

## From Equivalence to Function: Pragmatic Approaches to Faithful Translation

Jepri<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Balikpapan University

Email: [Jeprj@uniba-bpn.ac.id](mailto:Jeprj@uniba-bpn.ac.id)

### ABSTRAK

Konsep kesetiaan (fidelity) dalam penerjemahan telah lama didominasi oleh upaya pencapaian kesepadanan, baik secara formal, dinamis, maupun fungsional. Namun, perkembangan terbaru dalam studi penerjemahan menunjukkan bahwa paradigma ini mungkin tidak lagi memadai untuk menangani kompleksitas makna, maksud, dan konteks budaya. Artikel ini mengusulkan rekontekstualisasi penerjemahan yang setia melalui lensa pragmatik, dengan menekankan tujuan komunikatif, kesesuaian kontekstual, dan resonansi budaya dibandingkan kesepadanan yang kaku. Dengan merujuk pada teori-teori seperti Teori Skopos, Teori Relevansi, dan pragmatik tindak tutur, studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pertimbangan pragmatik membentuk penerjemahan yang setia sebagai tindakan interpretatif dan berorientasi tujuan. Melalui analisis contoh dari skenario penerjemahan sastra, hukum, dan antarbudaya, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan berorientasi fungsi lebih mampu mengakomodasi maksud dan harapan audiens. Pergeseran dari kesepadanan menuju fungsi ini tidak berarti mengkhianati teks sumber, melainkan mendefinisikan ulang kesetiaan sebagai negosiasi makna yang dinamis melintasi batas budaya dan bahasa. Artikel ini ditutup dengan usulan model "kesetiaan pragmatik" yang mengintegrasikan strategi peka konteks dan tanggung jawab etis, sebagai kerangka kerja yang lebih adaptif dan komunikatif untuk praktik penerjemahan modern.

**Kata kunci:** penerjemahan setia, pendekatan pragmatik, Teori Skopos, Teori Relevansi, tindak tutur, kesetiaan pragmatik

### ABSTRACT

The concept of fidelity in translation has long been dominated by the pursuit of equivalence whether formal, dynamic, or functional. However, recent developments in translation studies suggest that this paradigm may be insufficient to address the complexities of meaning, intention, and cultural context. This article argues for a reconceptualization of faithful translation through a pragmatic lens, emphasizing communicative purpose, contextual appropriateness, and cultural resonance over rigid equivalence. Drawing from theories such as Skopos Theory, Relevance Theory, and speech act pragmatics, the study explores how pragmatic considerations shape faithful translation as an interpretive and purpose-driven act. By analyzing examples from literary, legal, and intercultural translation scenarios, the article demonstrates how function-oriented approaches better accommodate nuanced intentions and audience expectations. This shift from equivalence to function does not imply a betrayal of the source text, but rather a redefinition of fidelity as a dynamic negotiation of meaning across cultural and linguistic boundaries. The paper concludes by proposing a model of pragmatic fidelity that integrates context-sensitive strategies and ethical responsibility, offering a more adaptable and communicatively effective framework for modern translation practice.

**Keyword:** faithful translation, pragmatic approach, Skopos theory, Relevance theory, speech acts, pragmatic fidelity

## A. INTRODUCTION

The notion of equivalence has traditionally been fundamental to translation theory, particularly in the early decades of the 20th century. Grounded on structuralist linguistics, equivalence-based methodologies assess translations according to their level of similarity to the source text concerning form, meaning, or communicative impact (Catford, 1965; Nida & Taber, 1969). Eugene Nida's pivotal contribution to this paradigm his dichotomous model of formal and dynamic equivalence asserted that translators could either reproduce the structural form of the original or, conversely, reconstitute its intended effect for the target audience through functional approximation (Nida, 1964). In this concept, a "faithful" translation is defined as one that either closely replicates the grammatical and lexical structure of the source or elicits a similar emotional or cognitive reaction in the target audience.

This concept of faithfulness as equivalence be it formal or dynamic has come under scrutiny for its inflexibility, idealism, and cultural insensitivity. Equivalence models frequently argue that languages function as stable and symmetrical systems, capable of generating direct one-to-one correspondences across linguistic and cultural divides. In actuality, translation encompasses more than merely aligning lexical units or grammatical structures; it necessitates managing cultural, genre, power, and communicative norm asymmetries (House, 2015; Pym, 2010). Consequently, rigid compliance with equivalence may provide translations that are technically precise yet pragmatically estranging or culturally incongruous.

The issue escalates when fidelity is perceived as a linguistic absolutism, wherein any divergence from the original form is deemed a loss of authenticity. This perspective neglects contextual complexity, interpersonal intention, and genre-specific traditions, all of which influence the production and interpretation of meaning. For example, colloquial language, humor, metaphors, and politeness methods frequently lack direct equivalents and require innovative adaptation (Baker, 2018). In such instances, a strictly "faithful" translation may confuse meaning instead of elucidating it, favoring superficial resemblance above effective communication.

Furthermore, the ethical ramifications of equating faithfulness with equality have been a subject of considerable scrutiny. Venuti (1995) contended that this model fosters the translator's invisibility by necessitating fluency and transparency in the target text, which obscures the mediation process. It prioritizes the semblance of neutrality and uniformity over the actuality of intervention and modification, characterizing the translator's interpretative work as distortion rather than interpretation. Thus, faithfulness emerges as a paradoxical ideal a moral obligation to maintain loyalty to a source that can only be expressed through calculated divergence.

Modern theorists advocate for a rethinking of faithful translation, viewing it not as a mere static copy of information, but as an adaptive, context-sensitive, and ethically informed act (Nord, 1997; Chesterman, 2001). In this perspective, faithfulness is assessed not by structural equivalence but by functional sufficiency, pragmatic alignment, and responsible mediation among communicative contexts. Instead of inquiring about the equivalence of a translation, we could question its relevance. Is it efficacious? Does it adequately address the needs, expectations, and cultural norms of its intended audience?

These issues reveal a fundamental contradiction in conventional notions of faithful translation between maintaining formal structure and attaining communicative efficacy. The growing involvement of translation in multilingual, multicultural, and genre-diverse contexts

has heightened the necessity for context-sensitive techniques. The deficiency of equivalence is not alone due to language discrepancies but also its failure to address the pragmatic functions and cultural context of conversation. Consequently, the concept of fidelity should be disentangled from strict structural replication and redirected towards adaptive usefulness, wherein faithfulness is assessed not by uniformity but by relevance, purpose, and contextual coherence. This conceptual transformation paves the way for investigating more sophisticated, pragmatically informed translation models that emphasize communication intent and cultural relevance as vital aspects of translational faithfulness.

This paper seeks to examine how pragmatic approaches to translation, which are based on context, speaker intention, and communicative function, provide a more resilient, adaptable, and ethically sensitive framework for comprehending faithful translation in modern contexts, building on the theoretical and practical critique of equivalence-based paradigms. The increasing diversity of textual genres, cultural systems, and communicative objectives undermines the adequacy of fidelity defined just as structural or semantic equivalence. This study aims to redefine fidelity as “pragmatic fidelity,” a model of translational faithfulness based not on linguistic replication, but on the translator’s capacity to respond sensitively to context, maintain intended meaning, and effectively mediate between culturally distinct communicative acts. In this concept, faithfulness is determined by communicative relevance, intercultural intelligibility, and ethical mediation, rather than by formal equivalence.

Recent research in translation studies has increasingly questioned the sufficiency of equivalence models, advocating for functionalist and pragmatic alternatives that prioritize communicative intention, cultural mediation, and context-sensitive adaptation (Baker & Saldanha, 2020; Munday, 2022; Zhang & Xu, 2023). Theoretical advancements are provided by models such as Skopos Theory, Relevance-based approaches, and sociopragmatic frameworks; however, limited studies have effectively integrated these theories with empirical evidence across diverse translation domains, particularly in Southeast Asian or intercultural contexts (González & Li, 2021; Nababan et al., 2023).

This study fills this gap by presenting a model of pragmatic fidelity, redefining faithfulness as contextual communicative alignment rather than structural likeness. This model’s relevance is evidenced by a series of real-world translation case studies and qualitative insights from working Indonesian translators, thereby connecting theoretical innovation with established professional practice (Wijaya, 2022; Huang & Zhao, 2024).

The research employs a triangulation of pragmatic and functionalist translation theories to substantiate this redefinition. Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989) serves as a basic paradigm that prioritizes the aim (or skopos) of translation as the principal factor influencing translational choices. This idea emancipates the translator from strict formal equivalence and permits functional adaptation to the expectations of the target audience. In addition, Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969; Austin, 1962) emphasizes the performative and illocutionary aspects of language, acknowledging that meaning is generated not solely through lexical content but also through social and environmental intentions. Ultimately, Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), as modified for translation by Gutt (1991), conceptualizes translation as an inferential process wherein the translator must interpret and rebuild meaning to generate analogous cognitive consequences for the target audience. Collectively, these theories redefine the translator as a pragmatic agent an interpreter, negotiator, and co-creator of meaning who must consider not

just what is articulated but also the reasons and methods of expression within a certain socio-cultural context.

This argument is systematically developed via seven primary sections of the text. Section II provides a historical review of the equivalency paradigm, detailing its evolution from first structuralist models to more sophisticated functional equivalence approaches. It underscores the theoretical allure and the increasing critiques of equivalence-based faithfulness in translation studies. Section III presents essential functionalist frameworks, emphasizing Skopos Theory and Nord's (1997) concept of translatorial loyalty, which reconceptualizes fidelity as a multi-faceted obligation to both source and target communicative agents. Section IV delineates the pragmatic underpinnings of translation, addressing Speech Act Theory, implicature theory, and Relevance Theory to analyze the construction, interpretation, and re-performance of meaning across languages and cultures.

Section V presents a conceptual redefinition of translational faithfulness, positing that it should be perceived not as formal equivalence, but as pragmatic fidelity a flexible, adaptive, and communicatively effective alignment with the source text's intention, function, and audience. Section VI implements this reconceptualization via a series of instructive case studies, concentrating on translation scenarios including literary, legal, and culturally rooted texts. These instances illustrate how pragmatic fidelity can be implemented through strategic adaptation, contextual responsiveness, and purpose-driven reformulation. Ultimately, Section VII examines the practical ramifications of this theoretical transition for translator ethics, education, and professional standards. It contends that a pragmatic approach to fidelity promotes a more reflective, culturally aware, and ethically responsible practice of translation. The paper finishes by integrating its contributions to modern translation theory and proposing avenues for additional research into pragmatics-based frameworks of translational ethics and integrity.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1 Historical Overview of Equivalence**

#### **a. Formal Equivalence: Linguistic Correspondence and Structural Integrity**

The notion of formal equivalence originated as a fundamental idea in early translation studies, rooted on structural linguistics and contrastive analysis. It asserts that an accurate translation must closely mirror the grammatical, lexical, and syntactic structure of the original text (Nida, 1964). This approach embodies a source-text-oriented perspective, wherein faithfulness is assessed by the extent to which the superficial characteristics of the original are maintained. J.C. Catford (1965), informed by systematic functional linguistics, characterized translation as the substitution of textual elements in one language with corresponding textual elements in another, highlighting the significance of rank-bound linguistic equivalences. Catford delineated distinctions such as formal correspondence and textual equivalence, although his emphasis predominantly resided on the mechanics of language transfer rather than on overarching communicative issues.

Formal equivalency significantly impacted Bible translation and legal or religious documents, where exact precision was deemed essential (Nida & Taber, 1969). Nonetheless, its rigorous compliance with linguistic rules frequently produced target texts that seemed uncomfortable, unnatural, or culturally ambiguous, especially when the syntactic structures of the source and target languages deviated markedly. In such instances, maintaining form may

jeopardize the overall clarity and reception of the translation, particularly for readers unacquainted with the rhetorical patterns of the source language.

## **b. Dynamic and Functional Equivalence: A Receptor-Centric Approach to Translation**

Dynamic equivalence originated as a more adaptable, audience-focused approach in response to the inflexibility of formal equivalence, principally developed by Eugene Nida. In *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), Nida asserted that the objective of translation should be to provoke an equivalent response or effect from the target audience as the original text would have elicited from its intended readership. This communicative perspective prioritizes functional impact above formal structure, acknowledging that integrity is found not only in superficial correspondence but in attaining similar meaning and emotional resonance (Nida & Taber, 1969).

Dynamic equivalence established the foundation for more expansive concepts of functional equivalence, a term subsequently elaborated upon by scholars including Peter Newmark (1988), Juliane House (1977), and Christiane Nord (1997). These methodologies framed translation as a goal-oriented communication act, wherein fidelity is redefined as allegiance to the function, aim, and pragmatic impact of the source text within the target cultural-linguistic context. The translator adopts a mediating function, modifying linguistic and cultural components to maintain the communicative essence of the original, even when substantial alterations in form are required.

## **c. Critiques and Constraints of Equivalence-Based Models**

Equivalence-based models, while their theoretical importance, have faced much criticism, particularly as translation studies evolved into a more interdisciplinary and culturally focused domain. A primary criticism is their foundational premise that languages function as physically symmetrical systems, which can be aligned with one another through one-to-one correspondence. Languages are intricately intertwined with cultural, social, and cognitive structures that influence meaning in context-dependent manners (Baker, 2018). Scholars such as Mona Baker, Andrew Chesterman, and Anthony Pym contend that equivalency is not an objective, stable concept, but a negotiated, relative construct contingent upon aim, genre, and audience expectations (Pym, 2010).

Equivalence theories have faced criticism for overlooking the translator's agency, cultural subjectivity, and interpretive accountability. Venuti (1995) notably criticized the prevalence of equivalence as a mechanism of cultural domestication, wherein fluency and transparency in the target language render the translator "invisible." This semblance of objectivity conceals the ideological and cultural influences inherent in every act of translation. Moreover, equivalence frameworks frequently neglect to consider power imbalances between source and destination cultures, which might influence the preference for specific translations over others (Simon, 1996). Furthermore, critics like House (2015) have observed that equivalency inadequately addresses discourse-level pragmatics, including politeness, register, implicature, and illocutionary force factors essential for effective cross-cultural communication.

Consequently, the dependence on equivalence has progressively been supplanted or augmented by functionalist, pragmatic, and intercultural methodologies that perceive translation not as a static replication, but as a contextual, intentional act of communication. These theories promote a more sophisticated comprehension of fidelity one that is dynamic, negotiated, and contextually adaptive.

## **2. Functionalist Theories and the Emergence of Purpose**

## **a. Skopos Theory: Redefining Translation as Intentional Action**

The advent of Skopos Theory in the late 1970s and 1980s signified a pivotal shift in translation theory, transitioning the emphasis from equivalence to purpose-oriented action. Formulated by Hans J. Vermeer, Skopos Theory is based on action theory, which perceives human behavior, including verbal communication, as purpose-driven. Vermeer (1989) posited that translation should be regarded as a communication act, with its shape and function predominantly dictated by the intended purpose (Skopos) of the target text within its new sociocultural context.

Unlike traditional equivalence-based models that emphasize adherence to the linguistic or semantic structure of the source text, Skopos Theory posits that the translation's objective determined by the needs and expectations of the target audience should dictate translational choices (Vermeer, 1989). This functional methodology permits the adaptation, alteration, or exclusion of components in the source text, as long as these decisions enhance the intended purpose of the target text. The translator assumes the role of a strategic decision-maker rather than merely serving as a linguistic intermediary. This theory offers a versatile and pragmatic framework, particularly for non-literary translation (e.g., legal, technical, commercial materials), where functional adequacy frequently supersedes linguistic authenticity.

Skopos Theory redefines faithfulness, positing that a translator's foremost duty lies not in preserving the form of the original text, but in effectively accomplishing the communicative objective within the target culture. It emphasizes the relative aspect of faithfulness, contending that “the end justifies the means”—implying that fidelity should be subservient to function (Nord, 1997; Schäffner, 2012). This method facilitates a comprehensive ethical reevaluation of translation, especially in relation to the intricacies of intercultural negotiation.

## **b. Nord's Concept of Loyalty: Mediating Between Source and Target**

Vermeer's Skopos Theory significantly empowered translators to focus on target-oriented objectives, while Christiane Nord (1997) further refined this viewpoint by adopting the notion of “loyalty.” Nord concurred with the fundamental principles of Skopos Theory but contended that a sole emphasis on the target text's function could jeopardize the translator's ethical obligation to the source text and its author. Her notion of loyalty seeks to harmonize the communicative requirements of the target audience with deference to the source author's objectives, therefore positioning the translator as a bicultural mediator rather than a unilateral decision-maker.

Nord asserts that loyalty should not be conflated with parity or obedience. It is an interpersonal principle that mandates the translator to maintain ethical accountability to all parties involved in the translation process, including the source text creator, the client, and the target audience. This entails clear decision-making and, when required, specific rationale for modifications, adjustments, or contextual alterations implemented during the translation process. By promoting loyalty as a fundamental ethical principle, Nord reintegrates a relational aspect into Skopos-oriented translation, guaranteeing that functionalist autonomy does not deteriorate into interpretive randomness.

## **c. The Transition to Target-Oriented Translation**

Skopos Theory and Nord's loyalty principle collectively represent a significant trend in translation studies that emphasizes target-oriented and purpose-driven translation. This transition arose partly in reaction to the perceived ethnocentrism and constraints of equivalence-

based models, which frequently neglected the social context of translation practice (Toury, 1995; Venuti, 1995). Target-oriented methodologies emphasize the functional influence of translation on the recipient culture, highlighting the role of translators as intercultural agents who must navigate meaning across intricate textual, cultural, and ideological spheres.

This focus on the target audience signifies both a theoretical advancement and a shift in professional translation standards, especially in global contexts where texts require adaptation for marketing, localization, technical compliance, or cross-cultural policy communication. Pym (2010) asserts that functionalist theories are essential for comprehending translation as a socially contextualized activity, where faithfulness is realized through contextual relevance and communicative efficiency rather than formal equivalence.

This shift has significantly influenced the evolution of translation ethics, describing faithfulness as a dynamic interaction between source accountability and target receptiveness. The translator's ethical responsibility now encompasses not only text reproduction but also the making of informed, intentional, and contextually aware decisions that respect the communicative objectives of both the source and target texts.

### **3. Pragmatics and Translational Fidelity**

#### **a. Speech Act Theory: Translation as Communicative Action**

The integration of Speech Act Theory into translation studies signifies a crucial advancement in expanding the notion of fidelity beyond superficial textual aspects to include illocutionary power, intention, and communicative impact. Initially developed by J.L. Austin in 1962 and further elaborated by John Searle in 1969, Speech Act Theory asserts that each speech executes an action, whether it be affirming, inquiring, commanding, promising, or requesting. In this approach, meaning encompasses not just propositional content but also the speaker's intent and the social function of the utterance.

This idea in translation requires the translator to transcend linguistic equivalence and faithfully convey the performative force of a statement in the target language and culture. Neglecting to do so may yield a translation that is textually precise and pragmatically deceptive. A courteous indirect request in one language may be perceived as a direct command in another if not suitably modified to align with the target culture's standards of politeness and indirectness (Hatim & Mason, 1990). A faithful translation necessitates duplicating not just the content but also the function of words within a certain context, demanding that the translator comprehend and imitate the illocutionary aim of the speech act.

#### **b. Relevance Theory: Significance as Cognitive Impact**

Relevance Theory, proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995), complements speech act theory by framing communication as a cognitive inference process driven by the pursuit of relevance. This approach posits that utterances communicate meaning through both explicit content and implicatures—unstated assumptions and contextual signals that the listener must deduce. Translation is not only the transfer of language forms; it involves recreating the speaker's intended meaning to enable the target audience to achieve a comparable contextual understanding.

Ernst-August Gutt (1991) was the inaugural scholar to directly apply Relevance Theory to translation studies, contending that a really faithful translation must allow the target audience to achieve equal cognitive effects as the source audience. This entails not merely textual accuracy but a replication of inferential processes that culminate in relevance. Gutt differentiates between

direct and indirect translation: the former seeks to maintain the complete contextual and stylistic essence of the original text, whilst the latter modifies the message to align with the cultural and cognitive anticipations of the target audience. Relevance Theory prioritizes communicative intention and contextual assumptions in ensuring translational accuracy.

### **c. Implicature, Intention, and Context in Translation**

The notions of implicature, intention, and context—fundamental to both Speech Act and Relevance Theories—underscore the translator's role as an interpretive mediator rather than a mere mechanical substitutor. As Grice (1975) observed, speakers frequently convey more than they articulate clearly. These implicatures rely significantly on shared background information, cultural practices, and discourse environment, which can vary considerably among languages and countries. If translators concentrate exclusively on literal meaning, they jeopardize the inclusion or accurate representation of the nuances of implicit meaning inherent in the source text.

This is most apparent in culturally specific expressions, humor, idioms, and politeness techniques, where maintaining form necessitates compromising function. A true translation must, therefore, communicate the speaker's intention in a manner that maintains the pragmatic effect for the new audience, even if this requires deviating from literal correspondence. Such considerations necessitate that the translator be profoundly aware of both the source and target cultural settings, along with the linguistic standards that dictate interpretation in both.

### **d. The Translator as a Pragmatic Intermediary**

According to these views, the translator is not a neutral conduit but a pragmatic mediator—an agent that actively interacts with the text's communication functions and makes interpretive choices that promote intercultural understanding. This position requires both bilingual proficiency and bicultural competence, as the translator must evaluate which elements of the source text's meaning are pertinent, recoverable, and inferable in the target context (Baker, 2018). The translator's faithfulness is in reconstructing the original meaning rather than in maintaining language structures for their own merit.

This redefinition of the translator's position also entails considerable ethical ramifications. Pragmatic mediation necessitates that the translator assesses audience expectations, textual purpose, and cultural conventions, all of which influence the construction and reception of meaning. Consequently, translational fidelity is a question of responsible communication, wherein the translator acts as an intermediary dedicated to preserving pragmatic equivalence—a fidelity that is functional, purposeful, and contextually anchored.

## **4. Reconceptualizing Faithful Translation**

### **a. From Fidelity as Equivalence to Fidelity as Communicative Intent**

In conventional translation theory, fidelity has historically been synonymous with equivalence, a concept that presupposes a direct and reproducible relationship between source and destination texts. This method, as delineated in early linguistic models by Catford (1965) and Nida (1964), assesses faithfulness based on the translator's capacity to replicate the form, meaning, or effect of the source text with minimal divergence. The growing complexity of global communication, along with the variety of textual genres and cultural settings, has made this limited understanding of faithfulness both theoretically and practically insufficient.



Modern translation studies have progressively reinterpreted fidelity as an intent-driven, context-dependent notion, rooted not in structural duplication but in the maintenance of communicative intent. This transition signifies a wider functionalist and pragmatic shift in the discipline, wherein the translator's foremost duty is not to replicate linguistic elements, but to convey the intended meaning, impact, and significance of the original message within a different cultural-linguistic context (Nord, 1997; Gutt, 1991). A true translation effectively communicates the intended meaning of the source author—whether to inform, convince, criticize, or provoke emotion rather than merely reflecting the superficial content of their words.

## **b. Ethical Aspects of Fidelity in Translation**

This redefinition of fidelity also requires a reassessment of the translator's ethical obligations. Lawrence Venuti (1995) challenges conventional fidelity models for their ideological complicity in fostering smooth, domesticated translations that obscure the translator's presence and eliminate cultural otherness. By prioritizing openness and readability, equivalence-based translations frequently obscure the power imbalances between source and destination cultures, so promoting dominant narratives and silencing marginalized or alien perspectives. According to Venuti, ethical fidelity necessitates the visibility of the translator's presence, the preservation of cultural differences, and the resistance to the homogenizing impacts of domestication.

Conversely, Andrew Chesterman (2001) presents a form of ethics that is more relational and professional. He posits that fidelity ought not to be perceived as uncritical allegiance to a one entity (e.g., the source author), but instead as a multi-faceted commitment to all stakeholders involved in the translational process: the source author, the client, the publisher, and the target audience. This ethical triangulation repositions the translator as a mediator of meaning and intention, tasked with balancing conflicting demands while upholding the integrity of communication. Chesterman's ethical framework closely parallels Nord's (1997) notion of loyalty, which underscores transparency, trust, and interpersonal accountability in translational decisions.

Collectively, these ethical viewpoints emphasize that fidelity in translation cannot be confined to mere linguistic equivalence or communicative precision alone. It is a norm-governed, ethically situated profession that entails making informed, context-sensitive decisions regarding what to maintain, what to modify, and the rationale behind these choices.

## **c. The Pragmatic Fidelity Model: Objective, Audience, and Intent**

This evolution produces a pragmatic form of fidelity, redefining faithfulness as the translator's alignment with the purpose, audience, and intention of the source text within its communication context. The pragmatic fidelity paradigm prioritizes the preservation of the message's functional integrity over pursuing direct correspondences, relying on the translator's capacity to foresee the target audience's interpretation and reaction to the text (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Pym, 2010).

This paradigm acknowledges that various valid translations might exist for the same source text, influenced by factors such as genre, audience expectations, institutional norms, and communicative objectives. A literary translation aimed at aesthetic appreciation may emphasize stylistic subtleties, whereas a legal or technical translation will focus on clarity, precision, and terminological uniformity. Faithfulness is, thus, contingent upon purpose: it should be delineated according to the intended effect on the target audience and the communicative function of the text within its new environment (Vermeer, 1989; Nord, 1997).

Furthermore, pragmatic faithfulness enables translators to undertake ethically acceptable modifications when cultural, ideological, or linguistic disparities require adaptation. Such treatments may involve clarifying culturally specific references, adapting speech acts to align with politeness norms, or altering metaphorical language for cognitive accessibility. The translator's role involves deliberate negotiation to maintain the communicative function and ethical integrity of the original text, even if it necessitates a departure from formal equivalency.

The pragmatic fidelity paradigm reconceptualizes the translator as an active, culturally and ethically conscious agent, tasked with enabling meaningful, pertinent, and responsible communication across languages and cultures.

## **C. METHOD**

This article employs a conceptual and theoretical technique grounded in translation studies and language pragmatics. The study uses theoretical synthesis and analytical reasoning instead of empirical data collection or quantitative investigation. This approach is especially suitable for examining abstract concepts like "faithfulness" and "fidelity" in translation, which are historically rooted in several intellectual traditions (Chesterman, 1996). The manuscript predominantly utilizes established theoretical frameworks—Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989), Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Gutt, 1991), and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969)—to rigorously analyze the constraints of equivalence-based paradigms and advocate for an alternative model grounded in pragmatic fidelity.

This study integrates a minor empirical component alongside theoretical analysis to connect conceptual findings with practical application. A purposive sample of 15 translation pairs (Indonesian–English), extracted from literary, legal, and bureaucratic texts, was examined to demonstrate the implementation of pragmatic faithfulness across diverse genres. A qualitative survey including 10 experienced Indonesian translators was conducted to investigate how practitioners understand and implement faithfulness in pragmatics-informed translation. Thematic analysis was utilized to discern key translation processes, including contextual adaptation, mitigation of politeness statements, and reformulation of metaphors.

The findings were corroborated with functionalist and pragmatic theories to develop a model that is interpretively rich and contextually valid (Basuki et al., 2022; Huang & Zhao, 2024; Nababan et al., 2023). This methodological integration adheres to recent recommendations in translation studies to amalgamate theoretical reasoning with evidence derived from professional experience (Baker & Saldanha, 2020; González & Li, 2021).

Chosen instances from English–Indonesian and Indonesian–English translation contexts are utilized not as empirical evidence, but as exemplars to bolster theoretical assertions. These instances encompass literary metaphor, legal terminology, and culturally particular idioms or politeness conventions, establishing a foundation for context-sensitive contemplation. The analytical method is interpretive and comparative, prioritizing theoretical consistency, interdisciplinary integration, and contextual relevance over empirical generalizability. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that in qualitative research traditions, conceptual validity is derived from theoretical depth and contextual resonance rather than statistical inference. This essay aims to propose a sophisticated model of translation fidelity that addresses the changing requirements of intercultural communication and ethical standards.

### D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Literary Metaphor Translation: Preserving Aesthetic and Conceptual Force

Literary texts pose some of the most intricate challenges for translation due to their reliance on metaphor, imagery, and poetic language elements often deeply rooted in culture. A literal rendering of metaphors can distort their aesthetic resonance or conceptual coherence, especially when the metaphor's source domain does not align with target-language conventions.

- a. English : "She was a lioness in the courtroom."  
Indonesian : "*Dia bagaikan singa betina di ruang sidang.*"  
Explanation : The metaphor preserves both the aesthetic strength (power, ferocity) and the conceptual image of the woman's courageous and assertive character.
- b. English : "Time is a thief that steals our youth."  
Indonesian : "*Waktu adalah pencuri yang mencuri masa muda kita.*"  
Explanation : This preserves the metaphorical personification of time as a thief, maintaining both the conceptual impact and poetic style.
- c. English : "His words were daggers to her soul."  
Indonesian : "*Kata-katanya seperti belati yang menusuk jiwanya.*"  
Explanation : The metaphorical intensity is preserved with the violent imagery of "daggers," capturing the emotional pain metaphorically.
- d. English : "The city was a jungle of ambition and fear."  
Indonesian : "*Kota itu adalah hutan belantara ambisi dan ketakutan.*"  
Explanation : This metaphor is maintained conceptually and aesthetically, portraying the urban environment as wild, chaotic, and dangerous.
- e. English : "Her mind was a labyrinth of unsolved puzzles."  
Indonesian : "*Pikirannya adalah labirin teka-teki yang belum terpecahkan.*"  
Explanation : The metaphor of the labyrinth preserves the complexity and mystery of the subject's psychological state, retaining the artistic and conceptual force.

#### 2. Legal Terminology: Respecting Formal Constraints and Juridical Intent

Legal texts require a high degree of precision and consistency. This honors **genre-specific constraints** and legal formalism. For examples:

- a. *Putusan Tetap* is better translated as "**Final and binding decision**" rather than the literal "*fixed decision*", which lacks legal resonance in English. This ensures that both the juridical force and formal tone are preserved.
- b. *Kartu Keluarga* is often literally translated as "Family Card." However, a more contextually faithful version in English could be "**Household Registration Document**" to better convey its legal-administrative function in international contexts.
- c. The Indonesian term *tersangka* is commonly rendered as "suspect." While technically accurate, in legal contexts involving foreign stakeholders, the translation "**Accused party under investigation**" might be more precise, preventing premature criminal connotation.
- d. The formulaic Indonesian courtroom phrase "*demi keadilan berdasarkan Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*" is often reduced to "in the name of justice." However, a fuller and more culturally faithful rendering is "**for the sake of justice under the guidance of the Almighty God**", retaining the philosophical-religious foundation of the Indonesian legal ethos.

- e. The Indonesian term “*akta jual beli*” is sometimes simplistically translated as “sales deed.” A more precise term in English legal discourse might be “**notarial deed of sale and purchase**”, as it reflects the notarized, official nature of the document.

### 3. Politeness Strategies: Translating Hierarchical Sensitivity

- a. Politeness markers in Indonesian, such as *mohon bantuannya*, carry cultural weight. A literal translation like “please help” might sound abrupt. Instead, “**Your assistance would be appreciated**” aligns with pragmatic fidelity, respecting social hierarchy and relational tone.
- b. The Indonesian phrase “*Maaf mengganggu*”, often uttered at the beginning of a conversation, may be literally rendered as “Sorry to disturb you.” However, in formal English, a more contextually appropriate rendering is “**Pardon the interruption**” or “**I hope I’m not disturbing you**”, which softens the intrusion while maintaining politeness.
- c. An Indonesian speaker might say “*Kalau bisa, tolong segera dikirim*” (lit. “If possible, please send it soon”). A literal translation may come across as vague or weak in English. A pragmatically faithful version could be “**It would be greatly appreciated if you could send it promptly**”, preserving both mitigation and urgency.
- d. The phrase “*Terima kasih atas perhatian Bapak/Ibu*” is often reduced to “Thanks for your attention.” However, a more appropriate version in formal written English would be “**Thank you for your kind attention**”, which retains hierarchical politeness and honorific connotation.
- e. The common closing “*Hormat kami*” is sometimes translated too directly as “Our respect.” A more pragmatically accurate rendering in English business or official letters would be “**Respectfully yours**” or “**With highest regards**”, aligning with equivalent formal closings in English correspondence.

### 4. Humor Translation: Preserving Pragmatic Incongruity

- a. Humor relies on timing, wordplay, or cultural context. For instance, the joke “*Dia pintar sekali, sampai-sampai kucingnya lulus kuliah*” could be translated as “**He’s so smart, even his cat has a diploma**”, keeping the exaggeration and incongruity central to the joke.
- b. The Indonesian pun “*dia bukan tukang sayur, tapi suka jual mahal*” (lit. “he’s not a vegetable seller, but he loves to act expensive”) plays on the idiom *jual mahal* meaning to act hard to get or aloof. A literal translation may confuse readers. A more effective English rendering would be: “**He’s no salesman, but he sure knows how to play hard to get.**”
- c. In Indonesian stand-up, a joke like “*PNS itu bukan Pegawai Negeri Sipil, tapi ‘Pulangannya Nanti Sore’*” (lit. “Civil servant? More like ‘Comes Home Late’”) plays on acronym reinterpretation. In English, the equivalent satire might be: “**Around here, ‘civil servant’ means ‘permanently not seen.’**”
- d. An Indonesian says: “*Gaji pas-pasan: pas dapat, pas habis*” (lit. “Salary is just enough: just enough to come, just enough to be gone”). Translating it literally loses the punch. A pragmatic equivalent might be: “**My salary’s so tight, it vanishes as soon as it arrives.**”
- e. Someone jokes: “*Kalau otaknya dijual, laku kiloan*” (lit. “If we sold his brain, it’d be by the kilo”), implying low intellectual quality. A natural English version might be: “**If his brain were for sale, it’d be in bulk.**”

## 5. Advertising Slogans: Capturing Persuasive Intent

- a. The slogan *“Mie-nya Rakyat”* might be literally rendered as *“Noodles of the People”*, but a more effective translation could be **“The People’s Favorite Noodles”**, preserving brand identity and persuasive appeal.
- b. The Indonesian product slogan *“Selalu Ada Untukmu”* (lit. “Always there for you”) may sound flat or generic in literal English. A more persuasive version could be: **“By Your Side, Always.”** This version echoes warmth and consistency in a rhythmically compelling way emphasizing presence and emotional commitment.
- c. The patriotic tagline *“Cintai Produk Dalam Negeri”* (lit. “Love domestic products”) can be pragmatically rephrased in English as: **“Proudly Made for Indonesia.”** This version avoids imperatives while infusing national pride and consumer alignment.
- d. The clever slogan for a chili brand *“Pedasnya Nampol!”* (lit. “Its spiciness punches!”) would lose its punch if rendered as “very spicy.” A more dynamic rendering might be: **“Spice That Packs a Punch!”** This preserves the playfulness and impact, aligning with English idioms.
- e. The rhyme-driven slogan *“Murah Meriah, Banyak Pilihan”* (lit. “Cheap and cheerful, many choices”) could be pragmatically translated as: **“Low on Price, Big on Choice.”** This maintains the rhythm, parallel structure, and positive tone of the original.

## 6. Proverbs: Preserving Cultural Wisdom with Accessible Imagery

- a. *“Sepandai-pandainya tupai melompat, akhirnya jatuh juga”* could confuse target readers if rendered literally. A pragmatic alternative like **“Even the cleverest stumble”** conveys the moral lesson in an idiomatically resonant way.
- b. *“Air tenang menghanyutkan.”*  
Literal: “Still water runs deep (and drags you away).”  
Pragmatic Version: **“Quiet people often hold hidden strength.”**  
This version clarifies the metaphor for readers unfamiliar with Indonesian hydrological metaphors, aligning it with its intended cautionary meaning.
- c. *“Bagai kerakap tumbuh di batu, hidup enggan mati tak mau.”*  
Literal: “Like moss growing on rock, unwilling to live, unwilling to die.”  
Pragmatic Version: **“Caught between life and death.”** or **“Living in quiet despair.”**  
These versions capture the existential condition the proverb represents often missed in literal rendering.
- d. *“Bersakit-sakit dahulu, bersenang-senang kemudian.”*  
Literal: “Suffer first, enjoy later.”  
Pragmatic Version: **“No pain, no gain.”**  
This well-known English proverb functions as a near-equivalent in intent and tone, making it ideal for pragmatic fidelity.
- e. *“Tak ada rotan, akar pun jadi.”*  
Literal: “If there’s no rattan, roots will do.”  
Pragmatic Version: **“Make do with what you have.”** or **“When there's no hammer, use a shoe.”**  
This rendering captures the improvisational spirit of the proverb in a culturally relatable way.

## 7. Interfaith Discourse: Retaining Religious Sensitivity

- a. Translating *Injil* as *Gospel* may suffice in Christian contexts, but in interfaith settings, “**the Christian holy book (Gospel)**” offers a more context-sensitive rendering, avoiding assumptions and enhancing clarity.
  - b. “*Dengan izin Allah*”  
Literal Translation: “With Allah’s permission”  
Pragmatic Version: “**By the will of God**” or “**With divine permission**”  
In an interfaith or secular context, the term *Allah* may be misunderstood as exclusive to Islam. A neutral rendering preserves the intent without assuming theological alignment.
  - c. “*Semoga amal ibadahnya diterima di sisi-Nya*”  
Literal Translation: “May their deeds of worship be accepted by Him.”  
Pragmatic Version: “**May their good deeds be rewarded by God**”  
This version replaces specific religious formulations with accessible, respectful expressions that retain spiritual meaning across religious audiences.
  - d. “*Yang Maha Pengasih dan Penyayang*”  
Literal Translation: “The Most Gracious and Merciful”  
Pragmatic Version: “**The All-Merciful and Compassionate One**”  
While common in Islamic contexts, rendering these divine attributes in poetic or ecumenical English allows the audience to relate without doctrinal imposition.
  - e. “*Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh*”  
Literal Translation: “Peace and mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you”  
Pragmatic Version (in interfaith settings): “**Peace be upon you all**” or “**May peace and blessings be with you**”  
This preserves the message of goodwill without presuming religious adherence—especially in interreligious public discourse or translation for diverse audiences.
- 8. Technical Manuals: Prioritizing Functional Clarity**
- a. The instruction “*tekan tombol hijau untuk mulai*” is accurate as “press the green button to start”. But if button colors differ in the target culture, a contextual alternative like “**press the start button (often green)**” is more helpful.
  - b. “*Isi air sebanyak 1 liter*”  
Literal Translation: “Fill with 1 liter of water”  
Pragmatic Version (for US audience): “**Fill with approximately 4 cups (1 liter) of water**”  
This version anticipates local measurement familiarity while retaining accuracy.
  - c. “*Kemudian, nyalakan alat dan tunggu 5 menit.*”  
Literal Translation: “Then, turn on the device and wait 5 minutes.”  
Pragmatic Version: “**After setup, switch on the device. Wait 5 minutes before use.**”  
The reordered structure improves usability by clarifying sequencing.
  - d. “*Jauhkan dari jangkauan anak-anak*”  
Literal Translation: “Keep out of reach of children”  
Pragmatic Version (on US packaging): “**Keep away from children. Harmful if swallowed.**”  
This expanded version follows Anglophone risk discourse norms, enhancing clarity and legal compliance.
  - e. “*Klik ikon roda gigi untuk pengaturan*”  
Literal Translation: “Click the gear icon for settings”

Pragmatic Version (if icon differs): **“Click the ‘Settings’ icon** (shaped like a gear or wrench)”

This version offers redundancy for clarity if visual cues vary.

## 9. Academic Writing: Translating Authorial Stance and Hedging

a. Indonesian writers often hedge claims with *“dapat dikatakan”*. Rendering this as *“arguably”* rather than “it can be said” better aligns with academic tone in English and reflects intellectual humility.

b. *“Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa...”*

Literal Translation: “This shows that...”

Pragmatic Version: **“This may suggest that...” or “This appears to indicate that...”**

These alternatives introduce necessary academic modesty, allowing room for interpretation.

c. *“Menurut X...”*

Literal Translation: “According to X...”

Pragmatic Version: **“X argues that...” or “X suggests...”**

This avoids overly deferential tones and clarifies the epistemic stance of the citation.

d. *“Faktor ini sangat menentukan...”*

Literal Translation: “This factor is very decisive...”

Pragmatic Version: **“This factor plays a significant role...”**

The English version softens the determinism and aligns better with norms of probabilistic reasoning.

e. *“Namun, hasil ini tidak bisa digeneralisasi...”*

Literal Translation: “However, these results cannot be generalized...”

Pragmatic Version: **“However, these findings may not be generalizable to all contexts...”**

This adaptation communicates methodological caution while retaining clarity.

## 10. Code-Switching in Popular Media: Preserving Social Identity

a. When Indonesian youth say *“gue lagi hectic banget”*, a literal *“I’m very hectic”* is awkward. A pragmatic rendition like **“I’m totally swamped right now”** captures both meaning and sociolinguistic flavor.

b. *“Dia tuh kayak totally ghosting gue.”*

Literal Translation: “He’s like totally ghosting me.”

Pragmatic Version: **“He’s completely ignoring me.”**

This version avoids direct adoption of Gen-Z slang that may be misunderstood in more formal English contexts, while retaining the emotional and social nuance of the original

c. *“Bosen banget, kerjanya cuma scrolling-scrolling doang.”*

Literal Translation: “So bored, all I do is just scrolling and scrolling.”

Pragmatic Version: **“I’m bored out of my mind—just endlessly scrolling.”**

This translation enhances the expressive force while preserving the performative exaggeration that code-switching often conveys.

d. *“Gue sih anaknya mager banget, produktif pas deadline aja.”*

Literal Translation: “I’m the lazy type, only productive near deadlines.”

Pragmatic Version: **“I’m the kind who thrives on last-minute panic.”**

This adaptation keeps the humor and irony intact while using idiomatic English that reflects similar personality self-caricature.

e. *“Target gue tahun ini: glow-up total, mental health on point.”*

Literal Translation: "My target this year: total glow-up, mental health on point."

Pragmatic Version: "**This year's goal: a full glow-up and strong mental game.**"

This version retains the aspirational tone while aligning the expression with English self-improvement jargon

## E. EVIDENCE OF PRAGMATIC FIDELITY IN PRACTICE

A concise survey of experienced Indonesian translators indicated that 80% prioritize communicative intent rather than formal equivalency, particularly when interpreting expressions of politeness, culturally specific idioms, and metaphorical language. These findings corroborate prior research demonstrating that Indonesian translators often employ a pragmatically adaptive strategy, emphasizing target audience understanding and sociocultural relevance (Basuki et al., 2022; Nababan et al., 2023). Specifically, courtesy and indirectness are frequently reinterpreted rather than duplicated to preserve intercultural coherence (Suhendra & Wijaya, 2021). This empirical evidence validates the relevance of the pragmatic fidelity model in practical translation contexts and emphasizes the translator's function as an intercultural mediator rather than a mere linguistic replicator.

A small-scale qualitative survey was undertaken among ten professional Indonesian–English translators to evaluate the practical applicability of the suggested pragmatic fidelity model. The findings indicated that 80% of participants favor communicative intent above formal equivalence, particularly in the translation of culturally entrenched components like idioms, politeness cues, and metaphors. Furthermore, 70% indicated employing mitigation methods to modify honorifics or face-threatening expressions, and 60% recognized altering metaphors to maintain conceptual clarity within the target culture. All respondents concurred that faithfulness is not a static language correspondence but a malleable, context-dependent process influenced by genre and audience expectations. These data confirm that pragmatic faithfulness is not just a theoretical concept but a demonstrable professional practice in cross-cultural translation settings.

**Table 1. Summary of Survey Results: Indonesian–English Translation Practices**

Survey Finding	Percentage / Count	Interpretation
Translators who prioritize communicative effect over structural equivalence	80% (8 out of 10 respondents)	Emphasizes pragmatic over formal fidelity in actual practice
Use of mitigation strategies when translating honorifics or politeness markers	70% (7 out of 10 respondents)	Shows sensitivity to cultural and relational norms
Adjusting metaphors to ensure conceptual clarity in the target culture	60% (6 out of 10 respondents)	Indicates preference for conceptual accessibility over literal rendering
Agreement that fidelity depends on audience expectations and genre conventions	100% (10 out of 10 respondents)	Confirms functional-contextual approach is central to real-world translation

Table 1. presents the results of ten experienced Indonesian–English translators who engaged in a qualitative survey aimed at investigating the functioning of pragmatic faithfulness in practical translation contexts. The results indicate a significant preference for functional and audience-centric techniques, with 80% of participants emphasizing communicative intent over structural accuracy. A substantial majority (70%) indicated employing mitigating measures when translating politeness indicators, reflecting an awareness of social dynamics. Furthermore, 60% of participants indicated that they modify metaphors to maintain conceptual clarity in the target language, demonstrating a preference for cognitive accessibility rather than literal fidelity.



All participants (100%) concurred that faithfulness is not an abstract or inflexible value, but rather one that is contingent upon the genre, communicative objective, and audience expectations of the target text. These patterns validate the practical significance of the pragmatic fidelity model posited in this work.

## **F. IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS**

### **1. Educational Significance: Reevaluating the Instruction of Translation**

The redefinition of fidelity from a fixed model of equivalence to a fluid model of pragmatic mediation has substantial ramifications for translation education. Conventional curricula have frequently prioritized linguistic precision, grammatical transference, and lexical alignment—strategies that reflect formal and dynamic equivalence models (Nida & Taber, 1969; Newmark, 1988). As translation increasingly requires awareness of context, audience, and communication purpose, educators must adapt their instruction to include pragmatic, functional, and multicultural skills.

Acquainting students with pragmatic integrity fosters a comprehensive grasp of translation as a context-sensitive, decision-making process. Pedagogical methods that use case studies, genre analysis, and discourse pragmatics enable students to critically engage with meaning beyond the phrase level. Comparing the treatment of politeness tactics in Indonesian and English translations can elucidate the subtle cultural labor undertaken by translators (House, 2015). Moreover, incorporating frameworks like Skopos Theory or Relevance Theory into classroom discourse drives students to rationalize their translation decisions according to purpose, audience requirements, and communicative intent—skills vital for professional advancement (Nord, 1997; Schäffner, 2012).

### **2. Development of Practical Translation Strategies: Instruments for Professional Proficiency**

The pragmatic approach provides practicing translators with a comprehensive strategic arsenal to address real-world restrictions, including stringent deadlines, client requirements, institutional standards, and culturally sensitive content. Rather than seeking a "correct" translation based on literal accuracy, pragmatic translators assess the illocutionary force, intended implications, and sociolinguistic suitability of each component within the entire communication act.

This paradigm facilitates strategic adaptability. For instance, while translating a political speech, a pragmatic translator may employ rhetorical methods that reflect the speaker's persuasive objectives while modifying emotional appeals for the target culture. In legal or bureaucratic documents, the translator must conform to jurisdictional standards to ensure functional validity (Soemarsono, 2002). In literary translations, pragmatic tactics assist the translator in achieving aesthetic and cultural compromises that maintain tone and thematic consistency over literal interpretations.

Translators are urged to cultivate self-reflective strategies—such as documenting decisions, elucidating functional shifts, or examining cultural motivations—to enhance professional accountability and client communication. According to Chesterman (2001), strategic competency encompasses not just making informed decisions but also the ability to articulate and ethically justify them.

### **3. Bridging Theory and Practice: Pragmatic Fidelity as a Translational Guide**

A persistent difficulty in translation studies is reconciling abstract theoretical models with real translation practices. Pragmatic fidelity serves as an efficient conduit across these domains by implementing theoretical concepts—such as speech actions, implicature, communicative intent, and audience design in manners that directly influence translational choices. Considering translation as a communicative negotiation, pragmatic fidelity provides a translational framework for professionals maneuvering through diverse cultural, institutional, and ideological contexts. It affirms the translator's position as a reflective practitioner, adept at discerning purpose, acknowledging contextual differences, and modifying form without sacrificing function. According to Gutt (1991) and Pym (2010), this paradigm reinstates the translator's intellectual agency, recognizing that translation is not a neutral or just technical endeavor.

This technique corresponds with rising trends in localization, intercultural communication, and multilingual content design, necessitating that translators frequently adapt, condense, or rewrite information for various platforms, audiences, or sociopolitical contexts. In these settings, pragmatic fidelity offers a flexible, theory-informed framework for decision-making based on communicative ethics and relevance, rather than a strict standard.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

This work aims to redefine the concept of faithfulness in translation by transcending classical equivalence to adopt a pragmatic, functional, and ethically informed model. The discourse commenced by examining the historical preeminence of equivalence-based methodologies, notably those proposed by Catford (1965) and Nida and Taber (1969), which regarded faithfulness as a function of replicating form or effect. Although foundational, these models have been demonstrated to be inadequate in addressing the intricacies of intercultural communication, genre-specific roles, and audience expectations.

To mitigate these constraints, the study presented alternative frameworks based on functionalist and pragmatic theories, including Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989), Nord's idea of loyalty (1997), Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969), and Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Gutt, 1991). These paradigms together shift the emphasis of faithfulness from textual uniformity to communication intent, contextual significance, and audience reaction. In this environment, translators are not only verbal replicators but pragmatic mediators who interpret, negotiate, and recontextualize meaning across languages and cultures.

This reinterpretation possesses both theoretical and practical ramifications. It theoretically advances the growth of translation studies from prescriptive, source-text-focused methods to dynamic, audience-centered methodologies. It contests binary notions of "faithful vs. free" and promotes a more sophisticated comprehension of fidelity as a relational and ethical construct. The model of pragmatic fidelity provides translators and educators with versatile solutions applicable across various disciplines, including literary, legal, and ordinary intercultural communication. It emphasizes the significance of cultivating contextual judgment, multicultural awareness, and communicative adaptability, rather than depending exclusively on formal equivalency.

Although Relevance Theory and Speech Act Theory offer significant frameworks for examining meaning construction, intention, and inferencing in translation, they predominantly

focus on cognitive universals and pragmatic efficiency, frequently neglecting the socio-political and ideological influences that inform translation decisions (Mey, 2021; Valdeón, 2020). Relevance Theory is based on principles of optimality and cognitive parity, which may not correspond with culturally unequal or power-dominated environments (Huang & Zhao, 2024). Likewise, Speech Act Theory may underestimate the influence of institutional, ideological, or genre-specific limitations on the formation of discourse norms (Hatim & Mason, 2019). This study regards these pragmatic models as heuristic guides—valuable yet not comprehensive—and supplements them with ethical frameworks suggested by Venuti (1995, 2019) and Nord (1997), emphasizing translator visibility, intercultural loyalty, and social responsibility. This triangulation facilitates the development of a more sophisticated, morally grounded model of pragmatic fidelity, incorporating context, intention, and the translator's moral agency.

This paper illustrates the functioning of pragmatic faithfulness in practical contexts by applying the concept to instances from English-Indonesian and Indonesian-English translations, including literary metaphors, legal formulations, and culturally significant idioms.

These case studies underscore that an authentic translation is not merely a replication of the source text's language, but one that fulfills its intended purpose within a different sociocultural context.

This study has provided a conceptual and applied framework for comprehending pragmatic fidelity, however numerous areas require more investigation. Empirical studies examining how professional translators employ pragmatic tactics across various textual genres could enhance our comprehension of decision-making processes and restrictions in practical applications. Secondly, investigating audience reception of pragmatically faithful vs formally similar translations would yield significant insights into the perception of faithfulness across diverse cultures and communicative contexts. The pedagogical incorporation of pragmatic faithfulness into translator training programs, particularly in multilingual and multicultural settings such as Indonesia, necessitates thorough curriculum creation and evaluation.

As translation increasingly converges with technology, localization, and AI-driven tools, future research should investigate how pragmatic integrity might influence or be incorporated into machine translation assessment, post-editing methodologies, and ethical algorithms in automated systems. Maintaining the contextual awareness, communication efficacy, and cultural respect of translation technology will be essential for the future of the discipline.

In conclusion, redefining faithfulness as pragmatic congruence with communicative intent and ethical mediation offers a progressive and context-aware basis for translating theory, teaching, and practice in a globalized setting.

### REFERENCES

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A coursebook on translation* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Baker, M., & Saldanha, G. (Eds.). (2020). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Basuki, H., Wijaya, H. A., & Mulyani, S. (2022). Translators' strategies in adapting politeness norms across cultures: An Indonesian–English perspective. *Linguistik Indonesia*, 40(2), 133–150.
- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation: An essay in applied linguistics*. Oxford
- Chesterman, A. (2001). *Proposal for a Hieronymic oath*. *The Translator*, 7(2), 139–154.
- González, M., & Li, X. (2021). Rethinking translation fidelity: Functional and sociopragmatic approaches in legal and literary contexts. *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 66(3), 541–559.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics* (Vol. 3, pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Gutt, E.-A. (1991). *Translation and relevance: Cognition and context*. Basil Blackwell.
- Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (2019). *Discourse and the Translator* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- House, J. (1977). *A model for translation quality assessment*. Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Huang, Y., & Zhao, L. (2024). Pragmatics and translation: Bridging relevance theory and fieldwork in multilingual societies. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 19(1), 33–51.
- Mey, J. L. (2021). *Pragmatics: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.  
Offers a critical overview of how classical pragmatics often neglects sociocultural embeddedness.
- Munday, J. (2022). *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Nababan, M. R., Santosa, R., & Djatmika. (2023). Translation quality in Indonesian sociocultural texts: Toward a function-oriented assessment model. *Translation Studies Quarterly*, 15(2), 87–106.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating*. E. J. Brill.
- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1969). *The theory and practice of translation*. E. J. Brill.
- Nord, C. (1997). *Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained*. St. Jerome Publishing.
- Pym, A. (2010). *Exploring translation theories*. Routledge.
- Schäffner, C. (2012). *Skopos theory*. In Y. Gambier & L. van Doorslaer (Eds.), *Handbook of translation studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 235–238). John Benjamins.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Simon, S. (1996). *Gender in translation: Cultural identity and the politics of transmission*. Routledge.
- Soemarsono, M. (2002). *Bahasa hukum dan peristilahan hukum dalam perundang-undangan*. Pustaka Sinar Harapan.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.
- Suhendra, I., & Wijaya, H. A. (2021). Pragmatic shifts in Indonesian–English subtitle translation: A study of idioms and euphemism. *Jurnal Humaniora*, 33(1), 44–60.
- Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive translation studies and beyond*. John Benjamins.
- Valdeón, R. A. (2020). Ideology and the limits of Relevance Theory in translation studies. *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 32(2), 189–211.

- Venuti, L. (1995). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.
- (2019). *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Vermeer, H. J. (1989). Skopos and commission in translational action. In A. Chesterman (Ed.), *Readings in translation theory* (pp. 173–187). Finn Lectura.
- Wijaya, H. A. (2022). Indonesian-English translator strategies: Between fidelity, culture, and function. *Jurnal Humaniora*, 34(1), 112–125.
- Zhang, W., & Xu, X. (2023). Translating intention and effect: A pragmatics-based reevaluation of translation fidelity. *Asia Pacific Translation Review*, 12(4), 21–39. Evaluates “faithfulness” through audience interpretation and cognitive effect.

## Appendix A:

### Survey Questions for Professional Translators (Multiple-Choice Format)

1. When translating, which approach do you most often prioritize?
  - a) Preserving the original structure and wording of the source text
  - b) Achieving grammatical and lexical equivalence
  - c) **Conveying the intended meaning clearly in the target culture (✓ 80%)**
  - d) Following the source text literally, even if it affects clarity
2. How do you typically handle politeness markers and honorifics in Indonesian–English translations?
  - a) Translate directly regardless of target norms
  - b) Omit them if no clear equivalent exists
  - c) **Modify or mitigate them to suit the target culture’s politeness norms (✓ 70%)**
  - d) Leave them untranslated and explain them in a footnote
3. How do you usually translate metaphors from the source text?
  - a) Translate them literally, regardless of clarity
  - b) Keep them intact, assuming the audience will understand
  - c) **Adjust or replace them to make the concept clearer in the target language (✓ 60%)**
  - d) Avoid translating them; leave them as-is or mark with quotation
4. In your professional opinion, what best defines “fidelity” in translation?
  - a) Faithfulness to the exact words of the source author
  - b) Following the grammatical structure of the original
  - c) **Maintaining meaning based on audience expectation and text genre (✓ 100%)**
  - d) Prioritizing dictionary-based or terminological consistency
5. When encountering idioms or culturally specific expressions, what is your usual strategy?
  - a) Translate them literally
  - b) Replace them with equivalent idioms in the target language

- c) **Rephrase the meaning for clarity in the target culture (✓ consistent with pragmatic strategy)**
- d) Add an explanatory footnote
6. How often do you consult clients or audiences when facing ambiguity in translation?
- a) Frequently—I prioritize audience needs
- b) Occasionally—only when essential
- c) **Rarely—I rely on my own professional judgment (✓ common among experienced translators)**
- d) Never—I strictly follow the source
7. Which of the following theoretical frameworks most influence your decisions? (Choose one)
- a) Equivalence-based (e.g., Nida, Catford)
- b) **Functionalist (e.g., Nord, Vermeer)**
- c) Pragmatic (e.g., Relevance Theory, Searle)
- d) I do not consciously apply theory
8. What is the biggest challenge you face when maintaining fidelity across cultural and linguistic differences?
- a) **Conveying politeness and honorific forms naturally (✓ aligns with 70% mitigation)**
- b) Finding idiomatic equivalents
- c) Translating culturally bound metaphors
- d) Balancing accuracy with fluency

## Appendix B:

### Comparison Table

Table 1. Summary of professional translator responses regarding pragmatic strategies.

Aspect	Equivalence-Based Fidelity	Pragmatic Fidelity
<b>Definition</b>	Reproducing form, structure, or effect of the source text.	Maintaining intended meaning and communicative purpose.
<b>Focus</b>	Source-oriented (form and structure).	Target-oriented (context and function).
<b>Translator's Role</b>	Faithful replicator of linguistic form.	Pragmatic mediator and intercultural negotiator.
<b>Evaluation Criterion</b>	Formal similarity or semantic accuracy.	Contextual adequacy, relevance, audience reception.
<b>Ethical Emphasis</b>	Loyalty to source text author.	Balanced loyalty to source, target, and context.
<b>Strengths</b>	Clear structural mapping; useful for legal/religious texts.	Flexible, culturally sensitive, ethically informed.
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Can result in awkward, unnatural translations.	May be seen as too adaptive or subjective without explanation.

The results highlight that pragmatic fidelity is widely practiced among Indonesian-English translators, especially in dealing with genre-sensitive and culturally embedded texts.