



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Cover It Up! Visual Euphemization Strategies for Transforming Non- Religious Songs into Islamic Songs in Music Videos

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Abstract

In Indonesia, covering songs with an Islamic theme has become a trend that is gaining more and more popularity. Several content creators have recently covered non-religious songs by changing the lyrics to ones loaded with Islamic teachings. As the cover songs are uploaded on YouTube, inevitably, there are versions of cover music videos in which some elements of the original music videos are euphemized to fulfill the purpose of religious wisdom. This study not only attempts to examine the visual elements euphemized in the cover music videos but also the visual euphemization strategies employed by the content creators. The data were gathered from YouTube in the form of twelve original music videos and their covers. Furthermore, a localization approach, the theory of euphemism, and para-adaptation were employed to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed that four visual elements were euphemized in these cover songs: the properties, costumes, locations, and interactions among the singers or models. Delving deeper into this, the researchers proposed four visual euphemization strategies, including peripheralization (euphemization of the properties), vestimentarization (euphemization of

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Citation in APA style: Pratama, I. D., Purnomo, S. F. L. A., Rohmatika, A., & Hutami, N. (2024). Cover it up! Visual euphemisation strategies for transforming non-religious songs into Islamic songs in music videos. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 11(2), 000-000.

Received January 9, 2023; Revised June 29, 2023; Accepted April 20, 2024; Published Online May 31, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i2.30188>

the costumes), locationalization (euphemization of the locations), and interactionalization (euphemization of the interactions). These findings interestingly highlight that there is a common visual euphemization strategy used by content creators when covering music videos of non-religious songs into Islamic songs. Thus, the findings suggest that content creators may apply the four proposed strategies to create acceptable cover music videos to spread Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Euphemisms, music video, song, visual euphemization strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of cover songs has been enormously admired these days, particularly due to the emerging era of digital content. Previously, cover songs were merely described as new recordings of existing songs performed by other musicians. From the 1930s until the 1950s, cover songs were a popular trend, especially when black hits were recreated to gain attention from white audiences (Schiffer, 2010). This historical signal serves as unblemished evidence that cover songs are created for ideological purposes. The trend has evolved as cover songs are now produced for various purposes. People are aware of the digital media platforms that can be used to spread their creativity. Cover songs for monetization are another new development. Content creators recreate formerly popular songs and upload the cover versions on YouTube to gain viewers and profit (Cusic, 2005). There is also a trend where content creators on YouTube establish cover songs with religious teachings. These phenomena are examples of the recreation of popular songs for religious purposes. The lyrics are changed to new ones with meanings entirely different from the original.

The use of cover songs for religious purposes is a practice that can be found in several parts of the world. Turkson (1995) mentioned that Africans in the Gold Coast changed the Fante sacred lyrics to those containing the story of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, a Christian-majority country in Asia, English gospels are covered through translation and hybridization, relying on American pop music popular among worshipers (Stallsmith, 2021). Another interesting example is Japan, where Protestant gospels were localized from African-American religious singing and performed widely among non-Christian performers, as Christians in this country are less than 1% of the total population (Minako, 2013). In a Muslim-majority country like Indonesia, the practice of Islamic preaching using cover songs can be found through the acculturation of Javanese traditional songs and Islamic teachings (Cahyono et al., 2020), and the adaptation of Dangdut Koplo for Islamic preaching (Nuryani et al., 2021).

Previous studies discussing religious cover songs, as mentioned above, have not yet explored the aspect of imagery encompassing the music videos of the cover versions. Indeed, the existence of social media platforms such as YouTube enables content creators to publish cover songs in the form of music videos. Considering this, the concept of localization seems applicable to portray the phenomenon. Localization is defined as the adaptation of linguistic and cultural elements of digital content

according to the purposes of the products (O'Brien & Schäler, 2007; Pym, 2003). In the context of localization, a text is not defined as a single element. Instead, it is a fusion of elements, including the verbal, visual, and operative, which form a unity of meaning (Esselink, 2000, 2002, 2003; Purnomo, 2019). In the case of a music video, the verbal element is the lyrics; the visual element is the visualization of the lyrics in the form of a music video, while the operative element is the embodiment of a song into a music video, which is different from a song that is not visualized. As the discussion has been narrowed to cover music videos, the study conducted by Constandinides (2019) is suitable. Constandinides (2019) used the term 'user-made YouTube cover songs' to refer to cover songs in which music videos are recreated and then uploaded to YouTube. Recreating the cover music videos is not simply composing new products for new target viewers. It is revealed that the creators of cover music videos retain some notable elements of the original music videos and redesign them in the cover versions. Consequently, the visual elements of the cover music videos are similar to the original ones; the pattern that Constandinides (2019) called 'para-adaptation'.

Further analysis revealed that when the issue of para-adaptation is applied to the phenomenon of popular songs converted into Islamic songs, the practice of refining the visual aspects is evident. Some elements of the original music videos are softened to meet the Islamic norms, which uphold politeness in every aspect of human life. This procedure is necessary since religious songs convey invocations to Islamic teachings, which must be wrapped in a well-bred performance. In dealing with this phenomenon, the theory of euphemism can be applied. Euphemism is known as the practice of altering or softening impolite, harsh, rude, or taboo expressions with more pleasant and polite ones for reasons of religious fear or moral sensibility (Burrige, 2012; Crespo-Fernández, 2020; Gomez, 2009; Kany, 1960). Most studies discuss euphemism and its correlation to verbal features (Asseel, 2020; Burrige, 2012; Halmari, 2011; Matusitz, 2016; Purnomo et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2010). On the other hand, the practice of euphemization can also be seen in visual features. Visual euphemization is considered a substitution of a visual sign due to the avoidance of face-threatening acts (Matusitz, 2016). Many discussions on visual euphemization occur under the theme of the correlation between photos and news within journalistic rules (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Chouliaraki & Blaagaard, 2013; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018).

Visual euphemization in the form of cover music videos involving Islamic teachings has not been explored, whereas it can be an appealing study to investigate visual euphemization strategies in adjusting visual elements. Producing Islamic religious content in the form of videos requires complex contemplation. The elements appearing in the videos must represent Islamic teachings, which is the ultimate purpose of the production. For example, in the case of an original music video showing people in revealing clothes, that do not represent Islamic teachings, the costumes must be euphemized to fit the purpose of Islamic preaching. Similarly, intimate interactions among models in the original music video, such as showing physical touch between an unmarried man and woman, must be changed to meet Islamic principles guiding relationships between men and women. Concerning this issue, Genette (1997) in his palimpsest theory used the term 'transtextuality' to define all elements that compose a text about other texts. In the practice of para-adaptation of cover music videos with an

Islamic theme, euphemization, and transtextuality are two procedures that content creators follow.

The aforementioned previous studies leave a gap in analyzing the visual euphemization practices conducted by content creators who cover popular songs into Islamic songs. Departing from this gap, this study attempted to address the unexplored area through the following questions:

1. What are the visual elements euphemized in the cover music videos for Islamic preaching?
2. What types of euphemization strategies can be proposed considering the visual elements being euphemized in cover music videos for Islamic preaching?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Euphemism

In communication practices, speakers typically avoid phrases that can offend the interlocutor. This effort can be made by implementing euphemisms. [Katamba \(2004\)](#) said that euphemism is an attempt to replace disrespectful expressions with more polite ones. Meanwhile, [Gomez \(2009\)](#) stated that euphemism is the substitution of an unpleasant word with a pleasant one when the former is to be avoided for reasons of religious fear, moral scruples, or courtesy. It is explained that unpleasant words are expressions avoided for religious, moral, and ethical reasons. [Crespo-Fernández \(2020\)](#) asserted that euphemism is used when a speaker wants to speak about the unspeakable. This unspeakable term is known as a taboo. Furthermore, [Burridge \(2012\)](#) described things that are considered taboo as usually related to personal matters, body functions, sex, anger, dishonesty, illness, death, fear, dangerous animals, and things related to God.

These experts' explanations illustrate that as a linguistic phenomenon, euphemisms are also closely related to extralinguistic factors, mainly related to culture. Things considered polite or appropriate in one culture are not necessarily considered appropriate in another. In relation to linguistic phenomena, [Burridge \(2012\)](#) explained that, in general, there are three euphemization strategies: analogy (generalizing the term 'taboo'), distortion (modifying the term 'taboo'), and borrowing (borrowing terms from other cultures). The selection of a euphemization strategy is carried out by its purpose. Speakers can use euphemisms by creating new terms or by obscuring softened terms. In particular, various strategies can be used when the speaker wants to implement euphemization. These specific strategies are related to the use of figurative language, including hyperbole, irony, metonymy, hyponymy, synecdoche, and so on.

In this study, the theory of euphemism is used to identify the strategies employed by YouTube content creators in adjusting non-Islamic visual elements to more acceptable Islamic visual elements when covering popular songs into Islamic songs. Euphemism is clearly evident as the purpose of covering the songs is for religious aims. Euphemism, as discussed in this subsection, generally pertains to verbal phenomena. Thus, there is a more precise theory that focuses on the visual aspect, namely visual euphemization.

2.2 Visual Euphemization

The study of euphemism has been widely analyzed in the field of verbal euphemisms, as explained in the previous subsection. In fact, language behavior does not only revolve around verbal issues. Non-verbal factors also contribute to creating the concept of meaning in communication. One of the non-verbal factors that contribute to creating the concept of meaning is the image or visual factor. [Van Winkle \(2016\)](#) explained visual euphemism as the replacement of a visual sign (image, video, color, etc.) with another visual sign to reduce actions that can threaten the face of the opponent. Visual euphemisms can be used to provide an actual analogy or deliberately distorted information. The practice of visual euphemization can be found in journalistic works ([Bednarek & Caple, 2012](#); [Chouliaraki & Blaagaard, 2013](#); [Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018](#)). For example, news of terrorism, rapes, or bombings in electronic and print media is often accompanied by illustrative photos rather than photos of the actual events. [Ojebuyi and Salawu \(2018\)](#) stated that in journalism, news editors are responsible for delivering news accurately with images that represent the news being reported. Visual euphemization in photos or images contained in the news is a strategy to soften news that is considered offensive or sensitive concerning public reaction to the news ([Matusitz, 2016](#)).

Research on visual euphemization mainly focuses on journalism, and none of it, to date, discusses the phenomenon of visual euphemism in cover songs made by YouTube content creators. Additionally, this research focuses on cover songs created from popular songs with non-religious themes into Islamic religious songs, a very interesting yet less explored phenomenon that fills a gap in the study and introduces new insights.

2.3 Para-adaptation

Para-adaptation emerges as a broader discussion of adaptation. Previous studies have discussed adaptation as the recreation of a book or novel into movies ([Constandinides, 2013a, 2013b](#); [Fehrle, 2019](#)). The emergence of digital content has invited amateur producers or content creators to recreate formerly popular works into their own versions. The most famous examples are videos that can be easily found on YouTube. [Constandinides \(2013a, 2013b, 2019\)](#) presented the term ‘para-adaptation’ to describe the practice of amateur producers composing texts based on formerly popular content. In correlation with the establishment of YouTube and its popularity, [Constandinides \(2019\)](#) introduced another term, ‘user-made YouTube videos’, referring to videos created by YouTube content creators based on other formerly popular videos. Considering this term, cover songs are included as examples of ‘user-made YouTube videos’. The interesting aspect of ‘user-made YouTube videos’ is that these videos are created based on particular elements familiar in the original videos. In other words, the content creators do not create the videos without any ‘guidelines’. They base their creativity on the original videos so that when viewers watch the cover video, they recognize it as a recreation of the more popular ones.

Cover songs are made for various purposes, such as ideological, monetization, and even religious purposes. Cover songs and their numerous purposes become an interesting field to analyze in various disciplines, including arts, business, music, and even linguistics. This study emphasizes cover songs composed for a religious purpose,

specifically for spreading Islamic teachings. In relation to para-adaptation, this study focuses on the alterations made by content creators in adjusting the visual elements of the original music video to align with Islamic teachings that must be represented in the cover version.

2.4 Localization

Many experts explain the phenomenon of localization by comparing it to the practice of translation. Pym (2003) stated that translation is just a small part of localization. Meanwhile, Anastasiou and Schäler (2010) explained that localization goes far beyond translation as it involves a broader range of factors than just translating a text. This statement is based on the fact that the localization process comprises more steps than translation. While translation concerns merely the transfer of meanings from one language to another, localization covers both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. Considering this, Khairullin (2019) added that the purpose of localization is to transform the verbal information of a particular product by considering the linguistic and cultural means to meet the needs of the target consumers or locale.

The understanding of cultural factors evolves as the growth of technology influences the practice of localization. Cultural factors become more complex when it comes to localizing digital content. It cannot be ignored that the emergence of digital content containing texts, videos, images, audio, and software gives rise to new practices in the world of localization. O'Brien and Schäler (2007) stated that digital products, such as video games, advertisements, and songs with complex elements, also need to be considered when converted to other languages. The scope of cultural adjustment becomes wider as it includes the analysis of various aspects, including images, colors, audio, video, costumes, etc.

3. METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative study using a localization approach. It analyzed cover songs that involved the transformation of non-religious original songs into Islamic cover songs. These cover songs were then uploaded on YouTube, which involved the creation of cover music videos that also adapted the original music videos. The localization approach can be applied, considering that it views text as a unity of meaning that consists not only of verbal elements but also of other elements, such as visual and operative elements (Esselink, 2000, 2002, 2003; Purnomo, 2019). The verbal element is the core element. Thus, the unit of analysis in this study was the verbal element, supported by the analysis of the visual elements and the operative aspects of the music videos and songs, which functioned as Islamic teachings. The theory of localization in the context of cover music videos was then linked to the concept of para-adaptation as defined by Constandinides (2019) to identify the visual elements that had been euphemized in the cover music videos. The aforementioned theories were then integrated with the theory of euphemism (Burridge, 2012; Crespo-Fernández, 2020; Gomez, 2009; Kany, 1960) and visual euphemization (Matusitz, 2016) to formulate the strategies used in composing the cover music videos.

3.1 Data Source

The researchers collected data from YouTube. Twelve cover songs and their twelve original songs were selected as the data sources. The music videos of both the original and cover songs were investigated for this research. Since the focus was on the visual elements instead of the verbal elements, the languages of the original songs varied. This did not affect the process or results of the analysis as the verbal element was not analyzed. Meanwhile, the cover songs were in Indonesian, as the phenomena of Islamic cover songs in this research occurred in the context of Indonesia.

In selecting the cover songs, purposive sampling was applied using the following criteria: (1) the original songs had their own original music videos, (2) the cover songs contained Islamic-themed lyrics, (3) the cover songs had their own versions of cover music videos, and (4) the cover songs were targeted at Gen Z and millennials. The cover music videos and the original ones were then compared to identify the visual elements that had been euphemized. This categorization was then classified into a typology showing the strategies of visual euphemization in composing Islamic cover songs. The twelve original music videos and their covers are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Titles, artists, and the URL of selected original and cover songs.

No.	Original songs			Cover songs		
	Titles	Artists	URL	Titles	Artists	URL
1.	Senorita	Shawn Mendez & Camila Cabello	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pkh8UtuejGw	Sosialita	Nada Sikkah featuring Dodi Hidayatullah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN4loYT5jPI
2.	Havana	Camila Cabello featuring Young Thug	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ0mxQXmLsk	Ingat Pada-Nya	Dodi Hidayatullah featuring Ibnu TJ	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk4G5ou4p4g
3.	Dance Monkey	Tones And I	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0hyYWKXF0Q	Move On	Nada Sikkah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtSMeYa4kg
4.	You are the Reason	Calum Scott	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShZ978fBl6Y	You are the Reason	Dodi Hidayatullah featuring Syakir Daulay	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5z5qlLBHlg
5.	A Whole New Word	Zayn Malik & Zhavia Ward	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg_zwKsSEY	A Whole New World Islamic Version	Nada Sikkah featuring Syakir Daulay	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xblr9ehHII8
6.	Salah Apa	ILIR 7	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4WCi4JmVw	Entah Apa yang Merasukimu	Nada Sikkah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNV0NKls1gw
7.	Memories	Maroon 5	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIPhMPnQ58k	Memories Muslim Cover	Nada Sikkah feat. Dodi Hidayatullah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fO1Poufze0

Table 1 continued...

8.	Butter	BTS	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMweEpGluU	Zikir	Putih Abu- Abu	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GN-HaHVJRXA
9.	Dynamite	BTS	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdZLi9oWNZg	Maksiat	MTS	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lA7kaueNtw
10.	Despacito	Luis Fonsi featuring Daddy Yankee	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJQP7kiw5Fk	Thank You, My Dear	Dodi Hidayatullah featuring Ibnu TJ	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKR0TcBqNqY
11.	Ziggy Zagga	Gen Halilintar	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCOjopku3bk	Dzikir Zakat	Santri Gontor	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp_ihjgJY9Y
12.	Boys with Love	BTS feat. Halsey	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsX3ATc3FbA	Ngaji Quran	Putih Abu- Abu	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R46I4zDBL3Q

3.2 Data Collection

The data were collected from YouTube using the steps of data collection as proposed by Miles et al. (2014). The researchers set the criteria for original songs and cover songs, as mentioned in the data source section, to be used as data. The researchers typed the titles of popular songs and then searched for their cover music videos in Indonesian versions. The original music videos had to be those initially posted by the original artists or their labels. In other words, the original music videos used as data were not fan-made videos. Meanwhile, the Indonesian cover versions had to be under the theme of Islamic religious songs. Similarly, the cover music videos used as data in this study were those published by content creators who created the cover songs. The two versions of the music videos were then listed as data.

In the data display step, the researchers transcribed the lyrics and took notes on the visual elements found in the original and cover music videos. In the conclusion-drawing step, the researchers analyzed the data qualitatively to come up with meaningful findings. The analysis was revisited several times to validate the results of this research.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis technique proposed by Spradley (2016) was applied in this research. There are four steps of data analysis, including domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and finding cultural themes.

During domain analysis, the para-adaptation theory as defined by Constandinides (2019) was applied to select the songs and music videos used as data in this research. In taxonomy analysis, the researchers compared the cover music videos with the original music videos. The visual elements that were euphemized were

identified using the transtextuality theory composed by Genette (1997). In the componential step, the researchers applied the concept of euphemization derived from verbal euphemization (Burridge, 2012; Crespo-Fernández, 2020; Kany, 1960). When analyzing the visual elements, the concept of verbal euphemization was applied to visual elements, resulting in visual euphemization (Matusitz, 2016). The classification of visual euphemization was then interpreted using theories of localization (Anastasiou & Schäler, 2010; O'Brien & Schäler, 2007; Pym, 2003) to compose a proposed typology of visual euphemization strategies in cover music videos of popular songs into Islamic songs. The final phase involved finding cultural themes employed by considering Islamic preaching or *da'wah* as the purpose of the cover songs in analyzing the data.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Visual Elements Euphemized in Islamic Cover Music Videos

The researchers compared the original and cover versions of the music videos to identify visual elements that were similar and softened in the cover versions. In this research, the term 'soften' is equivalent to 'euphemize' since the alteration of the visual elements is aligned with the purpose of Islamic teaching. The findings indicate that there are four visual elements euphemized in the cover music videos: properties, costumes, locations, and interactions.

4.1.1 Properties

Several properties of the original music videos were found to have undergone some changes to highlight the ambiance of Islam in the cover versions. The changes in the properties tend to be classified as euphemization, as the purpose is to substitute non-Islamic objects with Islamic ones. It should be emphasized that the properties in the cover versions must have the same context as when they appear in the original versions.

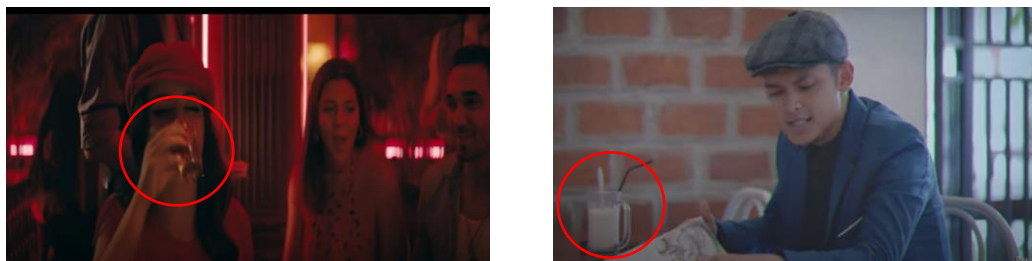


Figure 1. Left: Properties in the songs 'Havana' by Camila Cabello; right: 'Ingat pada-Nya' by Dodi Hidayatullah.

In the 'Havana' music video, beers appear as one of the properties since the setting of the video was in a bar. Meanwhile, in Dodi Hidayatullah's cover video, the bar was changed to a restaurant, and the beers were substituted with milk or coffee, aligning with Islamic teachings. Viewed from the perspective of Islam, which regards beer as a forbidden or *haram* beverage, drinking beer is prohibited for Muslims.

Therefore, the content creator intentionally replaced the beer with a property that aligns with Islamic teachings.



Figure 2. Left: Properties in ‘Dance Monkey’ (Tons & I); right: ‘Move On’ (Nada Sikkah).

In music videos, the replacement of certain properties to align with Islamic values is influenced by the narratives they portray. For instance, the ‘Dance Monkey’ music video depicts characters seeking happiness and relaxation through beer with friends. In contrast, the cover version ‘Move On’ by Nada Sikkah presents a similar theme of dealing with sadness after a breakup but replacing beer with turning to the Al-Quran. The protagonist finds solace by reading the Al-Quran with her best friend at a mosque. This substitution aligns with Islamic teachings, which encourage Muslims to seek comfort in the Al-Quran during difficult times.

Visual euphemization in music videos conveys *da’wah*, sharing Islamic teachings, in a way that appeals to youth. In Figure 3, a popular song performed by a well-known Korean boy band BTS entitled ‘Butter’ was covered in ‘Zikir’ by a girl band consisting of six high-school students, Putih Abu-Abu. *Zikir* or *dhikr* refers to an activity of worship in the remembrance of God in Islam. This activity is usually conducted using *tasbeih*, the properties held by the girls in their hands in the cover music videos. *Tasbeih* here was used as a replacement for the cards held by the BTS members. In the original version, these cards reflect identification cards which are usually held by prisoners once they enter the prison. The use of these cards seemingly represents the lyric, “like a criminal undercover”, which is in contrast with their imperturbable physical appearance in the lyric, “when I look in the mirror, I’ll melt your heart into two, I got that superstar glow”. Considering the fact that BTS is one of the most popular idol groups in Indonesia, this composed and charming idol concept is changed with a pious impression of young Muslimah holding *tasbeih*. This fun, and yet, entertaining euphemization carries the message that Muslim youth should get used to worshipping God at all times. The choice of BTS as an idol within the youth and its creative cover may ease the purpose of *da’wah*, especially to the youth.

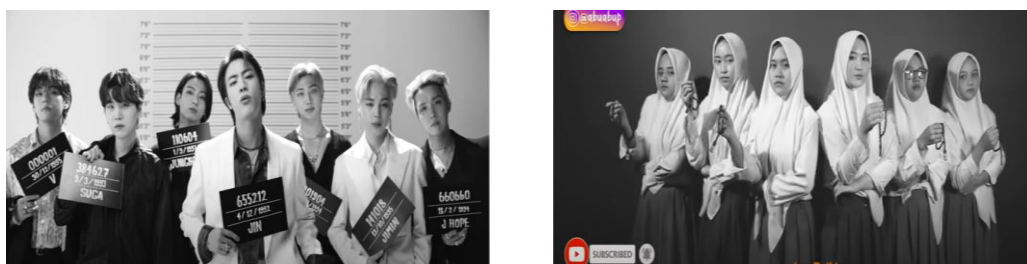


Figure 3. Left: Properties in ‘Butter’ (BTS); right: ‘Zikir’ (Putih Abu-Abu).

4.1.2 Costumes

Costumes are clothes worn by the singers and the music video models. It was revealed that costumes were the most dominant visual element euphemized in the cover music videos. This is because the original music videos always involved artists whose clothes did not represent the Islamic identity. Indeed, most of the original music videos featured revealing clothes that contradicted Islamic principles. Meanwhile, the cover songs carried Islamic teachings that required the singers and models to convey these religious messages, one of which was through clothes that characterized Muslims.



Figure 4. Left: Costumes in ‘Senorita’ (Shawn Mendez featuring Camila Cabello); right: ‘Sosialita’ (Nada Sikkah featuring Dodi Hidayatullah).

In the original music video, ‘Senorita’ was sung by a duet of a male and a female singer wearing revealing clothes. Shawn Mendez wore a thin white T-shirt, typical of summer clothes, while Camila Cabello was portrayed as a barmaid wearing a short pink dress. In contrast, in the cover music video entitled ‘Sosialita’, the song was sung by Nada Sikkah and Dodi Hidayatullah, preserving the duet concept from the original version. However, the costumes they wore were euphemized with casual clothes covering the *awrat* (body parts, according to Islam, which are mandatory to be covered by clothing).

Another interesting finding was discovered in the music videos of ‘Dynamite’ and its cover version ‘Maksiat’. As seen in Figure 5, there is a similarity in the idea of highlighting the concept of boybands. However, there is a change of impression in the costumes of the singers. BTS wore casual and colorful costumes, typically the image of Korean boyband artists. Meanwhile, in the cover version, MTS wore a white *baju koko*, a typical male Muslim shirt usually worn during religious occasions. This *baju koko* is combined with a *kopiah*, a cap worn by male Muslims, and a *sorban*, a scarf that can be worn as a head cover by male Muslims, making the Islamic touch even more dominant.

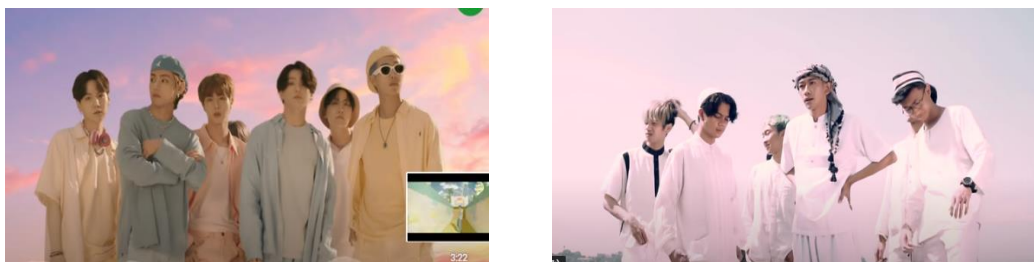


Figure 5. Left: Costumes in ‘Dynamite’ (BTS); right: ‘Maksiat’ (MTS).

Further findings indicated that all content creators changed the costumes worn by the artists and models in the original music videos into Islamic clothing in the cover versions. In the 'A Whole New World' cover music video, for example, Nada Sikkah, the female singer, wore a veil or *jilbab* as the identity of a Muslimah in Islam. The figures of women wearing veils occurred in all cover music videos used as the data in this research. Another proof is the music video of 'Memories' sung by Maroon 5, showing Adam Levine, the vocalist, with a topless performance, though the camera only focused on his face until the top part of his shoulders. Nada Sikkah and Dodi Hidayatullah, on the other hand, wore Islamic clothing in the cover version, though they still highlighted the casual fashion style.

Costumes give audiences the first impression of a music video since they are attached to the singers or models, the main characters in the music videos. Therefore, considering *da'wah* as the main purpose of the cover version, the singers and models needed to represent their Islamic identity through the clothes they wore.

4.1.3 Locations

The next visual element euphemized was the settings or the locations of the music videos. The content creators changed or deleted settings that were contrary to the image of Islam.



Figure 6. Left: Locations in 'Despacito' (Luis Fonsi featuring Daddy Yankee); right: 'Thank You My Dear' (Dodi Hidayatullah featuring Ibnu TJ).

The opening scene of 'Thank You My Dear' had a similar concept to 'Despacito', showing the beauty of the ocean and beach. The beach remained the sole location for the rest of the music video in 'Thank You, My Dear', whereas its original version had several other locations, including a crowded street and a bar, full of people with party atmospheres. The presence of the ocean and beach brought the same ambiance in the cover version. However, since 'the bar and party things' were not in line with the teaching of Islam, these locations were changed from the cover version.

'The bar and party scenes' exposed in the original music videos were also found in 'Havana' and 'Senorita' songs. The strategy of euphemizing the location was also applied by changing the setting of the video to a restaurant (in the 'Havana' cover version) and a house (in the 'Senorita' cover version). The concept of a bar and a restaurant remained related and similar. Meanwhile, the choice of the house as the location in 'Sosialita', the cover version of 'Senorita', was due to the narrative of the music video, which was changed from the romance of an unmarried couple in the original song into the story of a married couple in the cover version (based on Islamic teaching, romance is supposed to be developed in or after marriage).



Figure 7. Left: ‘Ziggy Zagga’ (Gen Halilintar); right: ‘Zikir Zakat’ (Santri Gontor).

The cover version, sung by students of Pondok Pesantren Gontor, one of Indonesia’s largest and most popular *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), cleverly mirrored the original song’s title. Meanwhile, the original song entitled ‘Ziggy Zagga’ is performed by a famous YouTube content creator, Gen Halilintar. Gen Halilintar is a popular YouTube content creator in Indonesia who successfully shaped their identity through social media platforms. This family is known as a wealthy family consisting of a mother, a father, and their eleven children who love traveling abroad for business and gaining experience. The mother is also popular as she raises her children with an inspiring parenting style. The luxurious life of Gen Halilintar is reflected in the ‘Ziggy Zagga’ music video, which takes place in several countries. Hence, euphemization is applied by changing the setting of the video when the song cover changes its concept to ‘Zikir Zakat’. *Zikir* or *dhikr*, as mentioned earlier, is an Islamic practice of remembering and invoking God through repeated phrases or prayers, often using prayer beads (*tasbeih*). Meanwhile, *zakat* is one of the Five Pillars of Islam; it is the obligatory giving of 2.5% of one’s savings to charity, aimed at helping those in need and promoting social justice. This cover version shows the *pesantren* as the location. This cover also depicts the life and identity of the singers as the *santri* (the students who study in *pesantren*).

The findings in this category showed that visual euphemization in terms of location may include deletion and modification. Deletion refers to the omission of locations that are considered inappropriate in Islamic teaching, as found in ‘Despacito’ and ‘Thank You, My Dear’. In addition, modification deals with the conversion of the original location to a similar location having a similar meaning as the original, as seen in ‘Ziggy Zagga’ and ‘Zikir Zakat’.

4.1.4 Interaction

Interaction in this case means the relationships or contacts between the singers or models. In some data, it was found that there were physical contacts involving the singers and models, for example when it was told that the models and singers were in intimate moments, traveling, and dancing. Such interactions involving non-*mahram* couples are deemed forbidden in Islam. A non-*mahram* is someone of the opposite sex who is not a close-blooded relative and with whom marriage is permissible. Interaction with a non-*mahram* is regulated to maintain modesty.

One of the scenes in ‘You Are the Reason’ by Callum Scott portrays the interaction of a gay couple. The issue of LGBT, though contradictory in a general discussion, has a clear and strict rule in Islam. Any LGBT practices are prohibited and must not be argued. Thus, this scene was deleted in the cover version created by Dodi Hidayatullah. The original version used love and romance as the themes. Dodi

Hidayatullah maintained the themes but, at the same time, inserted an Islamic touch on them. It resulted in a love story between a young man and woman in an ‘Islamic way’. There is no physical touch or other *haram* activities involving these two youngsters.

The change in the theme of the songs may also influence the change of interaction in the music video. Scenes in ‘Salah Apa’ sung by ILIR 7 showed the interactions between two highly passionate lovebirds. Nada Sikkah, who created the cover version, changed the theme of this popular song into the story of a *santri*’s life in *pesantren*. She made use of the popular line of the original song *entah apa yang merasukimu* ‘I have no idea what possesses you’ as the refrain in the cover version and linked it with the habits of the *santri*. Consequently, the romance scenes were changed into scenes showing the activities of the *santri* in *pesantren*.

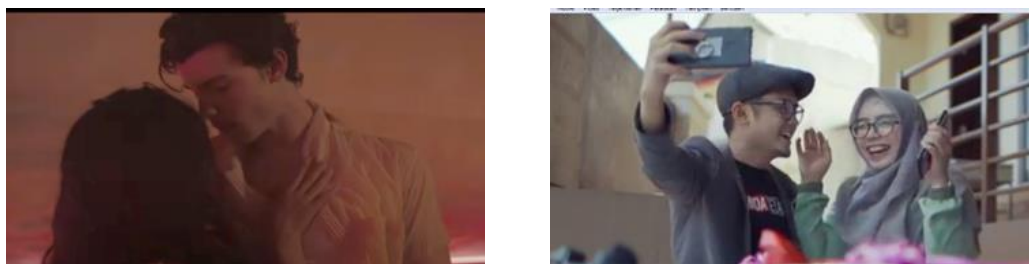


Figure 8. Left: ‘Senorita’ (Shawn Mendez featuring Camila Cabello); right: ‘Sosialita’ (Nada Sikkah featuring Dodi Hidayatullah)

Another interesting finding is shown in the cover version of ‘Senorita’ entitled ‘Sosialita’. The original version shows many passionate interactions between Shawn Mendez and Camila Cabello as the story is about a one-night stand couple. Unlike Dodi Hidayatullah, who decided to delete the “prohibited scenes”, Nada Sikkah altered the relationship between the male and female models in the cover music video. If it was told that Shawn and Camila in ‘Senorita’ were two strangers attracted to each other, the cover version told the life story of a married couple. In minute 2.30 of the cover version, the music video showed the male model posting a picture on Instagram using the caption *Ngasih surprise mobil baru buat istri tercinta romantic ga gais?* ‘I’ve just given a new car as a surprise for my beloved wife. Isn’t it romantic?’ to indicate that the relationship between the male and female characters in the music video was married. Thus, physical contacts between the models were allowed and, yet, shown in some scenes of the cover music video. The alteration of prohibited physical contact into allowed ones comprising the modification of the storyline was a creative strategy done by Nada Sikkah.

4.2 Proposed Typology of Visual Euphemization in Islamic Music Video Covers

Based on the findings in the previous section, we propose visual euphemization strategies that can be used to transform non-religious music videos into Islamic ones. There are four strategies: peripheralization, vestimentarization, locationalization, and interactionalization. Table 2 below helps to understand the types and functions of each strategy.

Table 2. Types and functions of visual euphemization strategies.

Types	Functions
Peripheralization	This strategy is applied by changing the properties that contradict Islamic teaching with those representing Islam or neutral ones.
Vestimentarization	This strategy is implemented by altering the costumes that reveal the <i>awrat</i> with those covering the <i>awrat</i> of the singers and models.
Locationalization	This strategy is employed by modifying the locations of the music videos that contradict Islamic teaching with those representing Islam. Besides, locationalization can also be applied by deleting locations of the original music videos which are contradicting Islamic teaching. The application of this strategy is seemingly influenced by the background of the singers, and the change of the narratives of the cover lyrics.
Interactionalization	This strategy is applied by modifying the interactions among the singers and, or, models which contradict the Islamic teaching with those that represent Islam. Interactionalization can also be applied by deleting interactions that are considered inappropriate for Islamic principles. Similar to localization, interactionalization seems to be influenced by the change in the narratives of the cover lyrics.

4.2.1 Peripheralization

The first strategy is peripheralization. Applying this strategy involves changing the properties of the original music videos, which contradict Islamic teaching, with other properties representing Islam. Examples can be found in the modification of beers into Al-Quran in Figure 2, and prisoners' identification cards into *tasbih* in Figure 3. The 'inappropriate properties' may also be changed into more neutral ones, as seen in Figure 1 where beers were replaced with a glass of milk or coffee.

The modification in this strategy does not simply mean changing inappropriate properties into more appropriate ones. In some cases, peripheralization involves the narratives of the lyrics in the original and cover versions. For example, in the 'Dance Monkey' and 'Move On' music videos, the occurrence of beer as an escape for lonely souls was euphemized, in a religious way, in the Al-Quran coming out as a solution for a broken-hearted girl. Both the original and cover lyrics contained stories of people facing problems in life and the solutions they took to overcome them. Peripheralization may also be used in the form of parody, which invites laughter, as seen in the 'Butter' and 'Zikir' songs. The euphemized scene was iconic, as the original singers were very popular among Indonesian youngsters. Thus, when the property was euphemized, it resulted in a parody that might facilitate the purpose of *da'wah*.

4.2.2 Vestimentarization

The Vestimentarization strategy deals with costumes. This strategy involves changing revealing costumes that expose the *awrat* with those appropriate in Islam, covering the *awrat*. This strategy was very dominant in all of the music videos in this research. Showing Islamic costumes can be interpreted as establishing the first impression to the viewers about the religious purpose of the cover songs. As the aim was to spread Islamic ideas, the singers as well as the models became ambassadors of the *da'wah*. Hence, viewers would expect that the messengers reflect the Islamic image, first, through their physical appearance. This can be seen primarily through the clothes they wore.

4.2.3 Locationalization

The third strategy is locationalization. As reflected by its name, locationalization deals with the modification or deletion of locations that seem inappropriate for the Islamic image. Occasionally, locationalization may also be applied as the result of the total alteration of the cover lyrics narratives. Besides, content creators may also use this strategy to change the image of the original singers, who are very popular in society, with a more positive image as taught in Islam (see explanation of ‘Ziggy Zagga’ and its cover version). Another way for locationalization is by deleting the inappropriate location, such as ‘bar and party things’ as seen in Figure 6. Locationalization with deletion means that one or some locations are kept in the cover version, while the inappropriate location is omitted.

4.2.4 Interactionalization

The ‘religious inappropriateness’, as mentioned in the aforementioned strategies above, remains the underlying reason for this strategy. Physical touch between non-mahram or relationships indicating LGBT should not appear in audiovisual content carrying the messages of *da’wah*. Consequently, a euphemization strategy is needed by modifying or deleting these kinds of interactions. Many of the original music videos in the study showed intimate interactions between unmarried couples which were modified in such a way, for example, by changing the narratives of the cover lyrics (see the explanation of ‘Salah Apa’ and ‘Senorita’ and their cover versions). Deletion may also be applied by omitting the inappropriate interactions shown in the original music videos (as explained in ‘You Are the Reason’ and its cover version).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Visual Euphemization Strategies in the Context of Localization Practices

The primary reason behind the composition of the visual euphemization strategies in this research was the consideration that the visualization of the new lyrics, in the form of cover music videos, must reflect religious values. Indeed, as the original songs contained non-religious themes, there were efforts to visualize the religious symbols and messages through the visual elements. The production of the cover music videos as studied in this research was still related to the original music, as seen in the data. This means that the production of the cover music videos still adapted the visual elements of the original ones, a concept that had been formulated by [Constandinides \(2019\)](#) as para-adaptation.

Moreover, the shifting of the visual elements cannot be derived from the other elements that are available in the product of audiovisual, i.e., the verbal as well as the operative elements. Thus, the shifting of the visual elements must be based on the analysis of the verbal, in this context the verbal was the lyrics and the operative. In this context, the operative is the function of the music video as the visualization of the lyrics. For instance, ‘Despacito’ or ‘Senorita’ were chosen as the popularity of the songs was expected to attract the attention of the target viewers, the millennials and

Gen Z; thus, the mission of da'wah through songs can be completed more easily. However, according to the operative element, there were some visual elements in the original music videos that were not in accordance with Islamic teaching; hence, a strategy was required to cover up the music video. This research proposed that the visual elements that may be euphemized, include the properties, costumes, locations, or interaction. The choice of which visual elements are euphemized depends particularly on the analysis of the verbal elements. The original lyrics of 'Senorita' talk about a man's admiration for a woman he has just met. Then, the two enter into a romantic relationship that is not by the teaching of Islam. These lyrics were then changed in the cover song entitled 'Sosialita' which tells about the habit of showing off possessions that must be avoided in the life of a Muslim. Meanwhile, the song 'Despacito' talks about the physical and sexual attraction between men and women who are not mahram which highly contradicts the Islamic teaching. The lyrics were then changed into 'Thank You My Dear' which actually has the same theme of men-women attraction but in a marriage relationship that is halal or appropriate in Islam. The narratives in the lyrics of these cover songs were then visualized in the form of cover music videos that still adapted the visual elements in the original music video. In practice, visual euphemization strategies as previously formulated can be applied so that the central message of Islamic preaching through cover songs can be realized.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of cover songs made for a religious purpose can be categorized as the product of transtylization. Genette (1997) described transtylization as the stylistic rewriting of a text whose function is to change the style of a text. The changing from non-religious songs into religious songs by adjusting the lyrics as well as the music videos renders the definition of transtylization as described above. Indeed, Genette (1997) added that transtylization may encompass some strategies, including concision, extension, expansion, and amplification; similar procedures as found in the findings, i.e., modification and deletion of some visual elements in the original music videos.

Besides, it must be underlined that song lyrics, music videos or images, and music are connected aspects (Kaidl, 2015). Thus, the changing of one of those three aspects may change the others. For example, as seen in all of the data where the lyrics were not the translated versions but the new ones containing completely new lyrics or narratives. This practice happens due to, once again, the main purpose of spreading Islamic teaching through the cover versions. The alteration of the lyrics causes the changing of the music videos as the narratives of the cover music videos must follow the narratives of the new lyrics. Besides, the personal image of the singers (as seen in Gen Halilintar's case) may also affect the euphemization. All visual aspects represented in the cover version are expected to convey the religious image and, thus, visual euphemization is necessary. Modification or deletion are some of the clear procedures in applying the strategies. However, viewed from the perspective of localization, it is clear that the content creators still keep several notable elements of the original versions. These findings are by the investigation of 'user-made YouTube cover songs' as defined by Constandinides (2019).

5.2 The Use of Visual Euphemization Strategies for Religious Purposes

As mentioned throughout the article, the visual euphemization strategies proposed here aim to achieve religious appropriateness, which is a challenge in

covering music videos. The term ‘euphemization strategies’ is preferred over ‘euphemistic strategies’ since this typology is proposed as a solution to a problem rather than being an attribute of an existing categorization. This formulation has been used by other researchers in developing novel typologies (Adesoye, 2021; Al-Adwan, 2015; Eldalees et al., 2017; Purnomo et al., 2020).

The typology of visual euphemization is named based on the visual elements that are euphemized. Understanding the definition of each categorization is necessary to avoid ambiguity in the euphemization process. For example, the term ‘peripheralization’ comes from the word ‘peripheral’, meaning ‘not as important as the main part’, referring to the properties in the music video. An example of peripheralization is the euphemization of non-Islamic properties, such as beers in the ‘Dance Monkey’ song, into Islamic properties, like Al-Quran in the ‘Move On’ song. ‘Vestimentarization’ comes from the word ‘vest’, referring to clothing, and is used to describe the euphemization of costumes. Analysis of the data shows that all cover music videos reflect the use of Islamic outfits, some resulting from vestimentarization when the original music videos did not feature Islamic clothing. ‘Locationalization’ comes from the noun ‘location’, referring to the place. In some original music videos showing settings like ‘the bar or party things’, this setting was euphemized into a more Islamic one, such as a mosque or *pesantren*. Lastly, ‘interactionalization’ comes from ‘interaction’, reflecting interactions among singers or models in the music videos. Inappropriate physical contact between non-*mahram* individuals and relationships indicating LGBT were euphemized through deletion or modification to achieve the purpose of *da’wah*.

It is important to note that the visual euphemization strategies proposed in this research are only applicable when covering a song and its music video for religious purposes, specifically Islamic preaching. However, religious purpose is not the sole goal of covering songs; it is also a practice of localization. Therefore, as mentioned by Pym (2003) and O’Brien and Schäler (2007), the purpose of adapting the localization product must consider the purposes of the adaptation. Different purposes for covering songs may require different euphemization strategies. Hence, the typology proposed here was developed with Islamic preaching as the main prerequisite for producing cover songs, which may not be suitable for other purposes.

6. CONCLUSION

There were four visual elements euphemized in covering non-religious songs into Islamic songs, namely: properties, costumes, locations, and interactions. Following these findings, the researchers proposed four visual euphemization strategies that can be used as references to recreate music videos for religious purposes, as proposed in this research. They are peripheralization, vestimentarization, locationalization, and interactionalization. The consideration of which visual elements of the original music videos to be euphemized becomes the consideration in applying these strategies. Peripheralization refers to the alteration of the properties found in the original music videos. Vestimentarization deals with changing the costumes of the original music videos. Locationalization is done by modifying or deleting locations shown in the original music videos. Meanwhile, interactionalization is the

modification or deletion of the interactions of the singers or models found in the original music videos.

The visual euphemization in this research does not only refer to the images, objects, or persons shown in the music videos. The concept of visuals refers to a wider understanding of the context of the songs, including the narratives of the lyrics, the background of the singers, and the religious purpose of covering the songs. Moreover, it must be underlined that the typology of visual euphemization strategies proposed in this research was specifically composed for cover music videos created for a religious purpose, i.e., Islamic preaching. The growth of cover songs provides wider fields on the study of cover songs and their features as well as purposes which can be explored by other researchers with various approaches, i.e. linguistics, adaptation, localization, music, or literature studies.

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