone is formal yet introspective. Frost's use of precise and vivid imagery, such as "yellow wood" and "leaves no step had trodden black," underscores the contemplative nature of the poem.

Table 3. TT analysis of tenor

Author’s Stance:	The TT mirrors the reflective tone but introduces a layer of emotional resonance unique to Indonesian cultural expressions, evident in phrases like "hutan kegundahan" (forest of melancholy).
Social Role Relationship:	The TT maintains the symmetrical dynamic, encouraging readers to engage with the narrator’s dilemma as a shared human experience.
Social Attitude:	While the TT retains formal elements, it leans toward a slightly more emotional and expressive tone, using culturally resonant words like "gundah" (melancholy) to amplify relatability.

Table 4. ST Analysis of Mode

Medium	The ST is a written poetic text designed to be read, with an emphasis on imagery and rhythm.
Presentation	Information is presented abstractly, relying on metaphors and symbols to evoke meaning.
Participation	The poem is a monologue with no direct interaction with the audience, inviting readers to reflect introspectively.

3.2. Discussion

The application of House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) Model to Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* and its Indonesian translation *Jalan Yang Tak Ku Arungi* demonstrates both the strengths and limitations inherent in translating poetry. Poetry, as Frost and many scholars have noted, is a deeply language-bound art form where the interplay of form and meaning creates an aesthetic experience. This duality presents unique challenges for translators, particularly when navigating between languages and cultures as distinct as English and Bahasa Indonesia. Through a systematic comparison of the Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT), this study explores how the translator balances fidelity to the original text with the need for cultural adaptation.

One of the most notable strengths of the translation lies in its effective cultural adaptation. By transforming metaphors like "yellow wood" into *hutan kegundahan* (forest of melancholy), the translator successfully aligns the poem's imagery with Indonesian cultural sensibilities. This shift, while not an exact equivalence, demonstrates a thoughtful attempt to make the poem resonate with the target audience. House's model emphasizes the importance of maintaining the textual function, including ideational and interpersonal components, to achieve equivalence. In this case, the translator preserves the reflective essence of the poem while adapting its metaphors to better suit the cultural and emotional context of Indonesian readers. Such adaptation ensures that the TT remains accessible and relatable, fostering a connection between the poem's themes and its audience.

Moreover, the TT maintains the structural integrity and tone of the ST, which is crucial for preserving the poem's introspective quality. Both texts share the same sentence and paragraph counts, and the TT mirrors the ST's contemplative narrative style. House's framework highlights the need to preserve the textual function, which includes both ideational (the representation of reality) and interpersonal (the relationship between speaker and audience) components. In the TT, the translator effectively conveys the narrator's dilemma and the universal theme of choice, ensuring that the TT retains the philosophical undertone of the original. The tone remains introspective, with minor adjustments to the language that enhance emotional resonance for Indonesian readers. For instance, the use of *gundah* (melancholy) adds a layer of emotional depth that aligns with the cultural context, making the TT relatable while preserving the contemplative essence of the ST.

However, the translation is not without its challenges. One significant limitation is the loss of nuance in certain symbolic elements. The transformation of "yellow wood" into *hutan kegundahan* shifts the metaphor from a visual to an emotional domain. While this change makes the imagery more accessible to Indonesian readers, it narrows the interpretative possibilities inherent in the original. In the ST, "yellow wood" evokes a sense of autumn and the passage of time, layering the poem with additional symbolic meanings. The TT's focus on emotional resonance simplifies this imagery, potentially limiting its depth and reducing the richness of Frost's metaphorical language. House's model acknowledges such covert mismatches, where cultural and linguistic shifts alter the ideational meaning of the text.

Another challenge lies in the reduction of ambiguity, which is a hallmark of Frost's poetic style. The ST's open-ended metaphors and layered meanings invite diverse interpretations, allowing readers to engage with the text on multiple levels. In the TT, the translator's choice of more explicit expressions, such as *hutan kegundahan*, reduces this ambiguity. While this approach enhances clarity, it sacrifices some of the philosophical complexity that defines the original poem. Hatim and Munday (2004) argue that ambiguity in poetry is a deliberate stylistic feature, designed to evoke introspection and multiple interpretations. The TT's tendency toward explicitness reflects a trade-off between accessibility and interpretative depth, underscoring the inherent tension in translating poetry.

Aesthetic shifts also present a notable challenge. The rhythmic and phonetic qualities of the ST, such as its iambic meter and internal rhymes, are less pronounced in the TT due to linguistic differences between English and Bahasa Indonesia. Frost's careful attention to rhythm and sound contributes significantly to the sensory experience of the poem, and this aspect is inevitably diminished in the TT. As Newmark (1988) and Jakobson (1959) observe, translating the musicality of poetry is one of the most difficult tasks for any translator, often requiring creative compromises. While the TT captures the essence of the poem, its sonic qualities are less impactful, potentially altering the reader's aesthetic experience.

The findings of this study highlight the dual role of the translator as both a cultural mediator and an artist. By applying House's TQA model, the analysis reveals how the translator navigates the complexities of maintaining textual function while adapting to

the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience. The TT effectively preserves the core themes and tone of the ST, ensuring its accessibility to Indonesian readers. However, the challenges of translating nuanced metaphors, maintaining ambiguity, and preserving aesthetic qualities underscore the limitations of any translation, particularly in the context of poetry.

This study offers novel insights by applying House's model to a poetic text, a genre that demands heightened attention to both form and content. It demonstrates the model's utility in identifying covert and overt mismatches, as well as its capacity to evaluate cultural and linguistic shifts. By examining the intricacies of Frost's *The Road Not Taken* and its Indonesian translation, the study contributes to ongoing discussions in literary translation, particularly regarding the balance between fidelity and adaptation. Future research could explore strategies for mitigating the aesthetic and interpretative losses inherent in poetry translation, further enriching our understanding of this challenging yet vital field.

4. Conclusion

This study illustrates the practical application of Juliane House's Translation Quality Assessment Model (1997) by examining Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* and its Indonesian translation *Jalan Yang Tak Ku Arungi*. The analysis underscores the challenges of translating poetry, emphasizing the need to balance fidelity to the source text with cultural and linguistic adaptation for the target audience.

The translator demonstrates a thoughtful approach by preserving the poem's thematic essence and reflective tone while making necessary adjustments to align with Indonesian cultural sensibilities. For example, the adaptation of "yellow wood" to "*hutan kegundahan*" reflects a deliberate attempt to evoke emotional resonance. However, the study also reveals some limitations, including the loss of certain symbolic nuances, reduced ambiguity, and diminished rhythmic qualities. These shifts, while ensuring accessibility, highlight the inherent complexities and trade-offs in translating literary texts.

House's model proves to be a valuable tool for evaluating translation quality, offering a structured approach to identify both overt and covert mismatches. The study contributes to the field of literary translation by showcasing how the model can be applied to poetry, a genre that demands heightened sensitivity to both linguistic and aesthetic elements. Future research could explore innovative strategies to mitigate the challenges of translating poetic form and ambiguity, further advancing the discourse in translation studies.

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