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## Diachronic Semantic Shifts of Major Hebrew Theological Terms in Hosea: A Comparative Study of English and Indonesian Bible Translations

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### Article Info

### Abstract

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This study examines diachronic semantic change in selected Hebrew theological terms in the Book of Hosea which are written in English and Indonesian Bible translations across different time periods. Though existing literature often examines semantic change within single linguistic traditions, comparative research across different cultural and linguistic contexts remains relatively underexplored. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate how theological meaning evolves when transposed into these distinct cultural and temporal contexts. Employing a qualitative descriptive design grounded in diachronic semantics and translation studies, the research analyzes five key lexemes of *zēnûnêyhā*, *ḥesed*, *’āšûbā*, *bērît*, and *ruḥāmā* that frequently appear in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and their renderings in the King James Version, New King James Version, Terjemahan Lama, and Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2. The results indicate that the English translation tradition exhibits relative semantic stability, while the Indonesian translations demonstrate systematic patterns as identified in 32 lexical examples, yielding 128 comparative data points. The findings suggest that the English translation tradition reveals relative lexical stability. In contrast, the Indonesian translations exhibit systematic patterns of semantic change, including narrowing, subjectivization, and amelioration. These patterns indicate that semantic change in biblical translation operates not only as a linguistic process but also serves as a form of theological and cultural adaptation. The results point to a diachronic shift in Indonesian translations from formal lexical representation toward the explicit encoding of internal theological states. Ultimately, this study contributes to the fields of diachronic semantics and translation studies by showing how cross-linguistic translation mediates theological meaning across historical and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Bible Translation Studies, Biblical Hebrew Linguistics, Cross-Cultural Interpretation, Diachronic Semantics, Semantic Change

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Human beings inevitably engage in communication to convey feelings, thoughts, and intended meanings to others as their interlocutors (Fitria & Setyawan, 2023). Semantic change is a focus of interest in linguistics due to the evolution of word meaning through historical and cultural developments (Geeraerts, 2010; Traugott & Dasher, 2002). As far as the study of the sacred texts of any religion is concerned, semantic change becomes a topic with particular importance since the meaning of language is intricately linked with the corresponding definitions of religious beliefs (Gutt, 1992; Thiselton, 2009). Thus, when translating the Bible from one language to another, this task involves more than simply transferring lexical forms (Apriyanti et al., 2016). Semantic changes shape the meanings embedded in the text. The translation of the Bible has become a topic of considerable study in the field of linguistics.

The Book of Hosea contains a rich metaphorical language that describes the relationship between God and the Israelites in a unique and distinctive setting (Cataldo, 2024). These descriptions create a background against which studies of semantic change can be conducted. The Book of Hosea also contains theologically significant ideas rooted in ancient Hebrew culture in the relational metaphors, such as marriage and adultery. The complexity of semantic and pragmatic vocabulary in the Book of Hosea resists straightforward formalization in modern languages (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Mathews (2024) introduces the concept of "Translation for Performance," which prioritizes the auditory and theatrical elements of biblical texts. This approach aims to improve listener comprehension and emotional resonance by treating the scripture as a script intended for public delivery. Thus, the translators would have the specialized task of finding a balance between capturing semantic meaning appropriately and understanding the usability of the translation among the contemporary community (Lohar et al., 2018; Newmark, 1988).

While some scholars argue that semantic shifts in translation are inevitable acts of cultural interpretation (Hsieh, 2020), others claim that it may undermine the theological accuracy of the original Hebrew text (Ezuoke & Ijioma, 2021; Tully, 2020). For instance, recent studies on the translation of the Quran have shown that failure to account for the cultural and linguistic nuances of complex words results in a lack of rhetoric in the translation, thereby creating semantic shifts that alter the spiritual and moral meaning of the text (Al-Shams & Al-Jbory, 2025). Furthermore, recent studies in cross-linguistic cognition have shown that translation from English into Indonesian necessarily involves valence and semantic shifts, as the translator must constantly adjust the semantic arguments to align with the social cognition of the target culture to ensure equivalence (Bessie et al., 2024).

Although several studies have investigated the semantic development found within biblical literature and, more specifically, the importance of cultural adaptability in the translation process, existing scholarship remains relatively limited in several ways. A study by Anwar (2022) investigated how the semantic changes of Arabic loanwords in Turkish also include some radical shifts and narrowing, highlighting how religious terms evolve under historical and cultural pressures. Meanwhile, Smereka (2021) demonstrated how semantic-syntactic changes in Bible translations reflect broader patterns of diachronic development across historical corpora. Limitations include the tendency to study individual words or traditions related to a sole language rather than investigating the semantic development of multiple translations over time (Soesilo, 2001; Koltuska, 2023). Diachronic semantics,

therefore, enables this study to trace how historically grounded meanings are retained or transformed across different stages of translation, a process that aligns with approaches to mapping lexical meaning change diachronically (Georgakopoulos & Polis, 2021; Yusuf & Puspita, 2020). In particular, limited attention has been given to the study of multiple translations across English and Indonesian versions of the Bible, which differ significantly in cultural and ideological contexts (Jose, 2024; MacLochlainn, 2025; Yahya et al., 2020).

In response to this explicit gap, the present study examines the diachronic semantics of 5 selected topical Hebrew words in the Book of Hosea across various English and Indonesian Bible translations. Previous studies have not systematically compared diachronic semantic shifts in the English and Indonesian biblical traditions within a single corpus. Based on the theories of diachronic semantics and translation studies (Martinc et al., 2019; Newmark, 1988; Traugott, 2017), these lexical items are analyzed to examine how the meanings develop and how these developments appear in translation choices. The translations in English are analyzed comparatively, while the Indonesian versions are analyzed as cases of semantic adaptation, in which cultural knowledge plays a significant role (Dörpinghaus, 2024; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Specifically, this research examines patterns of diachronic semantic change in selected Hebrew terms from the Book of Hosea, as observed in English and Indonesian Bible translations. It also examines how these semantic shifts impact translation choices and theological interpretation in both English and Indonesian contexts (Jamal & Simbuka, 2024; Sacko, 2025).

Ultimately, this article makes two specific scientific contributions. First, to the field of diachronic semantics, it provides empirical evidence of how semantic processes operate across linguistic bounds, investigating semantic developments in religious texts (Geeraerts, 2010; Traugott, 2017; Utama et al., 2020; Varghese & Punithavalli, 2019). Second, to translation studies, this study adopts a comparative approach to demonstrate how translators actively mediate theological meaning across multiple languages through a comprehensive translation corpus. Using the English and Indonesian translations of the Bible facilitates the investigation of the delivery of theological meaning in distinct cultural contexts (Nida & Taber, 1972; Gutt, 1992; Holmstedt, 2020; Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2023). To guide this investigation, the research addresses the following questions:

1. What patterns of diachronic semantic change are observed in selected Hebrew terms in the Book of Hosea across English and Indonesian Bible translations?
2. How do these semantic shifts influence translation choices and theological interpretation across English and Indonesian contexts?

## **B. METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design grounded in diachronic semantics and translation studies (Traugott, 2017; Newmark, 1988). A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research investigates semantic change in lexical items across historical stages of translation, rather than merely measuring numerical variables or testing statistical hypotheses (Mayring, 2000). The focus is on tracing how meaning is reinterpreted when key Hebrew theological terms in the Book of Hosea are translated into English and Indonesian Bible translations produced at different periods. Furthermore, diachronic semantic analysis enables systematic examination of meaning change over time. This process of categorization employed Traugott's semantic categorization, such as narrowing,

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amelioration, abstraction, subjectivization, and formal stability. This design is therefore well-suited to addressing the research questions, which seek to identify patterns of semantic change and to explain their implications for theological interpretation across linguistic and cultural contexts.

The research setting is textual rather than physical, as the data consist exclusively of biblical texts. The primary source text is the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Book of Hosea, which directly relates to the book's main topic. These Hebrew terms are compared with their renderings in selected English and Indonesian Bible versions. The English versions analyzed are the King [James Version \(1611\)](#) and the New King [James Version \(1982\)](#). These versions were specifically selected to represent a shared textual lineage. As [Farstad \(1989\)](#) notes, the NKJV retains the underlying textual basis of the KJV while modernizing its vocabulary, thereby isolating linguistic evolution as the primary variable for analysis. Meanwhile, the Indonesian versions examined are the *Terjemahan Lama* (1954) and the *Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2* (2023). This pairing captures the critical shift from the Classical Malay literary standard to modern Indonesian. As also noted by the Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (2023), the recent release of the TB2 marks a significant effort to align biblical syntax with contemporary grammar and the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), providing a clear diachronic contrast to the 1954 text.

All of these versions represent diachronic continuity and development. The specific lexical items (*zēnûnēyhā*, *hesed*, *'āšûbā*, *bērît*, and *ruhāmā*) were selected through purposive sampling based on two primary rationales. First, a theological rationale: these terms are foundational to the central covenantal and relational metaphors of the Book of Hosea, making them semantically complex and highly susceptible to cultural adaptation. Second, a frequency-based rationale: these lexemes occur repeatedly throughout the text, providing a robust and traceable dataset. The dataset thus consists of all occurrences of these terms in the Book of Hosea across the selected translations, consisting of a total sample size of 32 Hebrew source occurrences, yielding 128 comparative data points. This exhaustive sampling of the specific book ensures precision in the analysis without the need for statistical power calculations.

The study employed a systematic document analysis to collect data. The Hebrew text and its respective translations were obtained from the eRhema Bible corpora web-based application for multilingual analysis ([Dörpinghaus, 2024](#); [Åkerman et al., 2023](#)). The findings were verified with hard copies of the texts as appropriate. Each of the chosen Hebrew words was located and matched with the translations. Lexical definitions and semantic ranges were compiled from authoritative sources (Hebrew lexicons, biblical dictionaries, and the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), a necessary procedure in cross-lingual religious studies to accurately capture both denotative and connotative semantic nuances ([Alduhaim, 2021](#)). The data collection process followed a structured sequence, beginning with term identification, followed by cross-version alignment, and concluding with the compilation of contextual usage data for each lexical item.

The primary research instrument is a semantic analysis matrix designed to facilitate a systematic comparison between the original Hebrew meanings and their translated equivalents across time. The matrix includes categories for the original semantic range, translation equivalents, and identified types of semantic change. Instrument validity is ensured through theoretical triangulation, drawing on Traugott and Dasher's framework of

semantic change and established principles in translation studies (Nida & Taber, 1969; Newmark, 1988). Reliability is addressed by applying consistent analytical criteria across all terms and translations, with each semantic judgment supported by lexical evidence and contextual analysis. Interpretive trustworthiness is further enhanced through comparison with relevant secondary scholarship in biblical linguistics and translation theory.

Data analysis followed a qualitative interpretive procedure. Each Hebrew term was first analyzed synchronically within its textual context to establish its core semantic range. The corresponding translations were then examined diachronically to identify shifts in meaning across historical stages and linguistic contexts. These shifts were categorized according to recognized types of semantic change. Although recent methodological developments in diachronic research have increasingly employed qualitative computational software and text-mining tools and multilingual translation models to study the evolution of discourse (Wongso et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2025), the current study still follows a human-centered interpretive method. This manual qualitative method provides a greater opportunity for nuances to emerge, such as metaphorical meanings in theology. The results of this analysis directly address the research questions by demonstrating how semantic change operates in biblical translation and how such changes shape contemporary theological understanding, particularly in the Indonesian context (Hoed, 2017).

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Analysis of strong words

Table 1. Semantic Narrowing in the term “זְנוּנֵיחָ - *zěnúněyhā* (H2183)”

Word	Original Hebrew Meaning	Term in KJV (1611)	Term in NKJV (1982)	Term in TL (1954)	Term in TB2 (2023)	Type of Change in Bahasa Indonesia
<i>zěnúněyhā</i>	adultery, fornication, prostitution	whoredoms	harlotries	<i>sundal</i>	<i>pelacur</i>	Narrowing

Table 1 illustrates a clear case of semantic narrowing in the translation of the Hebrew term זְנוּנֵיחָ (*zěnúněyhā*, H2183), which appears repeatedly in the Book of Hosea (Hos. 1:2; 2:2,4; 4:12; 5:4). In its original Hebrew context, *zěnúněyhā* carries a broad semantic range encompassing adultery, fornication, and prostitution. Importantly, the term functions not only as a reference to literal sexual immorality but also as a powerful metaphor for Israel’s covenantal unfaithfulness toward God, particularly in the form of idolatry.

The King James Version (1611) renders the term as “whoredoms”, a translation choice that preserves the plural form and maintains a wide semantic scope. According to historical lexicography, the definition of whoredom extends beyond physical acts to explicitly include spiritual apostasy: “In Scripture, idolatry, the desertion of the worship of the true God, for the worship of idols” (King James Bible Dictionary, n.d.). This lexical choice allows the term to convey both physical and spiritual infidelity, aligning closely with the prophetic and metaphorical force of the Hebrew source text. Similarly, the New King

James Version (1982) uses “harlotries”. While this term is slightly more formal, it demonstrates a semantic shift toward the commercial or habitual aspect of the act. Defined as “the trade or practice of prostitution; habitual or customary lewdness” (King James Bible Dictionary, n.d.), the term harlotry focuses more on the profession or activity itself rather than the broad theological state implied by the older term whoredom. Despite this, both English translations retain a relatively broad interpretive range compared to their Indonesian counterparts.

In contrast, the Indonesian translations demonstrate a noticeable narrowing of meaning. The *Terjemahan Lama* (1954) translates the term as “*sundal*,” a word that primarily denotes a prostitute or immoral woman in a concrete, literal sense. The Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) defines *sundal* as “*buruk kelakuan (tentang perempuan)*” (bad behavior regarding women) or “*perempuan jalang*” (Badan Bahasa, 2018). While the term is culturally strong and addresses character, its meaning is often restricted to overt sexual misconduct, thereby reducing the metaphorical and theological dimensions present in the Hebrew text. This narrowing becomes even more evident in the *Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2* (2023), which renders the term as “*pelacur*” (“prostitute”) in Hosea 1:2. The term *pelacur* is specifically defined as “*wanita tunasusila*” (woman of low morals/prostitute) or “*perempuan yang melacur*” (Badan Bahasa, 2018). The translation shifts the focus from repeated immoral actions to a commercial sex worker, further limiting the semantic and theological depth of the original term.

From a diachronic semantic perspective, this pattern reflects a sustained restriction of meaning over time and across different cultural contexts. Such metaphorical narrowing aligns with established accounts of semantic change in morally and relationally charged lexemes, where complex metaphorical meanings tend to collapse into more literal referents over time (Allan, 2008). At the same time, this pattern supports previous findings that Bible translations provide a stable yet diachronically sensitive corpus for tracing semantic change, as shifts occur not in propositional content but in interpretive realization (Smereka, 2021). While the Indonesian renderings enhance cultural clarity and acceptability, they also risk attenuating the prophetic intensity and theological breadth embedded in the original Hebrew metaphor.

Table 2. Semantic Subjectivization in the term “ $\text{הַסֵּד}$  – *hesed* (H2617)”

Word	Original Hebrew Meaning	Term in KJV (1611)	Term in NKJV (1982)	Term in TL (1954)	Term in TB2 (2023)	Type of Change in Bahasa Indonesia
<i>hesed</i>	loyalty	lovingkindness	Loving kindness	<i>kemurahan</i>	<i>kasih setia</i>	Subjectivization

Table 2 highlights a contrast between stability in English translation and significant semantic realignment in Indonesian translation regarding the Hebrew term  $\text{הַסֵּד}$  (*hesed*, H2617). This term, appearing frequently in Hosea (2:19; 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:12; 12:6), is one of the most theologically dense words in the Hebrew Bible, combining concepts of love, loyalty, and covenantal obligation. Analyzing this shift through Elizabeth Closs Traugott’s

framework of semantic change, the data reveal a trajectory of subjectivization, where the focus moves from external behavioral descriptions to internal cognitive-emotional states.

The English translation history demonstrates remarkable semantic stability. The King James Version (1611) utilizes the compound term “lovingkindness,” a word specifically coined by Miles Coverdale to capture the nuances of *hesed*. It is defined as “tender regard; mercy; favor” and is noted specifically as “a scriptural word” (King James Bible Dictionary, n.d., “Loving-kindness” entry). The New King James Version (1982) retains this exact term. This preservation suggests that despite the evolution of the English language over three centuries, the specific theological weight of “lovingkindness” remains the standard for conveying the covenantal tenderness of God, reflecting a resistance to secularization for this specific term.

In contrast, the Indonesian translations reveal a profound semantic shift or “correction” over time. The *Terjemahan Lama* (1954) renders the term as “*kemurahan*.” According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), *kemurahan* is defined as “*kebaikan; kelimpahan*” (kindness; abundance) or “*sifat kasih dan sayang*” (trait of love and affection) (Badan Bahasa, 2018, “Kemurahan” entry). While positive, this term primarily conveys the idea of generosity or benevolence, an unidirectional act of giving from a superior to an inferior. It lacks the inherent nuance of “obligation” or “persistence” found in the Hebrew *hesed*. The *Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2* (2023) shifts to the compound phrase “*kasih setia*.” This choice engages in semantic expansion by combining two distinct concepts to capture the full scope of the Hebrew. The first element, *kasih*, refers to “*perasaan sayang*” (feeling of affection/love) (Badan Bahasa, 2018, “Kasih” entry). The second element, *setia*, provides the necessary covenantal counterweight, defined as “*berpegang teguh (pada janji)*” (holding firm to a promise) or “*kepatuhan; ketaatan*” (obedience/loyalty) (Badan Bahasa, 2018, “Setia” entry).

From a diachronic semantic perspective, the Indonesian shift from *kemurahan* to *kasih setia* represents a move from a general moral attribute (generosity) to a specific theological construct (covenant loyalty). While the older translation emphasized the emotional aspect of God's kindness, the newer translation explicates the volitional aspect of His loyalty. This subjectivization reflects a modern translation strategy that prioritizes internalized relational meaning over externally observable generosity. Rather than simplifying meaning, the later translation reconfigures it to make covenantal loyalty cognitively and emotionally accessible to contemporary readers.

Table 3. Semantic Amelioration in the term “אֲשׁוּבָה - 'āšūbā (H7725)”

Word	Original Hebrew Meaning	Meaning in KJV (1611)	Meaning in NKJV (1982)	Meaning in TB (1954)	Meaning in TB2 (2023)	Type of Change in Bahasa Indonesia
'āšūbā	Return	Return	Return	<i>Balik kembali</i>	<i>Pulang kembali</i>	Amelioration

Table 3 presents a significant diachronic shift in the translation of the Hebrew term אֲשׁוּבָה ('āšūbā, H7725), as appearing frequently in Hosea 2:7,9; 3:5; 4:9; 5:4,15; 6:1,11; 7:10,16; 11:5,9; 12:2,6,14; 14:1,2,4,7. While the English translation tradition demonstrates

semantic stability by retaining the neutral verb "return" in both the KJV (1611) and NKJV (1982), the Indonesian context reveals a distinct trajectory of semantic amelioration, a shift where a term acquires a more positive or socially desirable meaning over time.

The English tradition retains the verb "return" in both the KJV (1611) and NKJV (1982). Defined as "to come or go back to the same place" (King James Bible Dictionary, n.d., "Return" entry), this term functions as a broad, neutral descriptor of motion. It leaves the specific nature of the return, whether physical, political, or spiritual. As an open context, maintaining a formal equivalence to the Hebrew root *shuv*.

In the *Terjemahan Lama* (1954), the Hebrew concept of repentance is rendered as "*balik kembali*". The root word *balik* is defined strictly by its directional properties: "*sisi yang sebelah belakang*" (the back side) or the act of returning to a previous position (Badan Bahasa, 2018, "Balik" entry). Semantically, *balik* is mechanical and neutral; it describes a physical U-turn or a reversal of motion. In a theological context, this frames repentance primarily as a corrective duty, such a command to stop moving away and start moving back. It focuses on the change of direction without implying a specific emotional reward at the destination. In contrast, the *Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2* (2023) shifts the terminology to "*pulang kembali*". This choice represents a significant instance of semantic amelioration. The term *pulang* is not merely a directional verb; it is a relational noun-phrase in verbal form, defined as "*pergi ke rumah atau ke tempat asalnya*" (to go to the house or place of origin) (Badan Bahasa, 2018, "Pulang" entry).

Consequently, the diachronic change from TL to TB2 reframes the theology of Hosea. It moves from a functional instruction regarding conduct (*balik*) to an emotional invitation regarding relationship (*pulang*). Theological meaning is thus ameliorated, as repentance becomes not merely a change of direction but a return to relational intimacy. This aligns with broader trends in modern semantics where abstract theological concepts are mapped onto domain-specific terms that evoke positive emotional responses (affective meaning) rather than neutral spatial descriptions.

Table 4. Semantic Abstraction in the term "בְּרִיתִי - *běrit* (H1285)"

Word	Original Hebrew Meaning	Meaning in KJV (1611)	Meaning in NKJV (1982)	Meaning in TL (1954)	Meaning in TB2 (2023)	Type of Change in Bahasa Indonesia
<i>běrit</i>	Covenant	Covenant	Covenant	<i>Suatu perjanjian</i>	<i>perjanjian</i>	Abstraction

Table 4 analyzes the translation of the Hebrew term בְּרִיתִי (*běrit*, H1285) in Hosea 2:18. This term is central to Old Testament theology, denoting a binding agreement or treaty between God and His people. The comparative data reveal a contrast between the lexical stability of the English tradition and a significant move toward Abstraction in the Indonesian tradition.

The English translations exhibit complete continuity. Both the King James Version (1611) and the New King James Version (1982) translate the term as "Covenant". According to Smith's Bible Dictionary, the Hebrew *běrit* primarily means "a cutting", referencing the

ancient custom of cutting animals to ratify a bond. By consistently using "Covenant," the English translations preserve a technical theological term that distinguishes this divine bond from a common human "contract."

In contrast, the Indonesian translations demonstrate a clear trajectory of Semantic Abstraction. The [Terjemahan Lama \(1954\)](#) renders the phrase as "*suatu perjanjian*." The KBBI defines the specifier *suatu* as "*satu; hanya satu (untuk menyatakan benda yang kurang tentu)*"—meaning "one; only one (to declare an object that is less certain)". By attaching *suatu*, the older translation treats the covenant as a concrete, countable object, "a certain agreement". It frames the divine bond as a specific instance of a contract, conceptually limiting it to a "*benda*" (thing/object). The [Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2 \(2023\)](#) removes this specifier, rendering it simply as "*perjanjian*." In the framework of semantic change, this represents a shift from Concrete to Abstract. By eliminating the indefinite marker *suatu*, the translation liberates the term from being a "less certain object". It elevates *perjanjian* from a countable noun (an agreement) to an abstract theological concept (The Covenant). This shift diachronically suggests that for the modern reader, God's covenant is not understood as "one of many" agreements, but as an absolute, overarching reality that defines the relationship between the divine and the human.

Table 5. Semantic Formal Stability in the term “*רַחֲמָא* - *ruhāmā* (H7355)”

Word	Original Hebrew Meaning	Meaning in KJV (1611)	Meaning in NKJV (1982)	Meaning in TL (1954)	Meaning in TB2 (2023)	Type of Change In Bahasa Indonesia
<i>ruhāmā</i>	Have compassion	Ruhamah	Mercy	<i>Rukhama</i>	<i>Ruhama</i>	Formal Stability

Table 5 examines the translation of the Hebrew term *רַחֲמָא* (*ruhāmā*, H7355), which appears in Hosea 2:1. This term serves a dual function in the text: it is both a symbolic proper name given to Gomer’s daughter and a theological declaration of God’s restored compassion. The comparative data reveal a sharp divergence in translation strategy: the English tradition undergoes a radical semantic explicitation, while the Indonesian tradition maintains formal stability.

In the English tradition, the [King James Version \(1611\)](#) renders the term as "*Ruhamah*," strictly transliterating the Hebrew proper noun. Smith’s Bible Dictionary identifies this as a "symbolical" name addressed to the "daughters of the people". By retaining the name, the KJV preserves the historical and narrative identity of the character but leaves the theological meaning opaque to the lay reader. However, the New King James Version (1982) shifts the translation to "Mercy". This represents a move toward Semantic Explicitation and Internalization. Easton’s Bible Dictionary defines Mercy as "compassion for the miserable" and notes it is an "exercise of mercy towards the sons of men". By translating the name into its abstract definition, the NKJV prioritizes the internal theological state over the external narrative label. The reader is no longer reading a name; they are encountering the concept of divine compassion directly.

In contrast, the Indonesian translations demonstrate semantic stability. The [Terjemahan Lama \(1954\)](#) uses "*Rukhama*", and the [Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2 \(2023\)](#) uses

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"*Ruhama*." This slight shift represents only an orthographic adaptation to modern Indonesian spelling conventions (removing the Dutch-influenced 'kh'). According to the Alkitab.mobi Encyclopedia, "*Rukhama*" remains a "*nama simbolis*" (symbolic name) meaning "*dikasihani*" (to be loved/pitied). Unlike the modern English version, the Indonesian Bible chooses not to translate the meaning directly into the text (e.g., using "*Belas Kasihan*"). Instead, it forces the reader to treat the term as a proper noun, preserving the original meaning.

From a diachronic perspective, this highlights a key difference in semantic evolution. The modern English translation creates a subjective reading experience (Internalization) where the theology is explicit. The Indonesian translation preserves an objective reading experience (Formal Stability), where the ancient name stands as a monument that the reader must interpret independently. This contrast illustrates how translation traditions negotiate meaning either by explicating theology within the text or by preserving symbolic form and deferring interpretation to the reader.

## Discussion

The findings of this research show that diachronic semantic change in the translation of the Bible can be observed not only in linguistic terms but also in translational and cultural orientations. Although the English translation tradition exhibits relative lexical stability, the Indonesian translations exhibit systematic patterns of semantic change. It includes semantic narrowing, subjectivization, amelioration, and abstraction. These patterns indicate that translation practices are shaped by differing priorities in preserving form, conveying meaning, and adapting to the target culture. From a theoretical perspective, differences in translation orientation can be seen in the concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence (Nida & Taber, 1969). In English translations, especially the King James and New King James versions, the tendency toward formal equivalence is evident in the preservation of lexical and formal correspondence with the Hebrew source text. In this case, theological vocabulary shows relatively consistent historical and metaphorical content. In Indonesian translations, however, a stronger orientation toward dynamic equivalence is evident because they tend to reinterpret lexical content to accommodate readers in the target society. The shift in content from general theological concepts to specific, emotionally charged expressions prioritizes conveying meaning over maintaining form.

This distinction can be further clarified in terms of domestication and foreignization (Venuti, 1995). While a level of foreignization is evident in the English translations, which retain historically specific but culturally distant terms, the Indonesian translations display a strong domesticating trend, rendering abstract theological terms into culturally familiar and cognitively accessible expressions. While such a trend may increase intelligibility, it may also narrow the semantic scope of the original text. Nevertheless, such a trend is consistent with a broader model of cultural semantics, which posits that meaning is recreated within the cognitive constraints of a target language. Indeed, the semantic shifts seen in the Indonesian translations, such as subjectivization and amelioration, suggest a trend toward more internalized and relational forms of theological meaning. This suggests a broader trend in contemporary language use that tends to render abstract religious meanings in affective and experiential terms.

Importantly, the patterns emerging from the study indicate that diachronic semantic change in translation is not only systematic but also ideologically driven. The Indonesian translations show a clear trend from more formal, literal translations to more explicit, interpretative forms of theological representation. This shift reflects an emphasis on clarity, intelligibility, and cultural resonance for contemporary readers. Thus, translation is not simply the transfer of meaning from source to target language but an interpretative process that actively mediates theological meaning and understanding across language and cultural boundaries. The implications of the study's findings extend beyond the Book of Hosea into a more fundamental area, pointing to the need to reconceptualize translation as a dynamic process of meaning negotiation across time and culture. Rather than viewing semantic change as a loss of fidelity, it should be understood as an adaptive process that allows theological concepts to remain meaningful and communicable across different cultural contexts.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study expands upon traditional diachronic research by offering a comparative, cross-cultural analysis of English and Indonesian biblical translations. Its novelty lies in showing that diachronic semantic change in sacred texts functions as a mechanism of theological localization, rather than mere linguistic evolution. While semantic change is widely studied, this research proves that non-Western traditions systematically use semantic narrowing, subjectivization, and domestication to translate ancient Hebrew concepts into culturally and emotionally resonant meanings. Consequently, this study reframes translation not as a process of semantic loss but as an ideologically driven space in which theological meaning is actively adapted to serve the target culture.

Drawing on these findings, this study outlines several specific recommendations. First, Bible translation committees would benefit from integrating cultural semantics directly into their guidelines, specifically by documenting when and why a new edition favors dynamic equivalence over formal structural alignment. Second, developers of theological dictionaries and lexicographical tools should consider expanding their entries beyond traditional etymology to trace the evolution of the emotional and relational meanings of religious terms over time. Third, researchers should test this comparative framework in other linguistic environments in the future, especially within low-resource or minority languages. Doing so will help clarify whether the push toward subjectivization and domestication is a widespread trend in modern religious translation or a unique feature of the Indonesian sociocultural landscape.

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