

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the contemporary era of globalized digital media, translation operates as a vital cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and cross-social bridge that facilitates the dissemination of narrative art across international borders. Among the various modes of translation, film translation or Audiovisual Translation (AVT) has experienced exponential growth due to the rapid expansion of international streaming platforms, television networks, and cinema distribution. In non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia, where English is not widely spoken as a primary language, translation in the form of subtitling is the most crucial instrument for viewers to comprehend and enjoy foreign-language cinematic releases. Subtitling allows local audiences to preserve their exposure to the original auditory soundtrack, vocal performances, and ambient sound effects of a film, while simultaneously receiving linguistic support through synchronized target-language text displayed on screen.

However, translating dialogue within the medium of subtitling is not merely a linguistic transfer, but a complex semiotic negotiation. Unlike literary translation, which is purely monosemiotic, subtitling is strictly governed by physical, spatial, and temporal constraints. Subtitlers must conform to rigid limits, typically displaying a maximum of two lines on the screen with a spatial capacity of 35 to 39 characters per line. Temporally, the duration of a subtitle's appearance must align with the natural reading speed of the audience and be synchronized in real-time with the verbal utterance of the characters. This constrained translation environment often forces translators to employ drastic text compression, omission, and paraphrasing, which makes the transfer of highly socio-culturally bound elements, such as humor, an arduous task.

Humor, in its brightest sense, is a socio-cognitive phenomenon that evokes amusement, mirth, and laughter, serving as a tool for social bonding and cognitive

engagement. However, translating humor becomes exponentially more complex when dealing with dark humor. Dark humor is a type of humor where the comic effect primarily derives from the transgressive treatment of potentially tragic, distressing, or morbid situations, such as death, sickness, psychiatric trauma, or extreme violence. Subtitling dark humor presents a highly delicate pragmatic challenge: the translator must preserve the transgressive, shocking nature of the joke to evoke equivalent comedic amusement while simultaneously navigating the local cultural and sociolinguistic filters of the target audience.

When translating these highly transgressive dialogues into Indonesian subtitles, the subtitler is caught in a double bind. On one hand, maintaining literal syntactic matching may result in awkward phrasings that destroy the natural pacing of the comedic timing or remain completely incomprehensible to Indonesian viewers who do not share the Western cultural frame of reference. On the other hand, pursuing excessive adaptation and sanitization risks domesticating the text to the point where the bold stylistic identity, transgressive shock value, and authentic personalities of the characters are entirely lost.

To evaluate these translation operations, translation studies offer exceptionally robust frameworks that connect macro-level communicative goals with micro-level text adjustments. Eugene Nida's (1964) binary model of translation equivalence establishes the macro-orientation of the text, distinguishing between source-oriented Formal Equivalence and receptor-oriented Dynamic Equivalence which prioritizes the principle of equivalent effect. However, evaluating translation decisions through a simplistic, macro-level dichotomy often risks producing an over-generalized analysis. To counter this limitation, contemporary translation scholars recognize that the macro-level position of a text along the formal-dynamic equivalence spectrum is ultimately constructed by concrete, micro-level linguistic operations known as translation techniques. Therefore, a dual-layered analytical framework combining macro-equivalence with micro-translation techniques is required to provide a precise, comprehensive, and scientifically rigorous account of cross-cultural text transfer.

A compelling case study for analyzing the intersection of translation techniques and meaning equivalence on dark humor subtitling is the American action-comedy superhero film *The Suicide Squad* (2021), written and directed by James Gunn. Unlike traditional comic book adaptations, Gunn's film is characterized by a distinctive blend of gory violence, political satire, and crude dark humor. The characters—who are incarcerated supervillains forced to participate in black-ops missions—constantly engage in dialogues that trivialize mass casualties, joke about death, and treat severe trauma with flippant, cynical quips. This study is conducted to systematically analyze how these delicate dark humor dialogues are rendered into Indonesian subtitles by investigating the co-operational relationship between micro-translation techniques and macro-equivalence models across an expanded corpus of 45 distinct dark humor data points.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Translating dark humor in film subtitles presents immense sociolinguistic and pragmatic challenges as it requires rendering jokes that address sensitive, taboo, and tragic topics, such as death, suicide, or physical violence, into a different language and culture. When the dark humor dialogues in *The Suicide Squad* (2021) are translated literally, the resulting text risks confusing the audience due to cultural opacity, disrupting the comedic timing, or even offending local Indonesian viewers who generally hold socially and culturally conservative values regarding profanity and taboo themes. Conversely, if the translator relies too heavily on taming or omission to make the translation polite and culturally acceptable, the film's bold stylistic identity, transgressive shock value, and the authentic personalities of its villainous characters will be entirely lost.

This intricate sociocultural dilemma is further compounded by the strict technical constraints of subtitling, such as character-per-line limits and on-screen reading rates to ensure comfortable readability. Consequently, evaluating these complex translation decisions through an isolated micro-unit lens or an abstract macro-

unit equivalence framework produces an incomplete and fragmented account of the localization process. A micro-unit analysis of translation techniques is necessary to uncover the concrete linguistic operations conducted by the subtitler, but these micro-choices must be further evaluated against Eugene Nida's equivalence models to determine their final functional impact on the target reader. This study addresses this academic need by analyzing the subtitle tracks of the film. To guide the investigation, this study formulates three primary research questions:

1. What types of Dark Humor are found in *The Suicide Squad* (2021) Movie dialogue based on Alberto Godioli's (2024) tripartite classification?
2. What Translation Techniques, based on Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir's (2002) taxonomy and Dr. Rudi Hartono's (2020) multi-technique framework, are applied in the Indonesian subtitles of these dark humor dialogues?
3. What types of Translation Equivalence, based on Eugene Nida's (1964) binary model, are achieved through the application of those translation techniques?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research questions formulated above, the purposes of this study are systematically designed as follows:

1. To classify the specific types of dark humor present in the spoken English dialogue of *The Suicide Squad* (2021) based on the operational framework established by Alberto Godioli (2024). This objective seeks to map out how themes of death, tragedy, violence, and taboo are linguistically constructed as comedic material in the film.
2. To describe Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir's (2002) 18 translation techniques synthesized under Dr. Rudi Hartono's (2020) multi-technique framework (single, couplet, and triplet, quadruplet approaches) are applied by the subtitler in translating these dark humor elements into the Indonesian

subtitles. This objective aims to evaluate the precise micro-linguistic decisions made by the subtitler under the technical constraints of subtitling.

3. To evaluate how the applied single and multi-translation techniques determine the achievement of Formal Equivalence or Dynamic Equivalence based on Eugene Nida's (1964) binary model. This objective seeks to reveal the macro-functional orientation and receptor-based success of the subtitle localization track.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of translation studies:

A. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study enriches the academic literature on Audiovisual Translation (AVT), particularly regarding humor and dark comedy translation in non-European language pairs (English to Indonesian). It demonstrates how Eugene Nida's (1964) classic translation equivalence theory can be dynamically integrated with Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir's (2002) micro-analytical translation techniques, Dr. Rudi Hartono's (2020) multi-technique combinations, and Alberto Godioli's (2024) tripartite functional dark humor theory to analyze contemporary, transgressive, and R-rated cinematic genres. Furthermore, it provides robust empirical data on how micro-level procedural tools map onto and construct macro-level communicative effects under the tight spatiotemporal limitations of subtitling.

B. Practical Significance

Practically, this study serves as a highly valuable reference and guide for professional subtitlers, translators, and students of translation. It offers concrete, multi-layered examples of how to navigate the delicate balance between maintaining the stylistic "shock value" of dark humor and ensuring cultural acceptability, natural

readability, and comedic timing for Indonesian audiences. The analytical insights from this study can help translators develop creative, micro-level strategies (such as couplets or triplets of adaptation, transposition, and reduction) to achieve natural dynamic equivalence without causing cognitive overload or complete loss of comedic timing in the target language.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

To achieve the research objectives, this study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative descriptive design is a research method that focuses on presenting a straightforward, honest summary of events, phenomena, or textual data in the everyday terms typically used by those involved, without heavily manipulating them with highly abstract theoretical interpretations. According to the prominent methodologist Sandelowski (2000), qualitative descriptive studies prioritize descriptive validity to present the data "as is," much like a camera capturing the world without a filter. Lambert (2012) add that qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a complete and holistic overview of a social phenomenon or symptom, making it easily understandable for academic audiences. In this study, a qualitative descriptive approach is utilized to objectively map, categorize, and describe the specific types of dark humor, micro-translation techniques, and macro-equivalence levels implemented in the subtitles of the film.

1.5.1 Source of Data and Data

The primary data source for this study consists of the motion picture *The Suicide Squad* (2021), written and directed by James Gunn. To ensure methodological transparency, the analyzed English spoken dialogues were obtained from the transcripts on the MovieFandom platform, while the corresponding Indonesian subtitles were obtained from the public repository platform My-sub.s.co.

The Indonesian translation analyzed in this study represents a 'fansub' (fan-produced or amateur subtitling) rather than an official commercial release. In AVT

literature, fansubs are characterized by their volunteer-driven, grassroots nature; they showcase high linguistic creativity and source-text orientation but are significantly more prone to literalisms and pragmatic errors due to the complete lack of professional quality control. This file was selected because subtitle repository platforms such as Mysubs.co represent the primary means through which Indonesian audiences access foreign film subtitles, making it a sociolinguistically authentic and highly valid object of amateur translation analysis. The data analyzed are the written Indonesian subtitle turns containing verbal dark humor and their corresponding English source texts.

1.5.2 Data Collection and Corpus Selection

The data collection and corpus selection process was carried out through several systematic and transparent stages:

1. **Transcribing and Mapping:** The researcher repeatedly watched the film and transcribed all spoken English dialogues alongside the Indonesian subtitles. The entire film comprises approximately 1,450 conversational turns.
2. **Filtering:** The researcher filtered the entire transcript to isolate all utterances containing dark humor based on Chiara Bucaria's (2008) thematic definition (i.e., making fun of death, sickness, psychiatric trauma, child cruelty, or extreme violence). This rigorous filtering process successfully yielded an expanded corpus of 45 distinct dark humor data points.
3. **Classification:** The selected 45 data points were aligned side-by-side in a table. Each aligned pair was classified into Godioli's (2024) dark humor types, analyzed for its micro-translation techniques using Molina and Albir's (2002) 18 taxonomy (under Hartono's single, couplet, or triplet, quadruplet approaches), and finally evaluated for its macro-level equivalence model based on Eugene Nida's (1964) framework.
4. **Triangulation and Reliability:** To ensure reliability and reduce subjectivity, a systematic supervisor-investigator triangulation validation process was conducted. The researcher's initial codings, functional dark humor

categorizations, translation technique judgments, and equivalence assignments were systematically reviewed and validated by the thesis advisor (dosen pembimbing) through regular, recursive bimbingan sessions until a 100% consensus was achieved on the categorization of the 45 data points.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is strictly focused on the analysis of written interlingual subtitles. Specifically, it analyzes the spoken English dialogues containing dark humor in the film *The Suicide Squad* (2021) and their translation into Indonesian subtitles. The categorization of dark humor is limited to the definitions provided by Chiara Bucaria (2008) and Alberto Godioli (2024), focusing on jokes that derive amusement from tragedy, violence, taboo, and death.

This study is subject to several limitations:

1. It does not analyze other types of humor (such as physical slapstick, visual gags, or situational comedy) unless they are directly linked to verbal dark humor.
2. It excludes other modes of Audiovisual Translation, such as dubbing or voice-over.
3. It does not involve a quantitative reception study or audience feedback survey to measure how actual Indonesian viewers perceive the subtitles.
4. The analysis is restricted to one specific subtitle file obtained from the public repository platform My-subtitles.co and does not compare multiple alternative subtitle versions.

1.7 Status of the Study

This study positions itself within the academic constellation of audiovisual translation and humor translation studies by comparing several relevant previous

studies to highlight its scientific research gap. The literature review successfully identified nine previous studies closely related to the focus of this research:

The first study was conducted by Azis (2024) in a Sinta-accredited journal article entitled *Translation Technique Analysis of Dark Jokes in the Subtitle of Joker Movie 2019*, which focused its analysis on the translation techniques of dark jokes using Molina and Albir's theory, finding that linguistic compression and literal translation were the most dominant techniques applied in the subtitles. The second study by Samir (2022) in an international journal article entitled *An Investigation of Dark Jokes Translation Strategies in Persian Subtitled Versions of Joker Movie*, analyzed two Persian subtitled versions of *Joker* (2019) and found that literal translation strategies dominated the translators' choices despite facing strict sociocultural and religious constraints in Iran. The third study, a master's thesis by Abidin (2025) titled *An Analysis of Dark Humor and Sarcasm Translation in the Indonesian Subtitle of Venom Let There Be Carnage (2021)*, evaluated subtitle acceptability using Nababan's model, concluding that the dominant literal translation often produced stiff and less acceptable phrasing for Indonesian viewers due to the loss of cultural equivalence.

The fourth study was published by Bucaria (2008) in the classic study *Dubbing Dark Humour: A Case Study in Audiovisual Translation*, which examined the dubbing of verbal dark humor from English into Italian across ten dark comedy films, finding that in the majority of examples (80.4%), dark humor was rendered in a way that remains close to the original, though a small portion experienced weakening due to the recipient's cultural censorship norms. The fifth study, written by Sibuea and Ardinda (2022) in a scientific journal article titled *An Analysis of Slang Translation in Crazy Rich Asians Subtitle*, highlighted the importance of dynamic equivalence shifts to translate vulgar slang terms into acceptable Indonesian vocabulary without neutralizing the original humorous context.

The sixth study by Widyasari and Hikmaharyanti (2025) in a Sinta-accredited journal article in *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra* titled *The Equivalence Translation Procedure used in the Utterances of The Adam Project Movie English to Indonesian Subtitles*, proved that dynamic equivalence is highly effective when applied to informal idiomatic phrases to avoid awkward translational structures in Indonesian subtitles. The seventh study, written by Sudiansyah, Manalu, and Anggraeni (2021) in the Sinta-accredited journal *MEDIOVA* titled *The Analysis of Formal Equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence in Translated Subtitle in Little Women Movie*, showed that formal equivalence is robust for non-idiomatic vocabulary with close conceptual proximity, while dynamic equivalence is absolutely necessary when translating cultural expressions lacking direct equivalents.

The eighth study by Syamsul, Amalia, and Sopiawati (2025) in the Sinta-accredited journal *Leksika* titled *Analysis of Meaning Equivalence between Dubbing and Subtitles in Lost Bullet Movie*, examined textual and pragmatic equivalence levels, concluding that the subtitling format significantly demands higher textual conciseness compared to dubbing. The ninth study, pioneered by Ariantini, Susini, and Claria (2024) in *Jurnal Onoma* titled *How Subtitling in Pamali: The Corpse Village Preserves Elements of Fear and Cultural Meaning*, explained that failure to apply dynamic equivalence at the word level can diminish the psychological effects (such as fear or humor) that the director intends to convey to foreign viewers.

Based on the comprehensive review of the nine previous studies above, several fundamental similarities and differences were identified, establishing the research gap of this study. The primary similarity lies in the use of a qualitative descriptive design, the focus on Audiovisual Translation (AVT) in the form of film subtitling, and the application of meaning transfer as the main analytical tool.

Howbeit, a crucial difference that distinguishes this thesis from previous research is the film genre and the theoretical framework combined. Prior dark humor research analyzed somber psychological dramas where dark humor appears rarely and serves as a reflection of distress. In contrast, the object of this study is *The Suicide*

Squad (2021), a fast-paced action-comedy that intensively integrates dark humor, gory violence, and taboo-breaking as central entertainment elements. Furthermore, while previous studies analyzed translation techniques or equivalence models in separation, this thesis completely fills the research gap by establishing a dual-layered operational model that explicitly integrates Alberto Godioli's (2024) functional dark humor targets with Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir's (2002) 18 micro-techniques (synthesized under Hartono's 2020 single/multi-unit framework) to trace how they systematically coalesce to build Eugene Nida's (1964) Formal or Dynamic Equivalence across an expanded corpus of 45 data points.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized systematically into four chapters as follows:

1. **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION** This chapter presents the fundamental background of the study, the statement of the problem, the dual-layered purposes of the study, the theoretical and practical significance of the research, the qualitative descriptive methodology, the scope and limitations, the status of the study highlighting the multi-layered research gap, and the organization of the study.
2. **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE** This chapter establishes the comprehensive theoretical foundations of the study. It includes the definitions of translation, Eugene Nida's binary model of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence, Audiovisual Translation (AVT), and subtitling along with its rigid spatiotemporal constraints. Crucially, it reviews Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir's (2002) taxonomy of 18 translation techniques and Dr. Rudi Hartono's (2020) multi-technique combination framework. Finally, it discusses the typologies of dark humor, integrating Chiara Bucaria's (2008) thematic concepts and Alberto Godioli's (2024) tripartite functional dark humor classification.

3. **CHAPTER III: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION** This chapter presents the empirical findings and comprehensive qualitative discussions. It displays the dual-layered statistical distribution of the 45 compiled dark humor data points, categorized by Godioli's dark humor types, Molina & Albir's translation techniques, and Nida's equivalence levels. The discussion provides an exhaustive qualitative analysis of representative data points, demonstrating how the subtitler combined single, couplet, and triplet, quadruplet translation techniques to achieve formal or dynamic equivalence.
4. **CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS** This chapter consolidates the entire study by presenting the final conclusions that directly answer the expanded research questions. Additionally, it provides academic and practical suggestions for fellow students, future researchers, professional translators, and the academic institution.

