



TRANSLATION STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPLES IN RENDERING ENGLISH GERUND PHRASES INTO INDONESIAN: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Gerund constructions present a significant challenge in English-Indonesian translation because Indonesian does not possess an equivalent grammatical system. This study explores how English gerund phrases are translated into Indonesian in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Using a descriptive analytical approach, 25 instances were selected from 75 identified cases based on their level of complexity. The findings indicate that semantic strategies are dominant, accounting for 64% of the data, consisting of expansion (36%) and compression (28%). Meanwhile, syntactic strategies account for 36%, including literal translation (16%), unit shift (16%), and calque (4%). All analyzed data consistently apply a meaning-oriented approach, showing a strong tendency to prioritize meaning over structural form. These results demonstrate that structural differences between English and Indonesian encourage translators to focus on conveying meaning rather than preserving grammatical form when translating gerund constructions. The study highlights the importance of meaning-based translation in achieving natural and accurate results, with implications for translation practice and teaching.

Keywords: *gerund phrases, translation strategies, English-Indonesian, descriptive analytical*

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a cross-linguistic activity that involves transferring meaning from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) while maintaining communicative equivalence (Rouhani & Modarresi, 2023; Cui, 2025; Bielykh & Charikova, 2024). One of the most complex grammatical issues in English-Indonesian translation concerns gerund phrases verbal nouns formed by adding the suffix *-ing* to a verb (Karanjakwut, 2024; Torky & Ahmed, 2025). This difficulty arises from a fundamental typological disparity, as Indonesian does not have a grammatical

system that directly corresponds to the English gerund.

A gerund is understood as a verb form ending in *-ing* that functions nominally, occupying positions such as subject, object, or complement within a sentence (Wiliana & Djajanegara, 2020; Putri et al., 2023; Phetsangkhad & Prakai, 2022). Examples such as *Eating bread is bad for health* and *Filing papers can give you a paper cut* illustrate this dual verbal-nominal nature. In Indonesian, nominalization is typically achieved through affixation patterns such as *me-*, *pe-*, or *ke-an*. However, these forms differ structurally and functionally from

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English gerund constructions, compelling translators to adopt strategic solutions rather than relying on direct structural equivalence.

The data for this study are drawn from *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* by Muhammad Iqbal and its Indonesian translation by Hawasi (2016). As a philosophical work characterized by a high frequency of abstract nominal constructions, the text provides a fertile ground for examining translation behavior. Previous research has consistently demonstrated the predominance of meaning-oriented strategies in English–Indonesian translation, particularly in cases where structural correspondence is absent (Alfarisy, 2022; Zein et al., 2020). This study builds on those insights by focusing specifically on a philosophical corpus.

Accordingly, this research seeks to: (1) identify and categorize instances of gerund phrases in the source text; (2) analyze the translation strategies employed in rendering these forms into Indonesian; and (3) examine the underlying principles guiding each translational decision.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chesterman (2016) formulates an extensive framework of 30 translation strategies, systematically grouped into three overarching categories. Syntactic strategies focus on structural modification, including procedures such as Literal translation, Calque, and Unit Shift (Kandemirci et al., 2025). Semantic strategies, on the other hand, operate at the level of meaning (Adika & Budiarsana, 2023; Afisi, 2020), with Distribution Change playing a central role; this includes Expansion, where meaning is spread across additional lexical items, and Compression, where it is condensed into fewer words. Pragmatic strategies address aspects of communicative purpose and contextual adaptation (Nisak & Ariyanti, 2021; Saptiany & Prabowo, 2024).

In parallel, Duff (1990) outlines six core principles that guide translation decisions: Meaning, Form, Register, Source Language Influence, Style/Clarity, and Idiom. Among these, the Meaning principle is paramount, requiring that the translation convey the original message accurately without arbitrary addition or omission. This principle becomes especially crucial when the target language lacks direct structural equivalents for specific grammatical forms in the source language.

In English, gerund phrases function syntactically as nouns serving as subjects, objects, or complements while retaining verbal characteristics such as the ability to take objects, accept adverbial modification, and express temporal nuances. Indonesian, however, does not exhibit an equivalent grammatical category. Although nominalization can be achieved through affixation patterns such as *pe-* or *ke-an*, these forms differ both structurally and functionally from English gerunds. As a result, translation requires a process of recategorization to accommodate these typological differences (Hatim & Munday, 2019; Robinson, 2019; Richards, 2021).

Empirical studies have consistently shown that Distribution Change tends to dominate in the translation of structurally non-equivalent forms between English and Indonesian. Findings indicate that semantic strategies are frequently prioritized, particularly in contexts where structural correspondence is unattainable. Moreover, structural disparity has been identified as a key factor influencing the selection of translation strategies, especially in both literary and academic translation contexts.

3. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive analytical research design, which systematically describes phenomena in natural settings without variable manipulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023;

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Tisdell et al., 2025; Patton, 2020). Data consist of Muhammad Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (2011) and its Indonesian translation by Hawasi (2016), selected for high gerund phrase density and philosophical discourse complexity (Fauzi, 2022).

Data collection was carried out in three main stages (Mauliddiyah, 2021; Herdayati & Syahril, 2019; Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024). First, identification involved systematically locating and marking all *-ing* forms functioning as nouns in the source text. Second, alignment was conducted by pairing each identified gerund phrase with its corresponding translation in Indonesian. Third, purposive sampling was applied to select 25 representative data points from a total of 75 instances, based on the level of translational complexity and variation in strategy use. This sample size aligns with common practice in qualitative translation studies (Ahmed, 2024).

Each selected datum was then examined through four analytical steps: (1) presenting the source text (ST) alongside the target text (TT), (2) providing an explanation of the relationship between the two, (3) determining the underlying translation principle guiding the decision, and (4) identifying the translation strategy employed, supported by relevant theoretical considerations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Distribution of Translation Strategies

Analysis of 25 purposively selected data reveals a clear dominance of semantic over syntactic strategies. Table 1 presents the complete distribution, showing Distribution Change as the predominant strategy class (64%, n=16), consistent with prior studies (Simbolon, 2022; Apriyanti & Setyana, 2021).

Table 1. Distribution of Translation Strategies in Gerund Phrase Rendering (n=25)

No.	Meta-Category	Sub-Strategy	Freq. (n)	% Total	Rank
1	Semantic	Distr. Change - Expansion	9	36.0%	1st
		Distr. Change - Compression	7	28.0%	2nd
	Sub-total Semantic: Distribution Change		16	64.0%	-
2	Syntactic	Literal	4	16.0%	3rd
		Unit Shift	4	16.0%	3rd
		Calque	1	4.0%	5th
TOTAL		25 data analyzed	25	100%	

(Source: Primary data analysis, Lestiani (2025). Adapted from Chesterman (2016).)

Distribution Change represents the majority of translation solutions, accounting for 64% (n=16), consisting of Expansion (36%, n=9) and Compression (28%, n=7). This strategy involves redistributing the same semantic content across either a greater number of lexical items (expansion) or fewer elements (compression). Its predominance highlights the structural differences between English gerund constructions and Indonesian grammatical patterns.

Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of strategies employed. Expansion appears more frequently than Compression, indicating that

Indonesian often requires additional lexical elements to fully convey meanings that are more compactly expressed through English gerund forms. For instance, the phrase *Making things better* (three words) is rendered as *Membuat segalanya lebih baik* (four words) in Indonesian, demonstrating the need for expanded expression to maintain semantic clarity.

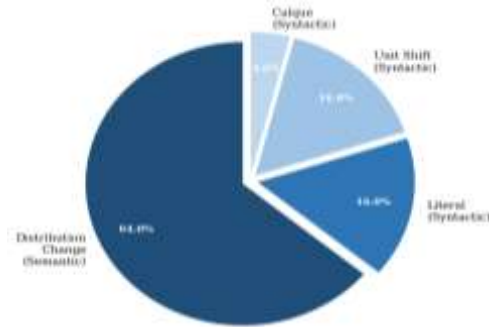


Figure 1. Proportional distribution of translation strategies applied in gerund phrase rendering (n=25)

Syntactic strategies account for 36% (n=9): Literal translation (n=4, 16%), Unit Shift (n=4, 16%), and Calque (n=1, 4%). Unit Shift (Chesterman, 2016, G4) involves a change in grammatical rank a phrase-level English gerund becomes a clause-level Indonesian structure, or shifts from nominal to verbal category. Calque is the rarest strategy, reflecting the absence of productive

-ing nominalization in Indonesian (Yesi et al., 2021).

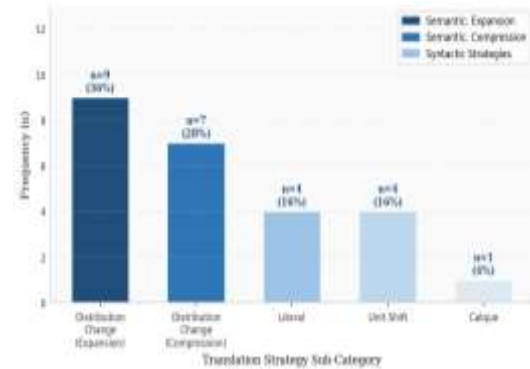


Figure 2. Frequency of translation strategy sub-categories in gerund phrase rendering (n=25)

4.2 Application of Translation Principles

Table 2 presents the distribution of translation principles across the 25 data points, referencing Duff's (1990) six-principle framework.

Table 2. Distribution of Translation Principles (Duff, 1990) Applied (n=25)

No.	Principle (Duff, 1990)	Core Definition	n Applied	%
1	Meaning	Accurate semantic equivalence	25	100%
2	Form	Structural correspondence	0	0%
3	Register	Style/register appropriateness	0	0%
4	SL Influence	Avoiding source language interference	0	0%
5-6	Style/Clarity & Idiom	Naturalness and idiomatic equivalence	0	0%
TOTAL			25	100%
			Meaning principle applied to all 25 data	

(Source: Primary data analysis, Lestiani (2025). Framework from Duff (1990).)

All 25 data exclusively apply the Meaning principle (100%), with zero application of the remaining five principles. This confirms systematic translator prioritization of semantic equivalence over structural fidelity a linguistically principled response to the absence of gerund morphology in Indonesian. This finding is dynamic equivalence principle and

observation that translation norms adapt to typological distance between language pairs (Munday et al., 2022).

4.3 Representative Data Analysis

Table 3 presents eight representative data points illustrating strategy range across all identified categories.

Table 3. Representative Sample of Gerund Phrase Translation Analysis (n=8 of 25)

D	Strategy	Source Text	Target Text	Principle
D1	DC (Compress.)	The teaching of the Quran...	Ajaran Al-Quran...	Meaning

D2	Calque	In his Logic	<i>Dalam Logikanya</i>	Meaning
D3	Unit Shift	The one is theory; the other is living	<i>Yang pertama merupakan teori...</i>	Meaning
D5	DC (Expansion)	The essence of Tawhid, as a working idea...	<i>Esensi tauhid sebagai ide yang bekerja...</i>	Meaning
D9	Literal	Logical interpretation	<i>Interpretasi logis</i>	Meaning
D24	DC (Expansion)	Making things better is something he can do	<i>Membuat segalanya lebih baik...</i>	Meaning
D25	DC (Compress.)	Exuberant of learning	<i>Pembelajaran menyenangkan</i>	Meaning

(Source: Analyzed by Lestiani (2025). DC=Distribution Change.)

The three strategy types show distinct structural patterns: Compression reduces word count (D1: Exuberant of learning → Pembelajaran menyenangkan; ST=3, TT=2 words); Literal maintains equivalence (D9: Logical interpretation → Interpretasi logis; ST=TT=2 words); and Expansion adds lexical material (D24: Making things better → Membuat segalanya lebih baik; ST=3,

TT=4 words). Despite structural variation, the Meaning principle governs all cases variability lies in form, not semantic intent (Valdez, 2017).

4.4 Comparison with Prior Studies

Table 4 establishes convergent validity by comparing findings with four recent independent studies.

Table 4. Comparison of Current Study with Prior Translation Strategy Research (2021–2025)

Study	Corpus	Framework	Dominant Strategy	Principle
Simbolon (2022)	English-Indonesian lit.	Chesterman (2016)	Distribution Change	Meaning
Apriyanti & Setyana (2021)	Indonesian lit. novel	Chesterman (2016)	Semantic (60%)	Meaning
Sembiring et al. (2025)	Jakarta Post editorials	Molina & Albir (2002)	Literal & Amplification	Meaning
Yesi et al. (2021)	Rainbow Troops (bilingual)	Vinay & Darbelnet	Modulation & Transposition	Meaning
Current Study	Philosophical: Iqbal/Hawasi	Chesterman+Duff	DC 64% (Semantic)	Meaning 100%

(Source: Compiled from Simbolon (2022); Apriyanti & Setyana (2021); Sembiring et al. (2025); Yesi et al. (2021).)

Table 4 demonstrates convergent validity: Distribution Change consistently dominates across all studies applying framework to English-Indonesian translation (Mahesti et al., 2025). The current study's 64% prevalence exceeds Apriyanti and Setyana's (2021) 60% for literary text, reflecting greater density of abstract nominalized constructions in philosophical discourse. The exclusive Meaning principle application is confirmed across all five studies, establishing it as the operative norm for English-Indonesian

translation when structural equivalence is unavailable (Munday et al., 2022; Nida & Taber, 2003).

4.5 Pedagogical Implications

The findings carry direct implications for translation pedagogy in Indonesian higher education. The dominance of Distribution Change and the exclusive Meaning principle application indicate that students require explicit instruction in: (1) identifying English grammatical categories absent in Indonesian particularly gerunds and (2) principled

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selection among expansion, compression, and unit shift strategies based on TL pragmatic requirements (Sukmawati et al., 2021; Umyati et al., 2022). Training modules should incorporate authentic English-Indonesian bilingual corpora with high gerund density and require systematic strategy classification using Chesterman's taxonomy.

Discussion

This study analyzed translation strategies and principles applied in rendering 25 English gerund phrases from Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* into Indonesian (Hawasi, 2016). Three principal conclusions emerge.

First, semantic strategy specifically Distribution Change is the dominant translation strategy (64%, $n=16$). Expansion (36%, $n=9$) exceeds Compression (28%, $n=7$), reflecting the tendency to add lexical material for semantic completeness when transferring compact English gerund constructions. This dominance is structurally motivated by the absence of gerund morphology in Indonesian, consistent with Simbolon (2022) and Sembiring et al. (2025).

Second, syntactic strategies Literal (16%), Unit Shift (16%), and Calque (4%) collectively account for 36% of solutions, indicating formal correspondence remains achievable in a minority of cases where Indonesian structural patterns permit limited direct transfer (Yesi et al., 2021).

Third, all 25 data apply exclusively the Meaning principle (Duff, 1990), confirming systematic semantic equivalence prioritization over structural fidelity. This is a linguistically principled response to English-Indonesian typological distance, corroborated by convergent findings in four recent independent studies (Apriyanti & Setyana, 2021; Simbolon, 2022; Sembiring et al., 2025; Yesi et al., 2021).

Future research should expand the corpus to multiple translators and text types to establish a more generalizable typology. Mixed-method approaches incorporating retrospective verbal protocols from professional translators could illuminate the cognitive processes underlying observed strategic patterns (Creswell & Clark, 2022; Thren, 2025). Longitudinal studies examining whether Distribution Change dominance persists across translator expertise levels would further enrich the evidence base for translation pedagogy in Indonesia.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the translation of English gerund phrases into Indonesian is predominantly governed by semantic strategies, with Distribution Change emerging as the most frequently applied approach. The preference for Expansion over Compression indicates a consistent need to redistribute meaning across additional lexical elements in order to achieve clarity and naturalness in Indonesian. While syntactic strategies such as Literal translation and Unit Shift are still utilized, their occurrence is limited to cases where structural correspondence is partially possible. Overall, the findings confirm that the absence of a gerund system in Indonesian necessitates a meaning-oriented translation approach, with all data consistently reflecting prioritization of semantic equivalence over formal structure.

These findings have important implications for translation pedagogy and practice. First, they highlight the need for explicit instruction on handling structurally non-equivalent grammatical forms, particularly gerunds, in English-Indonesian translation. Second, translation training should emphasize strategic competence, especially in applying Expansion, Compression, and Unit Shift based on contextual and pragmatic considerations.

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Third, the consistent application of the Meaning principle suggests that translators must develop sensitivity to semantic accuracy and natural expression rather than relying on direct structural transfer. Incorporating authentic bilingual corpora and systematic strategy analysis into teaching practices would further enhance learners' translation skills.

Future studies are recommended to broaden the scope of analysis by including multiple translators and diverse text genres to enhance generalizability. Employing mixed-method approaches, such as integrating qualitative textual analysis with translator interviews or think-aloud protocols, could provide deeper insight into the cognitive processes underlying strategy selection. Additionally, longitudinal research examining how translation strategies evolve across different levels of translator expertise would contribute valuable knowledge to the development of more effective translation pedagogy in the Indonesian context.

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