

# CHAPTER 15

## Teaching English for Translation: Cultural Terms in Country Roads by John Denver Song

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a rapidly developing subject in education and it is also closely related to the world of work which cannot be overlooked. It means that translation plays a crucial role in education and must be taught to students in higher education. To know more about translation itself we should know that there are many definitions of translation based on some experts that must be understood in this research. Translation is defined as the process of transferring meaning from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) while keeping the message understandable (Larson, 1998). Catford (1965) explains that translation involves replacing text in one language with equivalent text in another language, but this process becomes difficult when the languages have different grammar and cultural background. These basic definitions show that translation is not only about changing words but also about transferring ideas, cultural meanings, and emotional expressions.

Cultural terms themselves refer to words, phrases, symbols, or references that represent the lifestyle, traditions, environment, and identity of a particular community (Hall, 1997). In *Country Roads*, cultural expression include place names such as West Virginia, Blue Ridge Mountains, and Shenandoah River, as well as metaphors like

“mountain momma” and “moonshine.” These expressions carry cultural meaning that may not exist in Indonesian context, making them challenging to translate.

Finally, theories from Larson (1998), Catford (1965), Molina and Albir (2002), Newmark (1988), Nababan (2012), Venuti (1995), and cultural terms theory provide a complete framework for understanding how translation techniques are used and how cultural meaning is transferred. Together, these theories support this research in analyzing how the translator of Sonora.id adapts both linguistic and cultural elements in the song Country Roads.

## **2. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

### **2.1 Course Objective and Content**

The course objective of this research is to identify and describe the translation techniques used in the Indonesian version of the song “Country Roads” by John Denver, as presented on the Sonora.id website. This topic is one of example of one of the materials which is discussed in one semester in translation subject. This research also aims to examine how cultural expressions in the original lyrics are translated into the target language and to determine whether the translated version maintains the cultural, emotional, and contextual meaning of the source text. By analyzing both linguistic and cultural elements, this research seeks to provide deeper understanding of how translators handle cultural references in song translation.

### **2.2 Teaching Method**

This research uses qualitative method which applies a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze translation techniques which are used in Country Roads by John Denver. Qualitative research is appropriate significantly in this research because the data are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research focuses on understanding meaning and interpreting textual data in its natural context. In translation research, this approach is commonly used to examine how meaning is translated from a source text to a target text correctly. While teaching technique uses translation

techniques which are illustrated by Molina and Albir (2002) and Peter Newmark (1988). These techniques use to analyze translation of cultural terms in country roads by John Denver in teaching English when translating the data from source text (ST) into target text (TT).

### **2.3 Activity Types**

Activity types which are carried out when teaching how to translate cultural terms in the text "Country Roads" are as follows: Firstly, the lecturer introduces two translation theories: Molina and Albir (2002) and Peter Newmark (1988). It is hopefully that students will not only recognize these two translation theories but also understand them well and clearly. Secondly, the lecturer introduces and discusses data sources of the research. The data source in this research comes from the original English lyrics of the song Country Roads by John Denver and their Indonesian translation published on the Sonora.id website. The English lyrics serve as the source text (ST), while the Indonesian version acts as the target text (TT). Thirdly, the lecturer teaches and discusses how to analyse translation of cultural terms in country roads by John Denver in teaching English when translating the data from source text (ST) into target text (TT). Finally, the lecturer makes an important evaluation of the problems and shortcomings in teaching learning process to understand further and more deeply about how to translate the text of cultural terms in the lyrics of the song Country Road.

### **2.4 Materials and Media**

The materials in this research comes from the original English lyrics of the song Country Roads by John Denver and their Indonesian translation published on the Sonora.id website. The song was chosen because it contains many cultural expressions related to American rural life, especially in the Appalachian region, such as place names, local traditions, and symbolic expressions. These cultural elements make the lyrics suitable for studying translation techniques (Hasbi, 2025a). Only the parts that include cultural expressions, figurative language, or meaningful phrases were selected as the main data for analysis.

The data collection technique used in this research is documentation technique. Documentation is a method of collecting data from written or visual materials such as texts, documents, audio, or video recordings (Creswell, 2014). This technique is appropriate for translation studies because the data are taken from existing texts and do not involve direct interaction with participants. In this research, the documentation technique is used to collect song lyrics and their translation as textual data. The materials in the form of media can be shown in the form of texts from source text (ST) into target text (TT) in the table 1 as follows:

English as Source Text (ST)	Indonesia as Target Text (TT)
Almost heaven, West Virginia Blue Ridge mountains Shenandoah River Life is old there Older than the trees Younger than the mountains Growin' like a breeze Country Roads, take me home To the place I belong West Virginia, Mountain momma Take me home, country roads All my memories gathered 'round her Miner's lady, stranger to blue water Dark and dusty, painted on the sky Misty taste of moonshine Teardrops in my eye I hear her voice In the mornin' hour she calls me The radio reminds me of my home far away And drivin' down the road I get a feelin' That I should have been home yesterday, yesterday	Bak surga, Virginia Barat Barisan biru gunung-gunung Sungai Shenandoah Kehidupan tlah tua di sana Lebih tua dari pepohonan Lebih muda dari pegunungan Tumbuh bak hembusan angin Jalan-jalan pedesaan, bawa aku pulang Ke tempat asalku Virginia Barat, Mountain Mamma Bawa aku pulang, wahai jalan-jalan pedesaan Semua kenanganku terkumpul di sekelilingnya Wanita penggali, orang asing dengan air biru Hitam dan berdebu, terlukis di langit Nuansa sinar bulan berkabut Tetes air mata di pipiku Kudengar suaranya Di pagi hari, dia memanggilku Radio ingatkanku akan rumahku yang jauh di sana Dan saat berkendara susuri jalan, kudapatkan perasaan Bahwa aku harusnya aku tlah sampai rumah kemarin, kemarin

In this research, the data were analyzed by using translation technique. Firstly, each line of the English lyrics was compared with Indonesian translation to find out the differences in meaning, structure, and cultural elements. Secondly, we identified the translation techniques which are used in every line based on Molina and Albir's theory (2002), such as literal translation, modulation, borrowing, amplification, and transposition etc. Thirdly, we checked whether the translator used a single technique, a couplet, or a triplet by applying Newmark's theory (1988). After that, we tried to find out cultural terms in the lyrics and analyzed them to see how their meaning based on translation techniques. Finally, all findings are summarized to explain

how the translator handled linguistic and cultural meaning in the translated song. The above table 2 is the data translation techniques which are found out in country roads as a lyric song.

No	Translation Techniques	Amount of Data	Percentage
<b>A. Single Translation Technique</b>			
1.	Literal Translation Technique	13	59.09%
2.	Amplification Technique	2	9.09%
3.	Modulation Technique	1	4.5%
<b>B. Couplet Translation Technique</b>			
1.	Modulation + Transposition	1	4.5%
2.	Transposition + Pure Borrowing	1	4.5%
3.	Literal + Amplification	2	9.09%
4.	Transposition + Natural Borrowing	1	4.5%
5.	Transposition + Modulation	1	4.5%
	Total	22	100%

### *A. Single Translation Technique*

The analysis shows that some data in the song are translated by using only one technique, which Newmark calls as a single technique. The most common technique found in this data is literal translation which consists of 13 data.

#### *1. Literal Translation Technique*

The data (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), and (13) use literal translation technique because source text (ST) can be translated word by word in the target text (TT) literally.

- (1) ST: Blue Ridge  
TT: Barisan biru gunung-gunung
- (2) ST: Life is old there  
TT: Kehidupan tlah tua di sana
- (3) ST: Older than the trees  
TT: Lebih tua dari pepohonan
- (4) ST: Younger than the mountains  
TT: Lebih muda dari pegunungan

- (5) ST: To the place I belong  
TT: Ke tempat asalku
- (6) ST: Growin' like a breeze  
TT: Tumbuh bak hembusan angin
- (7) ST: All my memories gathered 'round her  
TT: Semua kenanganku terkumpul di sekelilingnya
- (8) ST: I hear her voice  
TT: Kudengar suaranya
- (9) ST: Miner's lady, stranger to blue water  
TT: Wanita penggali, orang asing dengan air biru
- (10) ST: Dark and dusty, painted on the sky  
TT: Hitam dan berdebu, terlukis di langit
- (11) ST: I hear her voice  
TT: Kudengar suaranya
- (12) ST: In the mornin' hour she calls me  
TT: Di pagi hari, dia memanggilku
- (13) ST: The radio reminds me of my home far away  
TT: Radio ingatkanku akan rumahku yang jauh di sana

## *2. Amplification Translation Technique*

The two data below (14) and (15) use single translation technique where the translator uses amplification translation techniques. The technique uses when source text 'And drivin' down' is added by the word 'saat' in the target text to make the meaning more clearly. The word 'aku tlah' in the target text is also added in the target text which cannot be found the word in the source text to translate literally to show hopefully.

- (14) ST: And drivin' down the road I get a feelin'  
TT: Dan saat berkendara susuri jalan, kudapatkan perasaan
- (15) ST: That I should have been home yesterday, yesterday  
TT: Bahwa aku Harusnya aku tlah sampai rumah kemarin, kemarin

## *3. Modulation Translation Techniques*

The following data shows modulation translation technique because the phrase 'my eye' in the source text can be translated into target text 'mata saya' literally but the phrase is translated 'pipiku' in the target text clearly. It means that the translation changes the point of view of the meaning of the sentences that we can call as modulation translation technique.

- (16) ST: Teardrops in my eye  
TT: Tetes air mata di pipiku

## *B. Couplet Translation Techniques*

Some data cannot be translated literally because they contain figurative language, cultural elements, or expressions that sound unnatural if translated word by word literally. In these cases, the translator combines two techniques, which Newmark calls as couplet translation.

### *1. Modulation + Transposition Translation Techniques*

Modulation is used to adjust the point of view or expression so the target sentence sounds natural. In data (17), the phrase “almost heaven” is translated as “bak surga” instead of the literal “hampir surga”, because the modulation makes the expression more natural and poetic in Indonesian. Source text ‘West Virginia’ is translated into target text ‘Virginia Barat’ change their position without changing their meaning we can say as transposition technique. Therefore, the data can be called as couplet translation technique.

- (17) ST: Almost heaven, West Virginia  
TT: Bak surga, Virginia Barat

### *2. Transposition + Pure borrowing Translation Techniques*

Transposition + Pure borrowing are needed because some cultural or geographical terms, such as Shenandoah do not have equivalent forms in Indonesian. Pure borrowing allows the translator to maintain cultural authenticity while still communicating the basic meaning. The word ‘River’ also changes its position at the beginning becomes ‘Sungai’ as a transposition.

- (18) ST: Shenandoah River  
TT: Sungai Shenandoah

### *3. Literal + Amplification Translation Techniques*

Amplification is applied to add small elements like “wahai” or “sekarang juga” in data (19) and (20) to enhance clarity and emotional tone in the target text. Such additions are common in song translation to maintain stylistic effect. This combination fits Newmark’s couplet technique because two strategies operate at once to reach an equivalent meaning. While ‘Take me home’ in data (19) and (20) can be translated word by word literally as a literal translation technique.

- (19) ST: Take me home, country roads  
TT: Bawa aku pulang, wahai jalan-jalan pedesaan

- (20) ST: Take me home, now country roads  
TT: Bawa aku pulang, sekarang juga wahai jalan-jalan pedesaan

#### 4. *Transposition + Natural Borrowing Translation Techniques*

- (21) ST: West virginia, Mountain momma  
TT: Virginia Barat, Mountain mamma

“Mountain momma” uses a natural borrowing technique because it is a cultural expression that cannot be translated literally without losing its emotional and cultural meaning. In American culture—especially in the Appalachian region, “Mountain momma” is a metaphorical nickname that people use to express a deep emotional connection to their homeland.

These translations are considered as a couplet translation technique because they use transposition technique + natural borrowing technique where source text ‘West Virginia’ can be translated into target text ‘Virginia Barat’ there is a change position of words when translating them clearly. According to Molina and Albir, natural borrowing is a translation technique where the translator keeps the original word from the source language exactly the same in the target language naturally.

#### 5. *Transposition + Modulation Translation Techniques*

- (22) ST: Misty taste of moonshine  
TT: Nuansa sinar bulan berkabut

Transposition changes the sentence structure from source text into target text to match Indonesian grammar. transposition is used because the structure of the sentence is changed; in English, “misty” appears at the beginning, but in Indonesian, “berkabut” is placed at the end to fit Indonesian grammar. Modulation is applied in the data because the phrase “taste of moonshine” in the source text does not only mean “the taste of alcohol” but also carries cultural and symbolic meaning in American culture. Therefore, the translator changes the point of view and translates it as “nuansa sinar bulan,” in the target text which sounds more natural and poetic in Indonesian.

### 2.5 Vocabulary and Grammar Building

The important vocabulary that needs to be understood from the text of cultural terms in country roads automatically involves recognizing

and comprehending the meaning of the cultural terms contained within the text. The meaning of cultural terms from one culture to another is bound to differ, or have different meanings (Hasbi et al., 2025). Even if two different cultures were forced to have the same meaning, the translation would inevitably result in an inconsistency. While grammar that needs to discuss in here is in the form of past tense as one of the sixteen tenses in English language. The students should perfectly understand formula or pattern of sentences in past tense whether in positive, negative, and interrogative sentence forms (Hasbi, 2025b).

## 2.6 Targeted Language Skills

There are four English skills (L, S, R, W), two are prioritized in here: listening and writing. Listening skills can be improved by having students recognize and memorize a number of vocabulary terms for different cultures, while writing skills can be improved by mastering the grammatical forms associated with the texts of these cultural terms.

## 2.7 Assessment and Evaluation

This course is generally assessed through four assessments: quizzes, midterm exams, group assignments, and final exams. However, each meeting includes a small assignment to hone comprehension of the translation material taught. This involves practicing translating texts from source texts to target texts. Students who successfully complete the assignments will receive a mark on the attendance sheet, which will then be used as a daily score

## 3. FURTHER DISCUSSION

There are 22 data which use translation techniques when translating source text (ST) into target text (TT) which consist of single translation technic 16 data and couplet translation technique 6 data. There are 8 data o cultural terms which has been analysed they are as follows:

- “West Virginia” – Identity and Home Culture

West Virginia is not just a location. It represents: a quiet and peaceful life, strong community ties, mountains and forests,

traditional American values. People from West Virginia feel proud of their land. So, the lyric “almost heaven” expresses how they view their home as almost perfect.

- “Blue Ridge Mountains” – Symbol of Natural Beauty  
These mountains are very famous, part of the Appalachian Mountain range, and mentioned in many folk songs. They symbolize traditional mountain life, old American culture, beauty, and simplicity. For listeners in America, this expression immediately creates a picture of peaceful mountain scenery.
  - “Shenandoah River” – American Folk Heritage  
The Shenandoah River is part of American folk history. It appears in old songs, stories, and poetry. It represents, calm country life, farming, and traditional rural communities. It gives the song a strong cultural connection to American roots.
  - “Country roads” – Rural Lifestyle Symbol  
“Country roads” symbolize small towns, peaceful living, long drives through nature, and a slow-paced life. It expresses a deep emotional feeling like “Home is not just a place. It is a feeling.”
  - “Mountain momma” – Cultural Metaphor  
This is not a real “mother.” It is a metaphor for the homeland. “Mountain momma” shows deep love for the mountains, emotional comfort, and a feeling of being protected by nature. In Appalachian culture, nature is often seen as a “mother figure.”
  - “Miner’s lady” – Mining Culture in Appalachia  
Mining is a big part of West Virginia’s history. For many families, mining was their livelihood, mining shaped their community, and mining shaped their identity. So “miner’s lady” refers to the wife or partner of a miner and a well-known social role in mountain communities. This expression shows the culture of hardworking rural families.
7. “Stranger to
- “Stranger to blue water” – Life Far from the Sea  
People in the mountains rarely see oceans or large lakes. So “stranger to blue water” means **someone** who grew up far from the sea, someone who belongs to the mountains, and someone connected to land, not water. It reflects the lifestyle of isolated inland communities.

- “Moonshine” – Illegal Homemade Alcohol Tradition  
Moonshine is homemade alcohol, often illegal, and common in Appalachian history. During Prohibition (when alcohol was banned), people made moonshine secretly. This became part of rural American identity. So “misty taste of moonshine” is not just about alcohol— It symbolizes rebellion, tradition, and strong rural culture.

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