THE STUDY OF SUBTITLING STRATEGY AND TRANSLATION ACCURACY IN FILM "KPOP DEMON HUNTERS"

Anisia Ivonda Seran
Universitas San Pedro
E-mail: iyetemala19@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the study of subtitling strategy and translation accuracy from English into Indonesian in the film "KPOP Demon Hunters." This study is qualitative research by employing library method and explicatory method. The data are collected from the film in Netflix both English subtitles and Indonesian subtitles. The data are focused on the three main characters' (Rumi, Mira and Joy) utterances. Total utterances of the data are 498 without repetitive utterances. The data are analysed based on Gottlieb's (2001) subtitling strategy to study the subtitling strategies of the utterances and Nababan et al's. accuracy rubric (2012) to evaluate the accuracy of the utterances. The results show that the mainly used strategies are transfer (42%), condensation (25,3%) and paraphrase (16,5%) which imply that the translator generally translate the utterances equivalently into the target language without much reducing their meaning from the source language. For assessment data, the accuracy of the translation is accurate (57,14%) for the translator well-delivered the utterances using various strategies; therefore, most of the utterances are understandable in the target language, even though some utterances cannot completely capture the meaning of the utterances in the target language.

Keywords: KPOP Demons Hunter, translation accuracy, translation strategy.

1) INTRODUCTION

Translation has an essential part in literature and audio-visual media which is as medium of transferring information. It bridges multicultural and multilingual society that require effective, efficient, and emphatic communication across languages and cultures. Translation itself is defined by J.C. Catford (1965: 20) as the replacement of textual material in source language (SL) by equivalent textual material in target language (TL). Meanwhile, according to Nida and Taber (1982: 12) translation means reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, firstly in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. In general, translation can be understood as the process of reproducing messages from source language to the target language while maintaining the closet equivalence in meaning or style. Therefore, translation plays a significant role in both written text, such as books, and audio-visual media, such as films.

Film industry produces numerous of films each year, some of which become highly popular. Kim et al (2021) states that the success of any film depends primarily on audience size, which has traditionally been measured by the number of screening days in theatres. However, other dimensions, such as online review, genre, rating even country of origin, also contribute to measuring a film success and popularity. In 2025, many films were released across various genres. One of the popular films is KPOP Demon Hunters. The film is a blend of musical, animated action, fantasy, and comedy genres, with a primary focus on K-pop culture and Korean mythology. The story revolves around a K-pop girl group whose mission is to protect a city called Honmoon from the forces of the underworld. The film conveys a strong moral message about self-acceptance, particularly the importance of embracing one's flaws rather than concealing them. The film's popularity may be attributed to its engaging storyline, impressive cinematography, appealing soundtrack, thematic relevance, and effective promotion. As an English-language film, translation plays a crucial role in making it accessible to international audiences. In this case study, the translator performs an essential role in translating the film from English into Indonesian

This study aims to analyze the subtitling strategies and translation accuracy in one of the popular films of 2025, KPOP Demon Hunters. The data are obtained from Netflix and primarily focus on the utterances of the three main characters: Rumi, Mira, and Joey. Redundant utterances are excluded, and only novel utterances are analyzed. In total, the study examines 498 utterances. The data are analyzed using Gottlieb's (2001) subtitling strategies and the translation accuracy framework proposed by Nababan et al. (2012).

Studies on film translation have been conducted by numerous researchers (Astiningsih and Nugroho, 2024; Haider and Shuhaiber, 2024; Arbaian, 2023). The present study also investigates film translation by analysing the translation strategies in film, similar to the previous studies. However, it differs in terms of the film selected, the specific utterances, the theoretical framework, and translation accuracy assessment. Previous studies indicate that translators tend to employ particular strategies because they are easier for target audiences to comprehend. Nevertheless, cases of mistranslation have been identified, possibly due to a lack of understanding of source-text nuances or difficulties in finding appropriate equivalents in the target language. Additionally, the choice of translation techniques may be influenced by factors such as the translator's ideology and competence.

2) METHODS

This study is qualitative study which means results are captured in words, images, or non-numeric symbols; for instance, research on dreams (George, 2008, p. 6). Qualitative research encompasses library research and explicatory research.

"Library research involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal expert opinion on a research question" (George, 2008, p. 6). This research is going to study the utterances from source language to the target language. "Explicatory research entails a careful, close and focused-examination of a single major text or a single complex event in attempt to understand its aspect(s)" (George, 2008, p. 6). In studying and analysing the data, careful and close are needed, therefore this method rigidly entails to explicatory research.

The data for this study were collected from the film KPOP Demon Hunters available on Netflix, comprising both the English and Indonesian subtitles. The analysis focuses on the utterances of the three main characters: Rumi, Mira, and Joy. A total of 498 non-repetitive utterances were identified as the data of the study. All of these data were analysed to examine the subtitling strategies employed. However, for the purpose of assessing translation accuracy, a subset of 35 utterances representing all types of subtitling strategies identified was selected. The evaluation of translation accuracy was carried out by three evaluators who are academic staff members at an English course institution. This study adopts Gottlieb's subtitling strategies and the translation accuracy rubric proposed by Nababan et al. (2012) as its theoretical frameworks.

a. Gottlieb's Subtitlling Strategies

1) Transfer

Transfer refers to the strategy of translating the source text completely and accurately.

SL: Okay, this is our biggest show yet.

TL: Oke, ini konser terbesar kita.

2) Expansion

Expansion is used when the original text requires an explanation because of some cultural nuances are not retrievable in the target language.

SL: Actually, you already have.

TL: Sebenarnya, kau sudah membantuku.

3) Paraphrase

Paraphrase is resorted to in cases where the phraseology of the original cannot be reconstructed in the same syntactic way in the target language.

SL: There's no water in these.

TL: Lah, gak ada airnya

4) Condensation

Condensation refers to the shortening of the text in the least obtrusive way possible.

SL: Sorry, Bobby. We already have plans.

TL: Maaf. Sudah ada rencana

5) Decimation

Decimation is an extreme form of condensation, perhaps for reasons of discourse speed, even potentially important elements are omitted.

SL: About to eat our preshow ramyeon.

TL: Makan sebelum konser.

6) Imitation

Imitation maintains even the same forms, typically with names of people and places.

SL: I didn't even get to finish my ramyeon.

TL: Ramyeon-ku saja belum habis.

7) Transcription:

Transcription is used in those cases where a term is unusual even in the source text, for example the use of a third language, or nonsense language.

SL: Yay! That's the spirit! Khaja… khaja

TL: Hore! Begitu, dong! Ayo…ayo

8) Dislocation

Dislocation is adopted when the original employs some sort of special effect, for example, a silly song in a cartoon film, where the translation of the effect is more important than the content.

SL: A thousand percent. A gajillion percent

TL: Seribu persen. Miliotriliun

9) Deletion

Deletion refers to the total elimination part of a text.

SL: When you mess with our fans…

TL: Jika kalian usik…

10) Resignation

Resignation describes the strategy adopted when no translation solution can be found and meaning is inevitably lost.

SL: They're so bleh!

TL: Mereka….

b. Translation accuracy

Table 1. Nababan et al. (2012) rubric

Scale	Category	Indicator	Segment	
			English	Indonesian
4	Highly accurate	The content of the source language is accurately conveyed in the target language and no revising is needed.	So these will be gone?	Jadi, ini akan hilang?
3	Accurate	The content of the source language is accurately conveyed to the target language, but it needs to be revised.	In fact, it almost seems like they're nice demons?	Mungkin mereka iblis baik?
2	Less accurate	The content of the source language is not accurately conveyed in the target language. There are some problems with the choice of diction.	For sure. We have to hide it. Mmhm.	Sembuyikan dan tangani
1	Inaccurate	The source language is not translated at all into the target language; for example, it is omitted or deleted.	You think we're just gonna let you steal our fans?	Kalian pikir kami akan biarkan kalian?

3) RESULTS

Table 2. Percentage of subtitling strategy

No	Subtitling Strategy	Quantity	Percentage
1	Transfer	209	42%
2	Expansion	8	1,8

3	Paraphrase	83	16,5
4	Condensation	126	25,3
5	Decimation	25	5%
6	Imitation	31	6,2
7	Dislocation	2	0,4
8	Deletion	13	2,6
9	Resignation	1	0,2
Total		498	100%

Table 3. Percentage of translation accuracy

Segments	Categories of Accuracy			
	Highly accurate	Accurate	Less accurate	Inaccurate
35	2	20	7	6
100%	5,72%	57,14%	20%	17,14%

Transfer

Transfer refers to the strategy of translating the source text completely and accurately. It is syntactically accurate and comprehensible.

Table 4. Transfer

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
Okay, this is our biggest show yet	Oke, ini konser terbesar kita	3

Expansion

Expansion is used when the original text requires an explanation because of some cultural nuances are not retrievable in the target language. Expansion is also be used to explain more than the literal meaning of a text, therefore the style and nuance can be felt in the target text.

Table 5. Expansion

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
But the pajamas! But no. **No!**	Piamaku. Gak mau. **Gak mau**	3

Paraphrase

Paraphrase is resorted to in cases where the phraseology of the original cannot be reconstructed in the same syntactic way in the target language. The meaning of text is conveyed in the target text however not in same syntactic way or literal meaning.

Table 6. Paraphrase

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
[Joey] There's no water in these.	[Joey] Lah, gak ada airnya	3,7

Condensation

Condensation refers to the shortening of the text in the least obtrusive way possible. Some parts are deleted which is considered to have minor essential in text, the meaning of the text is still well-delivered in the target text.

Table 7. Condensation

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
Okay, time for **our** pregame ramyeon!	Waktu ramen sebelum konser	3

Decimation

Decimation is an extreme form of condensation, perhaps for reasons of discourse speed, even potentially important elements are omitted.

Table 8. Decimation

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
About to eat **our** preshow **ramyeon.**	Makan sebelum konser	2

Imitation

Imitation maintains even the same forms, typically with names of people and places.

Table 9. Imitation

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
Happy fans, happy **Honmoon**!	Fan bahagia, **Honmoon** pun bahagia!	3,7

Dislocation

Dislocation is adopted when the original employs some sort of special effect.

Table 10. Dislocation

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
A thousand percent. **A gajillion percent.**	Seribu persen. **Miliotriliun**	2,3

Deletion

Deletion refers to the total elimination part of a text.

Table 11. Deletion

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
They will face my wrath!	-	1

Resignation

Resignation describes the strategy adopted when no translation solution can be found and meaning is inevitably lost.

Table 12. Resignation

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Accuracy
They're so bleh!	Mereka…	1,3

4) DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the translator employs a variety of subtitling strategies to convey utterances from English into Indonesian, with transfer, condensation, and paraphrase being the most frequently used. Transfer is predominantly applied when the utterances in the source language have direct equivalents in meaning and style in the target language. The use of colloquial language in the film, which is intended for a broad audience including children, also supports the frequent use of this strategy. Condensation is utilized to accommodate spatial and temporal constraints in subtitling, such as limited screen space and the speed of dialogue delivery.

As a result, less informative elements are often omitted in the target language without significantly affecting the overall meaning. Paraphrase, as the third most frequently used strategy, is applied when there is no direct equivalent in the target language. This strategy allows the translator to convey similar meanings while preserving the intended style or nuance, or to prioritize nuance over literal meaning. In addition, strategies such as imitation are used to render proper nouns from the source language into the target language. The findings also reveal that the translator tends to reduce rather than expand the meaning of the source text. More substantial reductions occur through the use of decimation and deletion, which in some cases lead to a loss of meaning in the target language.

The results of the translation accuracy assessment show that most translations are categorized as accurate, followed by less accurate. The majority of utterances are conveyed clearly in the target language; however, some loss of information is still evident. The relationship between subtitling strategies and translation accuracy indicates that frequently used strategies such as transfer and condensation tend to produce accurate translations, whereas the use of deletion and decimation is more likely to result in less accurate translations.

5) CONCLUSION

Based on Gottlieb's subtitling strategies, transfer, paraphrase, and condensation are the most frequently used strategies in translating the utterances, contributing to the acceptability and readability of the subtitles. The translation tends to be more casual, as the film is intended to entertain a broad audience; consequently, some information is omitted in the target language.

Based on the translation accuracy rubric proposed by Nababan et al., the sample analysis indicates that the translations are predominantly accurate. This suggests that most of the information from the source language is successfully conveyed and comprehensible in the target language. For future research, it is recommended that researchers examine translation accuracy in across entire dataset to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

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