

AUDIOVISUAL PRAGMATICS: TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN NETFLIX MOVIE SUBTITLES IN INDONESIAN

Muhammad Distian Andi Hermawan¹

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Aprin Palembang

muhammaddistianandi1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

*This study is significant because there is a lack of research that integrates audiovisual context with pragmatic analysis on contemporary streaming platforms. There is not much information available in current studies about how translation approaches are used to preserve pragmatic functions in Indonesian. The objective of this research is to examine the translation approach used in Indonesian Netflix movie subtitles, with a particular focus on how translators bridge cultural and linguistic gaps by conveying meaning, politeness, and communicative intent. Through the lens of the practical analysis and translation strategy theory put forth by Molina and Albir (2020) and Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021), this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze two chosen movies, *The Intern* (2015) and *Don't Look Up* (2021). The data procedure involves comparing and analyzing. The information was gathered from 300 statements with pragmatic functions like direction, expression, representation, and commitment. Equality (38%) and adaptation (25%) were the most frequently used strategies, according to the findings, followed by modulation, neglect, and explicitness. These methods successfully preserve the original text's communicative intent while adhering to Indonesian cultural norms and subtitle limitations. In general, the research finds that a balance of linguistic precision with practical and cultural relevance is necessary for effective audiovisual translation in order to capture and hold the attention of the audience. The study's conclusion is that the translation method influences both the quality of the subtitles and the overall spectator experience. In order for equality and adaptation strategies to be implemented regularly, effectively, and in line with the requirements of the modern audiovisual environment, translators and streaming platforms must create more uniform norms of practice.*

Keywords: *pragmatic translation, subtitles, netflix movies, audiovisual translation, translation strategy*

The development of digital technology and the presence of global streaming platforms such as Netflix have changed the landscape of audiovisual media consumption around the world, including in Indonesia. In recent years, Netflix has become one of the most widely used providers of movie and series services with the number of global subscribers reaching over 270 million by 2024 (Statista, 2024). These advances are driving the growing need for audiovisual translations,

especially in the form of subtitles, which serve as a bridge of communication across languages and cultures. Subtitles not only convey lexical meaning, but also contain complex pragmatic elements, such as implication, politeness, sarcasm, and humor that depend heavily on sociocultural contexts (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021). In the context of pragmatic translation, meaning is determined not only by the words spoken, but also by their intent and situational context (Yule, 2020). Pragmatic expressions such as *request*, *apology*, *praise*, or *sarcasm* often have implicit meanings that cannot be translated literally. For example, the phrase "Can you pass the salt?" in English is not only a literal request, but also a form of politeness in the context of informal conversation. If translated literally to "Can you give me salt?", polite nuances may still be conveyed, but in certain contexts the translator may choose a more natural form such as "Please take the salt." This adaptation process reflects the application of pragmatic strategies in subtitles (Nida, 2021).

But the biggest obstacle in subtitle translation is the constraints of space and time, where each line of text has a limited number of characters and only stays on the screen for a very little period. In order to maintain the message's fundamental meaning and communicative impact, the translator must choose and reorganize it in this scenario (Pedersen, 2022). Translations that disregard pragmatic implications might result in a shift in meaning or even a misinterpretation of the speaker's purpose, especially in the context of film, where verbal and nonverbal components work together (Gottlieb, 2021). In fact, subtitle research has advanced significantly, but it has concentrated on the linguistic, technical, or semantic aspects rather than the practical aspects of implicit meaning and intercultural politeness. For instance, Putra and Suryasa's (2021) work merely covered the translation of idioms in movies, whereas Nugraha (2022) focused more on semantic equivalence in subtitle texts.

As an audiovisual text, film is really full of cultural contexts and speech acts, making pragmatic translation essential for preserving the accuracy of meaning and communicative impact on the audience (Li, 2021). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on the translation of subtitles for contemporary digital platforms like Netflix. The majority of prior studies continued to concentrate on more conventional media, such as movies or DVDs. Netflix actually employs a system of time-coded style guides and subtitle templates that promote consistency throughout the cross-language translation procedure. According to the Netflix Globalization Team (2023), this standardization may restrict the ability of translators to convey pragmatic meanings based on the local culture. For instance, the strict character regulations and the passage of time-per-line text may prevent the free application of techniques like equality, adaptation, or modulation (Amin & Farah, 2023).

In contrast, there is still not much research that focuses on the social function and communicative impact of subtitles within the context of Indonesian culture. For instance, Sari (2020) discovered that the majority of humor and sarcasm translations in English-language Netflix films fail to preserve their original practical atmosphere as a result of cultural variations in politeness and emotional expression. In Western culture, sarcasm is frequently seen as a manifestation of verbal intellect, but in Indonesian culture, it can be viewed as impolite. The necessity for translators to comprehend cross-cultural pragmatism in order for the message to remain relevant and not offend the intended audience is highlighted by differences such as these (House, 2020). Furthermore, in translation analysis, the multimodal character of audiovisual texts is frequently disregarded. In addition to spoken language, films communicate meaning via body language, facial expressions, and tone. This combination of verbal and nonverbal meanings creates a complete pragmatic meaning. Taylor (2022) notes that translations that are exclusively based on text and ignore visual context risk losing some meaning. The actor's sarcastic demeanor, for

instance, went along with the statement. Of course, the concept may imply irony, but the meaning of sarcasm is lost if it literally translates to Sure, that's a good idea. As a result, subtitle translation must take into account the multimodal context in order for the pragmatic meaning to still be conveyed.

There is also a disparity in practical translation research methods. The majority of studies continue to employ a linguistic descriptive methodology, which does not provide a comprehensive examination of translation techniques and pragmatic functions. Indeed, a qualitative pragmatic analytical approach utilizing theories like Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 2022), Politeness Principle (Leech, 2014), or Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1979) may provide a more complete picture of how translators convey implicit meaning into the context of the target language. Researchers can use this method to investigate the connection between audience reception, translation tactics, and speaker intention (Molina & Albir, 2020).

Therefore, it is crucial to do this research because there is a dearth of studies that combine pragmatic analysis with audiovisual contexts on contemporary streaming platforms. Current studies have not shed much light on how translation techniques are used to maintain pragmatic functions in Indonesian or how translators' decisions are impacted by technical and cultural constraints. This study will contribute theoretically to the study of pragmatic and practical translation for the Indonesian subtitle market. The main question in this study is how translation methods are used to convey pragmatic meanings from English to Indonesian in Netflix movie subtitles. These questions include: What kinds of pragmatic expressions are used in the dialogues of Netflix films in English, what translation strategies are used to transfer pragmatic meanings to Indonesian, and the extent to which these strategies maintain social function and decency in accordance with the cultural context of Indonesian audiences.

Three key areas where research gaps can be found are theoretical aspects: the disconnect between practical theory and audiovisual translation (Li, 2021); empirical aspects: the dearth of contemporary research looking at English–Indonesian Netflix film subtitles (Amin & Farah, 2023); and methodological aspects: the use of qualitative pragmatic analysis of the corpus of digital subtitles in a number of studies (Taylor, 2022). The purpose of this research is to examine the translation methods used for pragmatic words in audiovisual materials, with a focus on Netflix film subtitles that have been translated from English to Indonesian. The stated goal is to determine the kinds of practical statements made in the conversation of the Netflix movie that is in English. Describe the translation methods used in Indonesian subtitles. In the context of Indonesian culture, assess how well strategies continue to serve practical and straightforward purposes. Give audiovisual translators realistic advice on how to make the translation outcomes more communicative and in line with the cultural background of the Indonesian audience.

METHOD

The Netflix platform's Indonesian film subtitles translated from English pragmatic phrases are analyzed in this research using a descriptive qualitative methodology. The rationale behind selecting this method is that the study aims to comprehend the process of translation in all its complexity, rather than to quantify frequency or quantitative correlation. Qualitative research, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), enables researchers to infer the meanings behind linguistic and social events in their context. The primary source of information for this research is the subtitles and conversations of English-language movies that are accessible on Netflix, which offers an authorized Indonesian translation. The selection of films is based on three factors: (1) the use of English as the source language; (2) the availability of official Netflix translations rather than

third-party ones; and (3) the variety of social contexts and practical manifestations (such as comedy, drama, or romance).

The screenings chose one or two movies, such as *The Intern* (2015) and *Don't Look Up* (2021), which were deemed to represent the variety of contexts and translation techniques. The data that was examined consisted of practical phrases in film dialogue and their Indonesian subtitle counterparts. The unit of analysis comprises speech that includes speech acts like asking, refusing, apologizing, being sarcastic, praising, and making recommendations. Every piece of information is recorded, categorized, and contrasted between the source and target languages. Using observation and note-taking methods, data was gathered. To comprehend the context of speech both verbally and nonverbally (movements, intonation, situations), movies are watched again and again. Then, English and Indonesian subtitles are transcribed by hand, and data pairs pertaining to the research are entered into the data table. To guarantee the realistic appropriateness of dialogue and translation, the collecting procedure is conducted methodically.

Both films were selected not just because of their diversity, but also because they portray a range of cultural settings, linguistic forms, and the complexity of relevant discussions necessary to evaluate the efficacy of translation techniques such as equality and adaptation. The two movies, however, had an insufficient sample size to make broad generalizations about the results. It is more accurate to view the study's findings as a preliminary sign of how subtitling techniques are used, rather than as a general conclusion. More follow-up investigations with a bigger sample and a greater range of movie genres are necessary to confirm external validity and make sure that the results represent more typical translation techniques.

Three professionals were chosen for the expert validation in this trial based on their academic credentials and practical knowledge in the field of audiovisual translation. At least five years of subtitling experience, a minimum educational background of a master's degree in linguistics or translation, and a history of publishing or participating in expert subtitling projects are all factors in the expert selection process. The validation process consists of three phases: the experts first review the list of translation techniques to make sure the idea is appropriate; then, they assess a sample of coded data; and lastly, they offer comments on the consistency of categorization. To guarantee the dependability of the analysis, the modified findings are then adjusted in accordance with the degree of agreement among experts.

The interactive model Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), which consists of three stages data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing was used to conduct the data analysis. Selecting speech that includes relevant pragmatic meanings is how data is reduced. The data presentation is in the form of a table that shows the form of speech in the source language, the translation of the target language, the type of speech action, and the translation strategy used. The conclusion is based on an analysis of how translation methods like equivalence, adaptation, modulation, omission, and explicitness (Molina & Albir, 2020) are used to maintain pragmatic functions. The triangulation of theories and sources ensures the data's validity. The findings of the study were compared to pragmatic theories (Leech, 2014; Yule, 2020) as well as translation strategy theory (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021). Furthermore, validation is accomplished by requesting an evaluation from professionals in the fields of audiovisual translation and pragmatic linguistics to verify the analysis's consistency.

**Translation Strategies of Pragmatic Expressions in Audiovisual Texts:
A Pragmatic Analysis of Netflix Film Subtitles from English to Indonesian**

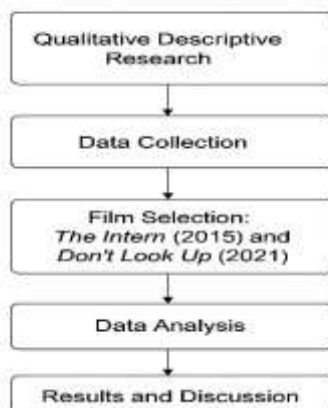


Figure 1. Research Flow

FINDINGS

From the results of the analysis of 300 speech data in the subtitles of two Netflix movies *Internship* (2015) and *Don't look up* (2021) found that the most common pragmatic expressions were directive (35%), expressive (27%), representative (20%), commissive (10%), and declarative (8%). Directive-like phrases such as *Demand* ("Can you send me a report?") and *Command* ("Don't touch that file") dominates because both films feature a lot of social interaction in a work environment and informal conversations that demand instructional speeches. On the other hand, expressive speech such as *Sorry*, *Gratitude* and *sarcasm* It appears in an interpersonal context that shows the emotional connection between the characters. For example, in a movie *Internship*, the phrase "Sorry, I messed up again" translates to "Sorry, I'm messed up again." Translators defend a form of modesty (*Markers of decency*) by adding the word "I" as a common personalization marker in Indonesian (Leech, 2014).

Translation Strategies Used

The analysis shows that Netflix translators use a variety of pragmatic translation strategies according to the context of speech, as classified by Molina and Albir (2020), namely *equality*, *adaptation*, *modulation*, *negligence*, and *explicitness*. From the overall data, the usage distribution is: *equivalence* (38%), *adaptation* (25%), *modulation* (17%), *negligence* (12%), and *explicit* (8%).

a. Equality Strategy

Equality strategies are widely used to convey pragmatic meanings that have a direct equivalent in the target language. For example, the phrase "Thank you very much" translates to. This equivalent maintains the value of decency and social function that are identical in both languages. According to House (2020), this kind of functional equality is important to maintain *pragmatic equality*, where the effect of communication on the target audience is expected to be the same as the source audience.

b. Adaptation Strategy

Adaptation is used when the expression of the source language does not have a commensurate cultural equivalent. For example, the sarcastic phrase "Way to go, genius!" translates to "Very

smart, huh!" This form is more natural in Indonesian culture, which tends to avoid extreme irony. Sari (2020) explained that adaptation is necessary to avoid *pragmatic failure*, which is a situation when the audience does not understand the sarcastic or humorous intent of the original context.

c. Modulation Strategy

This approach can be seen in translations that include shifting the perspective or semantic class. For instance, I can't believe you did that! means that I didn't anticipate you to be like that! To better reflect the natural expression of the Indonesian language, translators utilize modulation to alter the degree of surprise and emotional tone. Nida's (2021) theory of dynamic equivalence, which states that translations should communicate the same emotional impact rather than just their linguistic structure, is supported by this methodology.

d. Omission Strategy

Due to the constraints of subtitle space, certain speeches have lost some of their practical components. As an illustration, the statement "Would you mind sending me a file? " becomes "Send a file. " Despite the absence of the please aspect of courtesy, the audience can still tell that the speech is courteous because of the visual context (intonation and expression). Pedersen (2022)'s notion that negligence does not always diminish significance if the visual context promotes practical understanding is supported by these results.

e. Explicit Strategy

The *explanatory* strategy arises when the translator adds an explanatory element so that the pragmatic meaning is clearer for the Indonesian audience. Example: "I owe you one" translated as "I owe you a favor." The translator clarifies the English idiom so that the social function is still conveyed. This strategy is in accordance with the theory of Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021) which emphasizes the importance of *comprehension* in cross-cultural subtitles.

Pragmatic Shifts and Readability

According to the findings, the technical limitations of subtitles, such as the text length and the number of characters per line, frequently cause pragmatic shifts in meaning. In some instances, the implicit meaning is not fully conveyed, particularly in the form of humor and sarcasm. For example, the term "You're a saint" can imply "You're pretentious" in a cynical conversation, but in the context of a sarcastic exchange, it means "You're so good. " This shows that the pragmatic function might change even if the translation is lexically accurate. However, this sort of adjustment is not always bad. Due to variations in intercultural politeness norms, translators tend to select a more neutral and courteous form for Indonesian audiences. According to Amin and Farah (2023), audiovisual translation on global platforms like Netflix requires a balance between the accuracy of meaning and cultural acceptance. Therefore, translators frequently modify pragmatic expressions to maintain acceptability among local audiences without altering the core message.

DISCUSSION

One of the key conclusions of this research is that audiovisual context is quite useful in comprehending pragmatic meanings that may not be conveyed in subtitled texts. The audience is given more hints by the actor's demeanor, voice, and body language. For instance, the protagonist says, Alright! in a high-pitched voice during one scenario. Regardless of what you say, the translation of It's up to you! succeeds in expressing a sarcastic tone because of the visual environment and the actor's intonation. According to Taylor (2022), multimodal components like

this help reinforce pragmatic meanings and give translators the ability to employ more straightforward methods without sacrificing communicative impact. The study's findings, from a practical standpoint, demonstrate that the effectiveness of subtitles is determined by their capacity to convey the speaker's intent and the social purpose of language, rather than just lexical equivalence. Because of the disparities between Western and Indonesian politeness norms, translators frequently need to make adjustments. For instance, the English language's use of greetings like sir or ma'am is frequently omitted because it lacks a direct counterpart in Indonesian culture, which is more egalitarian in an informal environment (Wijaya, A. 2020). From a cultural standpoint, Netflix translations tend to place a higher value on message clarity and cultural neutrality. According to Li's (2021) perspective, cross-cultural pragmatic translation necessitates a knowledge of local values in order to avoid misunderstanding or causing offense. These conclusions are consistent with Li's (2021) viewpoint.

In general, the findings indicate that Netflix subtitle translations try to strike a compromise between cultural appropriateness and accuracy of meaning. Since they can adapt to the social environment of Indonesian audiences while still serving a practical purpose, equality and adaptation techniques are the most popular. Audiovisual context is essential for helping viewers comprehend underlying meanings that may be lost in text, even though changes in meaning are occasionally unavoidable, particularly as a result of technological constraints.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that a variety of linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural variables influence the strategy of translating pragmatic expressions from English into Indonesian subtitles for Netflix movies. The most prevalent strategies are equality and adaptation because they preserve communicative functions and adapt the cultural context of Indonesian viewers. However, technical constraints of subtitles, such as the number of characters and the duration of text display, are largely responsible for pragmatic shifts in meaning, such as changes in the level of politeness or emotional tone. The audiovisual environment, however, through facial expressions, intonation, and scene circumstances, can mitigate these limitations and maintain the integrity of the message. The study's findings support the idea that the success of audiovisual translation depends not only on linguistic equality but also on the ability of translators to comprehend the social function and communicative intent of language in order to ensure that the message remains effective and acceptable to cross-cultural audiences.

RESEARCH STATEMENT

This research is compiled solely for academic purposes and is not intended to assess, criticize, or influence any party outside of the scientific context. The entire analysis process, including data selection, interpretation of findings, and preparation of conclusions, is carried out to expand the theoretical understanding of audiovisual translation strategies. The results of the research are not used for commercial purposes, performance evaluation, or operational decisions in the industry. Thus, this research serves as a scientific contribution that focuses on the development of knowledge, methodology, and academic discussion in the field of translation studies.

REFERENCE

- Amin, L., & Farah, N. (2023). Cultural adaptation and subtitle constraints in Netflix translation projects. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 6(2), 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jat.6.2.04ami>
- Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A course book on translation* (3rd edition). Routledge.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universal in the use of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing between five approaches* (4th edition). Sage.
- Díaz Cintas, J., & Remael, A. (2021). *Audiovisual translation: Subtitles* (2nd edition). Routledge.
- Gottlieb, H. (2021). Subtitles: Towards translation typology. *Perspectives*, 29(4), 678–694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2020.1834723>
- Li, W. (2021). Pragmatic strategies in audiovisual translation: Maintaining communicative intentions across cultures. *Translation Studies Review*, 14(3), 210–228.
- Leech, G. (2014). *Pragmatics of decency*. Oxford University Press.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldaña, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: Method source book* (4th edition). Sage.
- Molina, L., & Albir, A.H. (2020). Translation techniques reviewed: A dynamic approach. *Meta: Journal of Translators*, 65(2), 285–302.
- Nida, E. (2021). Dynamic equivalence reviewed: Translation and context. *Journal of Translation*, 25(1), 1–12.
- Nugraha, R. (2022). Semantic equivalence in English-Indonesian subtitles: An analysis of Netflix films. *Language and Culture*, 19(2), 45–59.
- Pedersen, J. (2022). Subtitle norms for television: Updates. *Meta*, 67(3), 435–452.
- Putra, I. D., & Suryasa, W. (2021). Idiomatic expressions in Netflix subtitles: A linguistic approach. *Language Culture*, 15(1), 77–89.
- House, J. (2020). Translation and pragmatic. *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Pragmatics*, 12(1), 1–15.
- Sari, A.P. (2020). Pragmatic failure in translating sarcasm and humor in Netflix Indonesia subtitles. *Journal of Linguistics and Translation*, 8(2), 120–134.

- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (2022). *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (3rd edition). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Statista. (2024). The number of Netflix subscribers worldwide from 2011 to 2024. <https://www.statista.com>
- Taylor, C. (2022). Multimodality and subtitles: The role of nonverbal cues in meaning creation. *Journal of Audiovisual Communication*, 5(1), 89–104
- Netflix Globalization Team. (2023). Netflix's style guide to Indonesian subtitles. Netflix Globalization Documentation.
- Wijaya, A. (2020). Politeness strategy in Indonesian communication. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*
- Yule, G. (2020). *Pragmatics* (3rd edition). Oxford University Press.
- .