

Orthographic Traces of Phonetic Adaptation in K-Pop Fan Translations on Social Media X

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ABSTRACT

This study examines orthographic traces of phonetic adaptation in the fan translation of utterances by Carmen, an Indonesian member of the K-Pop group Hearts2Hearts, by the @translatingH2H account on the X platform. The study aims to identify patterns of adaptation in translating Indonesian utterances into English and analyze their implications for translation equivalence. This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-comparative methods. The results reveal three categories: substitution, letter repetition, and orthographic or stylistic retention. Substitution involves marked target spellings that may correspond to sound-related features and reproduce aspects of the source expressions marked linguistic style, while letter repetition may represent emphasis, affect, or possible sound-related lengthening through written repetition. Orthographic or stylistic retention preserves source forms with cultural, expressive, stylistic, or digital writing functions. These findings suggest that preserving marked forms may help maintain communicative and stylistic effects that could be reduced through normalization, although the data do not establish a consistent prioritization of pragmatic equivalence. Thus, adaptation in the selected data involves the negotiation of linguistic, stylistic, cultural, and pragmatic features across languages, while reflecting language contact and digital multilingual practices in K-Pop fan communities.

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1. Introduction

The emergence of digital platforms and social media has fundamentally transformed the practices and conditions under which translation takes place, giving rise to new forms of non-professional translation that operate outside institutional frameworks yet carry significant cultural weight (Kotze, 2024). Within this landscape, the use of Indonesian by K-Pop idols through distinctive speech styles, including stylistically marked expressions, creative lexical formations, and phonetic play and the use of terms of address that signal closeness with fans, demonstrates that translation is no longer limited to the transfer of lexical meaning alone but also involves phonetic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions (Locher & Sidiropoulou, 2021). This phenomenon is particularly salient in the activities of fan translation accounts on social media, where translators are expected not merely to convey propositional content but to represent the expressive and identity-laden dimensions of the source speaker's utterances. This can be observed in the activities of @translatingH2H on X, an account that provides English translations of content produced by Carmen and other Hearts2Hearts members for a global audience. In this context, fan translators do not merely convey semantic content but are also expected to represent the distinctive linguistic and stylistic characteristic of the source speaker as represented in written form (Cruz et al., 2021). As a result, the expressive nuances embedded in the speaker's linguistic identity can be preserved and made accessible to target readers who may not share the original linguistic or cultural background,

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thereby sustaining the emotional bond between idol and fan across language barriers (Yoon, 2023). Because the translations examined in this study circulate as written social-media posts rather than audio recordings, such features are examined through their orthographic representations in the target text (TT).

Translation is essentially the process of transferring a text from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL), yet this definition encompasses a wide range of practices that differ significantly in their priorities, constraints, and methods. This study is based on three complementary frameworks, as the phenomenon of phonetic adaptation in fan translation requires examination at the conceptual, operational, and evaluative levels simultaneously. At the conceptual level, Newmark (1988) defines translation as the effort to convey the meaning of a text into another language in a way that most closely approximates naturalness, both in terms of meaning and style, and specifically identifies adaptation as the freest form of translation, in which the translator replaces cultural or linguistic elements of the SL with functionally equivalent elements. This framework was chosen over the formal equivalence approach because its focus on translator freedom aligns with the nature of fan translation, which is not bound by professional translation conventions; thus, patterns of phonetic adaptation as represented orthographically in the written data can be interpreted as functional choices rather than deviations. At the operational level, Molina & Hurtado Albir's (2002) classification of translation techniques is used to identify translation choices at the concrete text-unit level, with adaptation defined as the technique of replacing cultural elements of the SL with equivalent elements in the TL; this classification provides an operational basis for identifying the translation procedures observed in the source–target pairs, while the specific patterns found in the data are established through the analysis itself. At the evaluative level, Baker's (2018) concept of pragmatic equivalence, that is the translation's ability to convey a communicative effect equivalent to that of the source text (ST), is used to assess the implications of each adaptation pattern identified through the two previous frameworks. Together, these three elements form the research analysis framework, from the identification of forms to the assessment of their implications. The phonetic dimension is understood here as concerning language sounds that can be described in phonetic terms (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014). However, because the present study does not analyze recorded speech, phonetic adaptation is not treated as a direct measurement of pronunciation. Rather, in this study, sound-related features insofar as they may be represented or suggested through written forms in the TT. The written forms analyzed in this study are therefore treated as orthographic traces that may be compatible with phonetic adaptation rather than as direct evidence of phonetic realization.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that phonetic adaptation is not the only possible explanation for marked forms appearing in digital text. Written variation on social media can also arise from orthographic imitation, platform-driven abbreviation conventions, playful spelling innovation, or other community-specific writing practices that may carry social or stylistic meanings independently of phonetic motivation (Busch, 2021). Busch (2021) demonstrates that spelling variation in digital written communication can function as a form of social indexicality, whereby marked forms may signal register stance, community membership, or other socially meaningful distinctions. Rather than treating phonetic adaptation as the default explanation for every non-standard spelling in the data, this study therefore considers alternative orthographic and digital explanations before interpreting a form as an orthographic trace of phonetic adaptation. The complementary application of Newmark's (1988), Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002), and Baker's (2018) framework is used to examine the translation procedure, the form of the adaptation, and its pragmatic implications, respectively. This approach establishes an analytical hierarchy in which the translation procedure is identified first, the observable orthographic form is described, possible sound-related motivations are considered where relevant, and pragmatic or social functions are examined subsequently. This approach allows the analysis to distinguish phonetic adaptation from forms that are better explained by orthographic convention, digital stylization, or other socially motivated writing practices.

Previous studies on fan translation and translation in digital media have not specifically highlighted the aspect of phonetic adaptation in the idiosyncratic speech of individual speakers, particularly in the context of translation from Indonesian to English. Previous studies on this topic can be categorized into four tendencies. First, studies focusing on fan translation practices within the K-Pop ecosystem (Cruz et al., 2021; Lu, 2023; Sakuma, 2023; Yoon, 2023; Zhang & Vazquez-Calvo, 2022). Cruz et al. (2021) demonstrated that fan translation is a crucial node in the globalization of K-Pop

culture, in which fans act as cultural intermediaries who not only transfer meaning but actively negotiate cultural distance and construct transnational fan identities. Yoon (2023) extended this by theorizing "translational audiences" as active co-producers of meaning who sustain affective connections with idols across language boundaries, while Zhang & Vazquez-Calvo (2022) showed that K-Pop fan communities engage in creative translanguaging practices that blur the boundaries between languages. However, these studies do not examine how specific sound-related or stylistically marked features associated with an individual speaker are represented in translation, nor do they address the Indonesian-English language pair. Second, studies examining non-professional translation on social media and digital platforms (Kalman & Gergle, 2014; Kotze, 2024; Mao et al., 2024; Messerli & Locher, 2021; Shafirova et al., 2020; Yahya, 2024). Kalman & Gergle (2014) provided experimental evidence that letter repetition in computer-mediated communication functions as a paralinguistic signal for affective states, demonstrating how written forms can represent features associated with spoken interaction, while Messerli & Locher (2021) demonstrated that affective expressions in Korean entertainment fandom are often retained in their original form precisely to build emotional closeness, yet neither study examines the orthographic representation of phonetic features in fan translation as the primary object of analysis. Third, digital sociolinguistic research on identity and spelling variation has shown that non-standard orthography in online interaction is not incidental but is metapragmatically ordered by social actors to index register, community membership, and interpretive context (Busch, 2021). Within specifically Indonesian K-Pop fan communities, recent work has documented how fans construct identity and affiliation through multilingual and creative linguistic practices on X/Twitter (Azzahrah et al., 2022; Pratama, 2026), underscoring that such practices can function as community-specific stylistic resources rather than merely as linguistic errors or deviations. These studies suggest that linguistic forms in K-Pop digital fandom may simultaneously carry linguistic, social, and affective meanings. Fourth, studies focusing on techniques and methods for translating informal texts (Ghufron et al., 2022; Naqiyya et al., 2024; Panjaitan & Patria, 2024; Sari & Gusthini, 2023; Zewitra et al., 2023), which have collectively addressed lexical and semantic strategies in digital and informal contexts but have given comparatively little attention to the orthographic representation of phonetic features in written translation. Taken together, these four strands of research establish the relevance of loanword adaptation, digital writing practices, K-Pop fandom, and fan translation to the present study. However, previous studies have rarely examined how phonetic or sound-related features associated with an individual speaker are represented through written fan translation, particularly when Indonesian utterances are translated into English for international audiences. This gap is important because written forms on social media may simultaneously reflect linguistic adaptation, orthographic stylization, digital conventions, and identity-related meanings. Therefore, examining Carmen's utterances and their English translations provides an opportunity to investigate how fan translators negotiate linguistic form, speaker-specific style, and pragmatic meaning within multilingual digital communication.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the orthographic representation of marked forms associated with an individual speaker, rather than on the language variations of the fandom community in general, as well as in its application to the Indonesian-English language pair, which has not been extensively addressed in previous studies on K-Pop fan translation, and in its integration of translation-equivalence theory with a digital-sociolinguistic perspective on socially meaningful orthographic variation. To address this research gap, this study aims to identify marked orthographic representation associated with possible sound-related adaptation employed by the fan translation account @translatingH2H in translating Carmen's Indonesian utterances into English on the social media platform X, as well as to examine the implications of these marked forms for translation equivalence in relation to possible sound-related representation, pragmatic effect, and speaker-associated linguistic style. By focusing on an individual idol's speaker-associated linguistic style rather than fandom language variation as a whole, this study provides a more fine-grained analysis of marked written forms in fan translation. The study argues that, when supported by textual and contextual evidence, marked written forms in fan translation can function as orthographic traces compatible with possible sound related adaptation rather than merely as arbitrary non-standard spellings. Such adaptations can serve as purposeful translation choices through which sound-related, stylistic, affective, and pragmatic features of the source expressions are represented for a transnational fan audience.

2. Methods

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive-comparative method to examine the orthographic representation of phonetic adaptation in fan translation practices on social media. A qualitative approach was used because this study focuses on an in-depth analysis of linguistic phenomena, particularly the relationship between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) in terms of form, meaning, and function. The @translatingH2H account was selected because it consistently provides English translations of Hearts2Hearts members' content for an international audience, making it a suitable source for investigating marked written forms and their possible sound-related, stylistic, and pragmatic functions in non-professional fan translation. The data were treated as naturally occurring digital discourse; however, the written forms are not assumed to be direct or transparent records of spontaneous speech. Social media writing may be stylized, performative, and audience-oriented, and these characteristics may influence spelling and other linguistic choices. Therefore, the analysis focuses on how possible sound-related features are represented through orthographic forms rather than treating the data as direct evidence of pronunciation.

The data consisted of posts published by the @translatingH2H account on the X platform that contained Carmen's Indonesian utterances and their corresponding English translations. Data were collected through documentation by using the search feature on X with the hashtag #CARMEN as the primary search keyword within the period from March 2025 to April 2026. The search initially retrieved 35 posts, which were screened for the presence of Carmen's Indonesian utterances and corresponding English translations. After screening, seven utterances were selected for detailed analysis. The data selection was based on three criteria: (1) the posts contained utterances in Indonesian; (2) the utterances exhibited marked written forms that showed an identifiable relationship between the source and target forms and could therefore be examined for possible sound-related correspondence letter repetition, or marked-form retention; and (3) they were accompanied by English translations. For substitution, a form was considered potentially sound-related when a salient change in the target spelling could be compared with a corresponding segment or sound-related feature in the source form. For letter repetition, the repeated letters had to constitute a marked modification of the target form rather than ordinary spelling. Retained forms were classified separately when the source form was preserved in the target text and its function could be examined as cultural, stylistic, affective, or digital. Forms that could be explained solely by ordinary spelling variation, typographical choices, abbreviation, or other digital writing conventions without a relevant source-target relationship or contextual motivation were excluded from analysis. A total of seven utterances met all selection criteria and were included in the analysis. The final dataset consists of seven utterances from a single fan translation account, comprising two cases of substitution, two cases of letter repetition/gemination, and three cases of orthographic/stylistic retention. Given the small and account-specific dataset, these categories are treated as descriptive analytical categories within the selected data rather than as a general typology of adaptation in K-Pop fan translation.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the analysis used the translational equivalence method to identify the relations between the ST and the TT. Second, a descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the orthographic form, meaning, and function of the utterances in both languages. Third, a comparative analysis was conducted by comparing the ST and the TT to determine the existence of equivalence and correspondence in terms of form, meaning, and function (Sajarwa, 2021, as cited in Wijana et al., 2021). Fourth, the results of this comparison were further analyzed using an interpretive method. The interpretive method was used to reveal meaning and interpret the facts contained in the data, thereby providing a more in-depth explanation of the phenomenon of translation (Sajarwa, 2021, as cited in Wijana et al., 2021). Because the data consists of written social media posts rather than audio recordings, phonetic adaptation was distinguished from phonological and orthographic adaptation in the analysis. Phonetic adaptation was understood here as a possible sound-related feature insofar as it is represented or suggested through written form, whereas phonological adaptation concerns changes involving the phonological system or sound patterns of a language. Orthographic adaptation refers to changes in written form that can be explained by spelling conventions, typographical choices, abbreviations, or other visually motivated modifications without sufficient evidence of sound-related motivation. Based on these distinctions, the identified forms were classified into three descriptive categories, there are substitution, letter repetition or gemination, and orthographic or stylistic retention.

Substitution and letter repetition were examined as orthographic representations that may be compatible with sound-related features, whereas orthographic or stylistic retention was analyzed separately as the preservation of marked SL or digital forms. The analysis also considered alternative explanations, including orthographic convention, digital stylization, and other stylistic practices, before interpreting a form as potentially related to sound. Letter repetition refers to the repetition or extension of letters in the TT to create a marked written form. Such repetition may be compatible with the representation of a sound-related feature, but it may also function as an orthographic device for emphasis, affect, prosodic effect, or digital stylization. Because the data are written, letter repetition is not treated as direct evidence of phonetic gemination. Orthographic or stylistic retention refers to the preservation of a marked SL or digital form in the TT. Unlike substitution and letter repetition, these retained forms are not treated as evidence of phonetic adaptation. Instead, their analysis focuses on the preservation of stylistic, affective, cultural, or digital-writing functions.

An additional analytical consideration concerns the source of the markedness observed in the target forms. Because the data consist of translations produced by a fan account, a marked target spelling may reflect a feature associated with the source speaker, a stylistic choice made by the translator, or an interaction between the two. The analysis therefore does not assume that every marked target form directly reproduces a characteristic of Carmen's speech. Instead, the source-target relationship and contextual evidence are examined separately for each datum to assess whether the markedness appears to be inherited from the source expression, introduced in translation, or jointly constructed.

These translational and descriptive stages directly address the first research focus, that is identifying the orthographic representations of phonetic adaptation in the fan translation of Carmen's utterances on the @translatingH2H account. The comparative and interpretive stages then address the second research focus: they explain the possible reasons and contextual factors underlying the observed adaptations between the ST and the TT, thus allowing for a more in-depth analysis of their implications for translation equivalence at both the possible sound-related and pragmatic levels. Because the study relies on written evidence, these interpretations do not constitute direct evidence of Carmen's actual pronunciation but rather examine how sound-related features may be represented and stylized through orthographic choices in fan translation. The categorization and interpretation were conducted by the researcher as a single-coder analysis, no independent second coder was involved, and therefore no intercoder agreement was calculated. Analytical consistency was maintained by applying the same operational criteria to all seven data items and by repeatedly reviewing each source-target pair against the established criteria. Because the classification involves interpretation of written forms, the categories are treated as analytical interpretations rather than objectively measurable phonetic classifications.

3. Results and Discussion

The distribution of the adaptation patterns identified in the data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Adaptation Patterns

No.	Adaptation Patterns	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Substitution	2	28.6%
2.	Letter Repetition	2	28.6%
3.	Orthographic or Stylistic Retention	3	42.9%
Total		7	100%

As shown in Table 1, orthographic or stylistic retention occurs in three of the seven data items, while substitution and letter repetition each occur in two data items. These proportions are presented descriptively to show the distribution of the categories within the selected data. Given the small number of data items and the qualitative nature of the study, the proportions should not be interpreted as evidence of statistically significant differences or general tendencies in K-Pop fan translation.

The distribution also suggests that the observed marked written forms cannot necessarily be attributed to phonetic processes alone. In written social media discourse, marked forms may simultaneously represent possible sound-related features, orthographic stylization, digital writing conventions, humor, or the indexing of a speaker's distinctive linguistic style. Therefore, the following discussion considers both the linguistic form of each adaptation and its possible pragmatic and social functions, while distinguishing forms that may be compatible with sound related adaptation from those that are better understood as orthographic or stylistic practices. The data underlying this distribution are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings on Adaptation Patterns

No.	Date	Source Text	Target Text	Adaptation Patterns
1.	07-04-2026	<i>Lebih takut zomblo</i>	I'm more scared of being zingle	Substitution
2.	16-08-2025	<i>Gabole pacal pacalan</i>	No gillfliend gillfliend	Substitution
3.	24-07-2025	<i>jangan nyerah yaa gaizz!!</i>	don't give up guyzz!!	Letter Repetition
4.	31-05-2025	<i>Seru Bangetzzz!!!</i>	So Funzzz!!!	Letter Repetition
5.	28-03-2026	<i>btw adlibs style keren pol wkwkwkwk</i>	btw the adlibs for style were so cool wkwkwkwk	Orthographic/Stylistic Retention
6.	25-03-2025	<i>Mandi oiyy</i>	Go take a shower oiyy	Orthographic/Stylistic Retention
7.	09-03-2025	<i>ditunggu videonya plz</i>	waiting for the video plz	Orthographic/Stylistic Retention

As shown in Table 2, the three categories are distributed across different types of marked written forms. Substitution involves a change in the target spelling that may correspond to a possible sound-related modification, while letter repetition involves repetition or extension of letters in the TT that may function as a visual or paralinguistic cue. Orthographic or stylistic retention, in contrast, preserves marked SL or digital forms in the English translation and is analyzed separately from sound-related adaptation. These patterns therefore represent different forms of marked written representation rather than three equivalent types of phonetic adaptation.

3.1. Substitution

Substitution refers here to a marked orthographic form in which the target spelling differs from the source form in a way that may correspond to a sound-related modification. In phonetic adaptation, substitution may involve replacing a sound in the source language (SL) with another sound in the target language (TL), including adjustment toward a sound available in the TL phonological system (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014). In the present study, however, substitution is examined through written social media forms rather than recorded speech. Therefore, the substitution identified here is treated as an orthographic representation that may be compatible with a sound-related adaptation, rather than as direct evidence of actual pronunciation. The analysis focuses on the relationship between the source form and the marked target spelling, including possible sound correspondence and alternative explanations such as orthographic stylization or digital writing practices. Thus, the target forms are interpreted as marked written representations that may evoke or index features associated with the source speaker's linguistic style, rather than as evidence of a directly observed phonetic or stable idiolectal pattern.

In datum (1), the substitution pattern is evident in the translation of "*zomblo*," an Indonesian slang form referring to an individual without a romantic partner, as "*zingle*." The source form *zomblo* contains the marked initial /z/, while the corresponding conventional English form "single" begins with /s/. The target form "zingle" replaces the initial /s/ of "single" with /z/, creating a visible correspondence with the marked initial /z/ in "*zomblo*". At the orthographic level, this correspondence is compatible with a possible sound-related substitution, but it does not establish that the same substitution occurred in Carmen's pronunciation. The target form may also represent deliberate orthographic imitation or

stylization of the source spelling. Because the present data do not provide acoustic evidence, “zingle” is therefore interpreted as a marked written representation rather than direct evidence of Carmen’s pronunciation. The form nevertheless preserves the semantic content of being single or unattached while maintaining the marked and playful character of the source expression. This aligns with Newmark’s (1988) conception of adaptation as functional equivalence, insofar as the translation reproduces a functional aspect of the marked source expression rather than its conventional lexical form. Baker’s (2018) notion of pragmatic equivalence is also relevant here, as the marked spelling may help retain the humorous and self-deprecating effect of the original. A more normalized translation, such as “I’m more scared of being single,” would convey the propositional meaning but would not reproduce the same marked orthographic feature.

In datum (2), the target form “gillfliend gillfliend” differs from the conventional English spelling “girlfriend girlfriend” and corresponds to the source expression “*pacal pacalan*,” an Indonesian casual form related to “*pacar-an*,” meaning “to date someone” or “a girlfriend or boyfriend.” At the orthographic level, the occurrence of /l/ in place of /r/ in “gillfliend” can be interpreted as a possible representation of an /r/ to /l/ correspondence. However, this correspondence is based on the written forms and cannot establish an actual pronunciation pattern in Carmen’s speech. The spelling may alternatively function as deliberate imitation or stylization of a marked form associated with the source expression. The semantic relationship between the source and target forms is also mediated by the translator’s choice of “girlfriend” as the English lexical equivalent. The repeated target form “gillfliend gillfliend” retains the expressive and affectionate effect of the reduplicated “*pacal pacalan*” while introducing a marked spelling into the English expression. This is consistent with Panjaitan and Patria’s (2024) observation that digital language can prioritize emotional closeness and expressiveness over adherence to formal linguistic conventions. The apparent /r/ to /l/ correspondence may be discussed as one possible sound-related explanation for the spelling, but this interpretation remains provisional in the absence of spoken data. It should therefore not be treated as evidence of a stable pronunciation tendency among Indonesian speakers or of a consistent phonetic pattern in Carmen’s speech. The marked target form is more securely observable as an orthographic representation that preserves the expressive markedness of the source expression.

From a phonetic perspective, the apparent /r/ to /l/ correspondence can be discussed in relation to differences in the realization of rhotic sounds across languages (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014). However, the present datum provides only orthographic evidence and does not establish that such a correspondence reflects Carmen’s actual pronunciation. The possible sound-related explanation therefore serves as a linguistic interpretation of the marked spelling rather than as direct evidence of a phonetic process. This interpretation remains complementary to the stylistic and pragmatic explanations discussed above.

Taken together, the substitution patterns in this study suggest an observed practice of reproducing marked written forms that may evoke features associated with the source speaker’s linguistic style. Rather than establishing a process of direct phonetic reproduction, the selected examples show how marked source forms may be represented through marked target spellings. The limited dataset does not support characterizing this practice as a systematic translation strategy or as idiolect reconstruction. Instead, the target forms can be understood as written representations in which linguistic, stylistic, and expressive features of the source expression may be retained or re-created. This finding can be related to Cruz et al.’s (2021) argument about fan translators as cultural mediators, the selected examples suggest that fan translation may also involve the representation of speaker-associated linguistic style, although the present dataset is insufficient to establish a stable idiolectal pattern or to determine whether the marked forms originate consistently from the speaker. The findings therefore suggest that substitution in fan translation may operate as both a linguistic adaptation and a form of stylistic representation, while its interpretation as phonetic behavior remains provisional because the evidence is limited to written data.

3.2. Letter Repetition

Letter repetition refers to the repetition or extension of letters in a written form. In phonetics, gemination refers to the occurrence of adjacent identical sound segments (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014), but the present study does not contain spoken data would allow phonetic gemination to be directly

established. In digital written communication, repeated letters may function as visual representations of emphasis, affect, prosodic effect, or other features associated with spoken interaction. Kalman and Gergle (2014) demonstrated that letter repetition in computer-mediated communication can function as a paralinguistic signal associated with affective states and degrees of emotional involvement. This finding is relevant to the present data because the repeated letters are observable orthographic forms rather than directly observed instance of sound lengthening. Therefore, the forms classified here as letter repetition are interpreted as orthographic representations that may evoke sound-related effects while also functioning as affective, expressive, or digital-stylistic markers.

In datum (3), letter repetition appears in the translation of "*gaizz*" as "guyzz." In the ST, "*gaizz*" is a marked written form of the informal address terms "guys," with a repeated final /z/. The target form "guyzz" preserves this repeated letter pattern while returning the borrowed English expression to its conventional lexical form. The repetition creates a visually marked forms that may signal heightened emotional engagement, emphasis, or affective closeness with the audience. The correspondence between "*gaizz*" and "guyzz" is therefore primarily observable at the orthographic level. It may evoke a sound-related effect associated with lengthening, but the repeated /z/ cannot be taken as evidence that the sound was physically lengthened in Carmen's pronunciation. Kalman and Gergle's (2014) account of letter repetition as a paralinguistic signal is relevant here because the repeated letters can communicate affective involvement through the written medium. The translator thus preserves an expressive feature of the source form without requiring a claim about its actual phonetic realization.

In datum (4), letter repetition appears in the translation of "*Bangetzzz*" as "Funzzz." "*Bangetzzz*" is a marked form based on the Indonesian word "*banget*", meaning "very" or "so much," while "Funzzz" incorporates the repeated /z/ into the English adjective "fun." Rather than reproducing the source structure directly, the translator transfers the marked written feature into an English lexical item. The resulting "Funzzz" is not a standard English spelling, and the repeated /z/ creates a visually salient form that may communicate intensity, enthusiasm, or affect in digital writing. The repeated letters may evoke a sound-related effect associated with lengthening, but they may also function independently as a visual cue of emphasis. Because the study does not contain audio data, "Funzzz" cannot be interpreted as direct evidence of phonetic lengthening. The more securely observable feature is the translator's preservation and creative reconfiguration of the source expression's marked orthographic style. This demonstrates that letter repetition in fan translation is not necessarily a mechanical transfer of a sound feature, but may involve creative integration of a marked written form into a TL lexical item.

The letter repetition patterns in this study collectively demonstrate that repeated letter can function as orthographic resources for representing affect and emphasis in the written medium. In spoken interaction, a speaker's enthusiasm or emotional closeness with interlocutors is conveyed through prosodic features, such as raised pitch, lengthened vowels, increased vocal intensity, that are invisible in written text. Repeated letters provide one possible orthographic resource for evoking or compensating for the absence of these acoustic and prosodic cues. This finding complements Messerli and Locher's (2021) analysis of humour support and emotive stance in digital fan comments and supports the broader observation that affective meanings can be encoded through digital writing practices across linguistic and cultural boundaries. At the same time, Kalman and Gergle's (2014) account is used here to support the paralinguistic function of repetition, not to establish that the repeated letters necessarily correspond to actual phonetic lengthening. The present findings cannot determine whether the repeated letters correspond to actual phonetic lengthening. Their interpretation should therefore remain primarily at the level of an orthographic and paralinguistic representation, with possible sound-related effects treated as provisional.

Taken together, the two letter repetition cases indicate that the translator preserves and reconfigures not only the lexical meaning of the source expressions but also their marked written character and expressive potential. The forms "guyzz" and "Funzzz" allow the target reader to perceive emphasis, enthusiasm, and informality without requiring the translator to normalize the spelling. In this respect, letter repetition may contribute to pragmatic equivalence by helping preserve an expressive effect that could otherwise be weakened in a standardized translation. Although the repeated letters may evoke sound-related effects associated with lengthening, the written data do not establish actual phonetic lengthening.

3.3. Orthographic or Stylistic Retention

Orthographic or stylistic retention refers to the preservation of a marked SL or digital form in the TT without substantial modification. Unlike substitution and letter repetition, the retained forms identified in the present dataset are not treated as evidence of phonetic adaptation. Instead, their significance is considered in relation to their cultural, affective, stylistic, pragmatic, and digital writing functions. The retained forms may nevertheless carry meanings that make them valuable to preserve in the target text, particularly when replacing them with more conventional English forms could reduce their markedness or contextual associations.

In datum (5), the retention of *"wkwkwwk"* in the English TT is the most culturally specific instance of this strategy. *"Wkwkwwk"* is a recognizable Indonesian digital expression of laughter, widely recognizable in Indonesian online communication as a written laughter expression. It is the Indonesian functional equivalent of *"hahaha"* or *"lol"* in English language digital communication. The translator's decision not to render this as *"hahaha"* or *"lmao"*, the nearest English equivalents, but instead to retain *"wkwkwwk"* intact has important pragmatic implications. First, it signals to target readers that they are consuming content that originates from a specific cultural context, allowing a recognizable feature of Indonesian online discourse to remain visible rather than being replaced by a culturally more neutral English expression. Second, it may contribute to cultural awareness, as fans who engage regularly with translated content will come to recognize *"wkwkwwk"* as an Indonesian laughter marker, enriching their cultural literacy. Third, it avoids the pragmatic flattening that would result from substituting a culturally neutral equivalent. *"hahaha"* in the TT would make Carmen sound like any generic social media user, whereas *"wkwkwwk"* preserves a marked form associated with Indonesian digital communication. This aligns with Yoon's (2023) argument that translational audiences in K-Pop actively seek and value cultural specificity in translated content, using it to construct their sense of belonging to a transcultural fan community.

However, *"wkwkwwk"* should not be treated as direct evidence of a particular pronunciation or acoustic form. Its retention is more directly observable as an orthographic and digital cultural practice. The translator preserves the form because its value extends beyond its basic function of representing laughter. It also maintains a recognizable source cultural feature within the English translation. Thus, retention here demonstrates that a form can remain untranslated because of its cultural and pragmatic value rather than because of its phonetic properties alone.

In datum (6), the retention of *"oiy"* reflects a different dimension of the strategy. Unlike *"wkwkwwk"* which has a culturally specific function recognized within Indonesian digital discourse, *"oiy"* is a marked expressive form that appears to contribute to a playful and expressive way of attracting attention or addressing the interlocutor. There is no standard English equivalent for this form; attempts to render it as *"hey," "oi,"* or other English interjections would potentially reduce some of the particular expressive quality associated with the source form. The translator therefore retains the form intact, trusting the target readership to intuit its emotive function from context. This strategy is consistent with Messerli and Locher's (2021) finding that affective expressions in Korean entertainment fandom are retained in their original form to build emotional closeness and signal community identity, and may be comparable to the present fan translation context, although the present dataset does not establish that the same mechanism operates here. Retaining *"oiy"* is thus not merely an admission that the form is untranslatable; it is an active strategy for preserving the affective and expressive texture of the source utterance and allowing target readers to encounter a marked form within the translated content. Nevertheless, the present written data do not establish whether *"oiy"* represents a particular pronunciation, vocal duration, or stable idiolectal feature of Carmen. Its function is more safely interpreted as expressive and stylistic, with the retained spelling allowing the target audience to encounter a marked form associated with the source utterance.

In datum (7), the retention of *"plz"* represents a different type of retention from the culturally specific or expressive cases above. *"Plz"* is a cross-cultural digital abbreviation of *"please"* that is widely recognized across English language and multilingual social media communities. Carmen's use of *"plz"* in her Indonesian language post is itself an instance of borrowing from English digital vernacular, and it contributes to an informal digital register. The translator's decision to retain *"plz"* rather than expand it to *"please"* preserves the informal register and digital writing style represented by the form. This case demonstrates that retention in fan translation is not always motivated by untranslatability; sometimes

the source form is retained because it is already familiar and functional within the target digital environment. This is consistent with Panjaitan and Patria's (2024) observation that abbreviations and marked spellings in digital communication prioritize speed and expressiveness, and are increasingly shared across language communities.

The retention of “plz” also demonstrates that the translator does not necessarily need to adapt a source form when that form is already familiar within the target digital environment. Unlike “*wkwkwkwk*,” whose cultural specificity is strongly associated with Indonesian online discourse, “plz” is already part of a broader digital writing repertoire. Its retention therefore appears to preserve register and informality rather than a specifically Indonesian linguistic feature or a sound-related property.

The retention patterns in this study collectively demonstrate that the translator preserves marked sourced forms when they are culturally, stylistically, expressively, or pragmatically meaningful, already recognizable to target readers, or more effective in their original form than a conventional English equivalent. “*Wkwkwkwk*” is retained because of its recognizable association with Indonesian digital discourse, “*oiy*” preserves a marked expressive form whose interpretation depends on its context, and “plz” is retained because it already functions within a broader digital writing collection shared across language communities. These cases show that retention does not necessarily result from the absence of a functional equivalent in the target language. Rather, the decision to retain a marked source form may reflect the translator's attempt to preserve aspects of cultural specificity, affective expression, stylistic markedness, or digital register.

From the perspective of pragmatic equivalence, these cases suggest that maintaining the marked form can sometimes preserve contextual and communicative effects more effectively than replacing it with a standardized English equivalent. For example, replacing “*wkwkwkwk*” with “hahaha” would maintain the general function of expressing laughter but would remove the recognizable Indonesian digital form. Similarly, expanding “plz” into “please” would preserve the propositional meaning while reducing the informal digital register of the source expression. The retention of “*oiy*” likewise allows the marked expressive form to remain visible to target readers rather than replacing it with a more conventional English interjection. These examples therefore illustrate how pragmatic considerations may influence the preservation of marked written forms in fan translation.

Taken together, the three categories suggest that the marked forms observed in the present data emerge from the interaction of language contact, digital writing practices, translation choices, and the preservation of speaker-associated linguistic style. The substitution of “*zomblo*” as “zingle” and “*pacal pacalan*” as “gillfliend gillfliend” illustrates how marked features associated with Carmen's linguistic style can be reproduced in English rather than normalized into conventional TL forms. Similarly, the letter repetition patterns in the translation of “*gaizz*” as “guyzz” and “*Bangetzzz*” as “Funzzz” demonstrate how letter repetition can represent emphasis and affect in a written medium. Meanwhile, the retention of “*wkwkwkwk*,” “*oiy*,” and “plz” shows that source forms may be preserved because of their cultural, stylistic, expressive, or digital value. Thus, the three categories do not represent a single mechanism of phonetic adaptation but rather different ways in which marked written forms are negotiated in fan translation. Substitution and letter repetition may be compatible with possible sound-related effects, whereas orthographic or stylistic retention is better understood in relation to cultural, expressive, stylistic, and digital writing functions.

These patterns can be situated within the broader context of language contact in K-Pop fan communication, where Indonesian and English frequently coexist within multilingual digital interaction. The forms identified in this study demonstrate that linguistic resources from different languages may be combined, modified, and retained to construct a recognizable communicative style. In this context, the translator functions not only as a mediator of propositional meaning but also as a mediator of linguistic style. By preserving or reproducing marked forms such as “zingle,” “guyzz,” “Funzzz,” and “*wkwkwkwk*,” the translation allows aspects of the ST marked linguistic and stylistic features to remain visible to an international audience. This finding extends Cruz et al.'s (2021) argument about fan translators as cultural mediators by suggesting that their mediating role may also involve the representation of speaker associated linguistic style, although the present data do not establish a stable idiolectal pattern or demonstrate that every marked target form originates directly from Carmen.

The findings further demonstrate the importance of treating social media writing as a performative and audience-oriented form of communication. The observed spellings may reflect

possible sound-related features, but they may also result from deliberate orthographic stylization, humor, affective expression, or digital conventions shared within online communities. This is particularly evident in the repeated letters in “guyzz” and “Funzzz”, which may evoke sound lengthening while simultaneously functioning as visual markers of emphasis, and in the retention of “*wkwkwkwk*”, which preserves an Indonesian digital convention within an English translation. The retention of “*oiyy*” and “*plz*” likewise illustrates how marked expressive forms and established digital abbreviations can remain visible in translation rather than being normalized into conventional English forms. The forms therefore illustrate how digital linguistic practices can make affect, informality, cultural affiliation, and speaker associated stylistic features visible to target readers. At the same time, these functions cannot be separated completely from deliberate translator stylization, since the target forms are produced in written social-media discourse rather than recorded speech.

From the perspective of pragmatic equivalence, these findings indicate that successful fan translation does not necessarily require the normalization of marked source forms. In several cases, preserving a non-standard or culturally marked form may better maintain the pragmatic effect of the original than replacing it with a formally conventional English equivalent. The translator consequently negotiates between semantic comprehensibility and the preservation of stylistic and cultural markedness. For example, retaining “*wkwkwkwk*” preserves a culturally recognizable digital form that would be altered if replaced with “*hahaha*,” while retaining “*plz*” maintains an informal digital register that would be reduced by expanding it to “please.” Similarly, the marked spellings “*zingle*,” “*gillfliend*,” “*guyzz*,” and “*Funzzz*” preserve aspects of the source expressions’ marked written character rather than fully normalizing them. This supports Baker’s (2018) emphasis on pragmatic equivalence, in which translation involves reproducing communicative effects and contextual meanings rather than merely matching linguistic forms. However, these observations should be understood as possible pragmatic functions of the selected forms rather than as evidence that the translator consistently prioritizes pragmatic equivalence across fan translation.

Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted cautiously. Because the data consist of written posts and translations rather than audio recordings, the study cannot independently establish whether the observed forms correspond to actual phonetic behavior. The forms may reflect a combination of possible sound-related imitation, orthographic stylization, digital conventions, and deliberate performance for an online audience. The seven data items therefore provide evidence of orthographic traces that may be compatible with interpretations of sound-related adaptation, but they do not constitute direct evidence of pronunciation. The three categories framework used in this study, substitution, letter repetition, and orthographic or stylistic retention, should therefore be understood as a descriptive framework for the selected written data rather than as a general typology of phonetic adaptation. Its applicability to other fan translation datasets remains to be established. Future research could examine whether comparable patterns are observable in translations of other K-Pop idols’ content, including Korean language content translated into other languages, as well as other language pairs, to assess whether similar forms recur across different speakers, translators, accounts, and linguistic content. Future studies incorporating audio or multimodal data, as well as research into target readers’ perceptions of these strategies, would also make a valuable contribution to understanding how fan translation functions as a digital sociolinguistic practice.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the seven written forms examined in the fan translation of Carmen’s utterances by the @translatingH2H account on X can be understood as marked orthographic representations with potentially linguistic, stylistic, affective, cultural, and pragmatic functions. The data were descriptively grouped into three categories, there are substitution, letter repetition, and orthographic or stylistic retention, with three cases of the latter and two cases each of substitution and letter repetition. These categories describe the selected data and should not be treated as a general typology of phonetic adaptation or K-Pop fan translation.

The substitution cases involve marked target spellings that correspond visibly to marked elements in the source forms. The forms “*zingle*” and “*gillfliend*” are compatible with possible sound-related correspondences, but the written data do not establish whether these spellings reflect actual pronunciation. They may instead represent deliberate orthographic imitation or stylization of features

associated with the source expressions. The analysis therefore treats these forms as orthographic traces that may evoke sound-related features rather than as direct evidence of phonetic realization. The letter repetition cases involve repeated letters in the target forms “guyzz” and “Funzzz.” These repetitions may evoke effects associated with emphasis, affect, or prosodic lengthening, while also functioning as visual and stylistic markers in digital writing. Because no audio evidence is available, they are not treated as direct evidence of phonetic gemination. Instead, the repeated letters are more securely understood as orthographic representations with possible paralinguistic and sound-related effects. The orthographic or stylistic retention cases involve preserving “*wkwkwkwk*,” “*oiyy*,” and “*plz*” in the target text. These forms are not treated as phonetic adaptations, rather, their retention may preserve cultural, expressive, stylistic, or digital writing functions that could be altered through normalization. The three cases demonstrate that marked forms may be retained because of their communicative value within digital discourse, including cultural recognition, affective expression, informality, and familiarity among target readers.

Taken together, these three categories indicate that the selected fan translations involve more than the transfer of propositional meaning. The preservation and reproduction of marked written forms may also contribute to maintaining aspects of the source expression’s stylistic, affective, cultural, and pragmatic character. However, the findings do not support the claim that @translatingH2H consistently prioritizes pragmatic equivalence over formal equivalence. Rather, the selected examples illustrate instances in which preserving marked forms may help maintain communicative and stylistic effects that could be reduced through normalization. At the same time, because the study is based on written social media data rather than audio recordings, the identified forms cannot be taken as direct evidence of actual phonetic behavior. They may reflect a combination of possible sound related imitation, orthographic stylization, digital conventions, and deliberate expressive performance.

Beyond the individual translation choices, the findings highlight the role of K-Pop fandom as a space for digital multilingual communication. Through fan translation and everyday interaction on social media, Indonesian fans encounter, circulate, and creatively modify linguistic resources drawn from Indonesian, English, Korean, and shared digital vernaculars. These practices allow linguistic forms to move across language boundaries while acquiring new pragmatic and social meanings within online fan communities. In this context, fan translation provides a space in which linguistic styles, cultural affiliations, and forms of digital expression can be negotiated across languages. However, the present study does not claim that the seven data items are representative of K-Pop fandom as a whole, rather, they illustrate these processes within the selected account and dataset.

The findings also suggest that K-Pop fandom may participate in broader processes of linguistic innovation and variation in Indonesian digital communication. The present study does not claim that the seven data items provide evidence of language change in Indonesian as a whole. Rather, they illustrate how multilingual K-Pop content and its circulation through fan translation may contribute to the visibility and use of borrowed expressions, expressive spellings, digital abbreviations, and other marked forms within particular online interactions. Such practices may contribute to ongoing linguistic innovation within particular online communities, although their wider circulation and long-term development require further investigation.

The contribution of this study lies in providing a framework for analyzing marked orthographic forms associated with possible sound-related features in fan translation, complementing previous studies that have largely focused on language variation within the fandom community as a whole. By connecting speaker associated linguistic style with digital multilingual practices, the study demonstrates how fan translation can function as a site where linguistic, cultural, stylistic, and pragmatic meanings intersect. Future research could expand on this study by comparing the marked written forms across other Hearts2Hearts members, K-Pop fan translation accounts, translators, and language pairs. Such research could examine whether similar forms recur across different speakers and translation contexts without assuming that the patterns identified here will necessarily be consistent. Research incorporating audio or multimodal data would also be valuable for determining whether orthographic forms that appear compatible with sound-related adaptation correspond to systematic phonetic patterns in source speakers’ actual speech. In addition, studies involving target readers could investigate how readers interpret marked written forms and whether such forms influence their perceptions of linguistic style, cultural identity, or affective meaning.

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