Translation Errors in Subtitle of the Movie Joker 2019 on Netflix

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Abstract

There have been various genres of movies completed with their subtitles. The role of subtitle is crucial, besides to gain engagement with the audiences, subtitle also conveys the meaning and the message of the movie. However, there have been found errors in the subtitle itself. This study aims to discover the types of translation errors in the English-Indonesian language pair of the Joker (2019) movie shown on Netflix. The English-Indonesian subtitles were used as the data of the study. The method of the study is qualitative descriptive and The American Translators Association (ATA) framework errors category was applied in analyzing the errors types. The results showed that there were six types of errors; (1) omission errors; (2) misunderstanding errors; (3) faithfulness error; (4) literalness error; (5) ambiguity errors and (6) other errors that do not included in the category. The most frequent error is omission, misunderstanding, and faithfulness errors. All the errors found influenced information and message that delivered to the viewers.

Keywords: Translation errors, subtitle, movie, Netflix

1. INTRODUCTION

The film industry has become one of the most promising industries in an international scale. Nowadays, people can enjoy watching movies through offline or online media. The high interest in watching movies from the audiences has become one of the factors for the film industry to produce movies that can be shown all around the world. In order to adjust with the viewers, the subtitle translation on the movie is needed since it plays a crucial role to convey the meaning and the message of the movie.

Netflix, as stated in www.ir.netflix.net, is one of the world's leading entertainment services with 223 million paid memberships in over 190 countries. According to www.netflix.com, Netflix is a streaming service that offers a wide variety of award-winning TV shows, movies, anime, documentaries, and more
on thousands of internet-connected devices. We can watch as much as we want, whenever we want without a single commercial – all for one low monthly price. Netflix also provides subtitles with several different languages for all the movies shown on the platform, one of them is in Bahasa Indonesia.

Since 1941, movies in the field of superhero have taken place in the international market. Adapted from the Republic Pictures, the Adventures of Captain Marvel was released as the first superhero movie. However, in the recent year, movies in the field of villain started to compete with superhero movies and got great attention from the viewers. The succeed of villain-themed movie can be seen from Joker (2019) movie that has won the highest award on Venice Film Festival in Venezia, Italia, and won the Oscar for the main character, Joaquin Phoenix, in category of Actor in a Leading Role. Joker (2019) movie was firstly shown on screen in 2019 and now it is available on Netflix with several subtitles provided, one of them is in Bahasa Indonesia. This movie brought concern that the main character named Arthur suffered from a psychopath and narcissism as consequence of the parenting style of his stepmother. The mixed emotional feeling of the main character and the lesson pictured in the movie, can be delivered to the audiences from the subtitle translation. Although subtitle translation could be functioned as a bridge between the viewers and the movie in delivering the content of the movie, the possibility of error in the subtitle translation is undeniable. The error itself could lead to misunderstanding, misinformation, and not fully convey the meaning of the conversation in the movie. Séguinot (1990) stated that both novice and professional translators make errors because humans have limited cognitive processing capacity or limitations on short-term memory. Séguinot also added that translators sometimes have vocabulary and knowledge gaps that are not always filled in time. Therefore, translation errors could probably be found even in Netflix. Due to this problem, the author is encouraged to conduct study on the types of error that could probably be found in the subtitle translation in Bahasa Indonesia of the movie Joker (2019) shown on Netflix. The main objective of conducting this study is to find out the types of errors in terms of words, phrases, and sentences in subtitle translation in the Joker (2019) movie shown on Netflix and furthermore discussed the implication of the errors towards the result of the translation.

Sihotang et al., (2020) described that translation is connection between two languages, the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). Newmark (1986) defined that translation is an exchanging messages from SL to TL structurally. In another point of view, Sokolovsky, (2010) had three definitions of translation, they are a process, process and result, and communication and skill. The process is the translation activity which produces a translation that can be read by the public. While skills and communication are related to the ability of translation in translating a text that can communicate the
author's message to the reader. Therefore, it can be concluded that the translation is the process of transferring messages from the SL into the TL.

In the process of translation, some translators both novices and professionals still have some translation errors due to the lack of knowledge or the carelessness and irresponsibility. From the perspective of the function of translation, Nord (2001) defined translation errors as “failure to properly implement the instructions in the translation outline or unreasonable solution to translation problems.” Viewed from the standpoint of equivalence between an SL and an TL, according to Koller (1992) “a translation error is considered as non equivalence between SL and TL or non-adequacy of the TL” (p. 216). Viewed from a functionalist approach, Kupsch-Losereit (1985) was the first to introduce the notion of translation errors. Her definition of a translation error is as “an offence against: (1) the function of the translation, (2) the coherence of the text, (3) the text type or text form, (4) linguistic conventions, (5) culture-and situation-specific conventions and conditions, (6) the language system” (p. 172). Williams (1989) provided a definition for a major translation error but not for a minor translation error. He explained that a major translation error is “the complete failure to render the meaning of a word or group of words conveying an essential part of the message of the document”.

Thus, based on those definitions, what a translation error is has a variety of meanings depending on translation theories and norms (Hansen, 2010). Hansen also stated that translation errors appear since something “goes wrong” during the transfer and movement from the SL to the TL. The definition of translation errors vary according to different translation theories, which lead to different categorizations of errors. Second, different translation language pairs could result in different types of errors.

Pym (1992) has proposed two types of translation errors: binary errors and non-binary errors. He explains that “a binary error opposes a wrong answer to the right answer,” so for this type of errors it is about right and wrong (p. 282). Binary errors are typically very rapidly and punctually corrected. On the contrary, non-binary errors or non binarism “requires that the target text actually selected be opposed to at least one further target text, which could also have been selected, and then to possible wrong answers.” There is a minimum of two right answers and two wrong answers for non-binary errors. The time needed for correcting non-binary errors can take long until there are no more significant differences. Pym maintains that all translational errors (as opposed to language errors) are non-binary by definition, but non-binary errors are not necessarily all translational (283).

Hansen categorized translation errors into seven, they are pragmatic, text linguistic, semantic, idiomatic, stylistic, morphological, and syntactical errors (2010). Pragmatic errors refer to misinterpretation of the translation brief and/or the communication situation. The examples of these errors
are an incorrect translation type, lack of important information, unwarranted omission of SL units, too much information related to the SL and/or the TL receiver’s needs in the situation, disregarding norms and conventions as to genre, style, register, abbreviations, etc. Text-linguistic errors constitute a violation of the semantic, logical, or stylistic coherence, such as incoherent text caused by incorrect connectors or particles, incorrect or vague reference to phenomena, unclear temporal cohesion, incorrect category (using active voice instead of passive voice, or the other way around), incorrect modality, incorrect information structure caused by word order problems, and unmotivated change of style. Semantic (lexical) errors are incorrect choices of words or phrases. Idiomatic errors are semantically correct words and phrases, but these errors will not be used in an analogous context in the TL. Stylistic errors refer to incorrect choices of stylistic level, stylistic elements, and stylistic devices. Morphological errors, also called “morpho-syntactical errors,” include incorrect word structure or mistakes in number, gender, or case. Syntactical errors include incorrect sentence structure, for example.

There have been a number of previous studies related to error analysis on translation. First, a study conducted by Salam et al., (2017) that discussed the kinds of translation errors and the dominant error made by Indonesian-English translators in crowdsourcing translation application of Flitto. The data collected was analyzed by using error analysis technique of Miles and Huberman (1984) consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display and conclusion/verification.

Another study was conducted by Wongranu (2017). The study was discussing about the errors translation made by English major students from Thai into English. The participants were 26 students on the third-year, English major students at Kasetsart University. The data were collected from the students’ exercises and examinations. In analyzing the data, the author categorizing the errors into three types; semantic error, syntactic error, and cultural error. After analyzing the types of errors, this study continued to analyze the most common error found and described the possible causes of errors.

The other study conducted by Dewi (2017) was entitled Translation and language errors in the Indonesian-English Translation. This study aimed to discover the types of translation and language errors mostly found in the Indonesian-English translation. The data were obtained by conducting several projects in translation classes of LBI (Lembaga Bahasa Internasional - an International Language Institution) Universitas Indonesia (UI) for two years from 2013 to 2015 by asking the students to do translation from Indonesian text into English. The data were analyzed using the ATA framework of error analysis.

Lijun & Yali (2019) conducted a study about analysis of translation errors in subtitle of the movie The Wandering Earth. The language pairs that had been analyzed are Chinese-English. The study put
forward four categories of translation errors according to Nord’s theory (2001); linguistic translation error, cultural translation error, pragmatic translation error, and text-specific translation error.

Koman et al., (2019) conducted a study about the types of translation errors in Indonesian-English translation practice made by students in Indonesian-English Translation Course. After categorizing the types of errors, this study analyzed the most prominent error categories and the factors that influenced the errors on the translation process. The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis and the errors were categorized according to ATA’s Framework for Standardized Error Making.

Last, a study conducted by Sihotang et al., (2020). This study aimed to determine the cultural translation errors in aspect of gender and racial discrimination in movies subtitles *The Help* and *Hidden Figures*. The study used content analysis method by Krippendorff (2004).

Based on the literature reviews above, there have been backgrounds from several countries discussing the problems in translation errors. From the previous studies, it can be summed up that there are some similarities between the previous studies and the current study in discussing the types of errors and the most common error found in translation. However, the previous studies have not presented the implication of the errors towards the result of the translation. Hence, this study aims to, first, reveal the types of translation errors and discover the most frequent translation errors in the *English-Indonesian* subtitle translation in the *Joker* (2019) movie on Netflix. Next, this study will discuss about the implication of the errors towards the result of the translation. The translation error types will be classified based on the error category in the *American Translators’ Association* (ATA) Framework version 2021. This model provides a simple and detail definition of translation errors. The error categories will be described on the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar (G)</td>
<td>occurs when a sentence in the translation violates the grammatical rules of the target language. Grammar errors include lack of agreement between subject and verb, incorrect verb inflections, and incorrect declension of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax (SYN)</td>
<td>occurs when the arrangement of words or other elements of a sentence does not conform to the syntactic rules of the target language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Form/Part of Speech (WF/PS)</td>
<td>occurs when the root of the word is correct, but the form of the word (e.g. number or case of noun or pronoun) is incorrect or nonexistent in the target language (e.g., “tooths,” or “conspiration” instead of “conspiracy”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling (SP)</td>
<td>occurs when a word or character in the translation is spelled/used incorrectly according to target language conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization (C)</td>
<td>occurs when the conventions of the target language concerning upper and lower-case usage are not followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diacritical Marks (D)</td>
<td>occurs when the target language conventions of accents and diacritical marks are not followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation (P)</td>
<td>Occurs when the conventions of the target language regarding punctuation are not followed, including those governing the use of quotation marks, commas, semicolons, and colons. Incorrect or unclear paragraphing is also counted as a punctuation error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition (A)</td>
<td>Occurs when the translator introduces superfluous elements of meaning, including aspects of tone (irony, intensification, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission (O)</td>
<td>Occurs when one or more elements of meaning in the source language are left out of the target language. This covers not only textual information but also the author’s tone (irony, intensification, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology (T)</td>
<td>Occurs in a general text when the candidate chooses a content word or phrase (noun, verb, modifier) with an incorrect or inappropriate meaning in relation to the source text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faux Ami (FA)</td>
<td>Occurs when words of similar form but dissimilar meaning across the language pair are confused. Faux amis, also known as false friends, are words in two or more languages that probably are derived from similar roots and that have similar or identical forms, but that have different meanings, at least in some contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Form (VF)</td>
<td>Occurs when the translation includes a verb in a grammatically possible form (as to person, number, gender, tense, mood, aspect, etc.) that conveys a meaning different from that of the source text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity (AMB)</td>
<td>Occurs when either the source or target text segment allows for more than one semantic interpretation, where its counterpart in the other language does not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion (COH)</td>
<td>Occurs when a text is hard to follow because of inconsistent use of structural elements such as terminology, pronouns, inappropriate or missing conjunctions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithfulness (F)</td>
<td>Occurs when the target text does not respect the meaning of the source text as much as possible. Candidates are asked to translate the meaning and intent of the source text, not to rewrite it or improve upon it. The grader will carefully compare the translation to the source text. If a “creative” rendition changes the meaning, an error will be marked. If recasting a sentence or paragraph—i.e., altering the order of its major elements—destroys the flow, changes the emphasis, or obscures the author’s intent, an error may be marked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literalness (L)</td>
<td>Occurs when a translation that follows the source text word for word results in an awkward and/or unidiomatic rendition—for example, “reductions of taxes of income” instead of “income tax reductions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misunderstanding (MU)</td>
<td>Occurs when the translation clearly results from a misinterpreted word or idiom, or the incorrectly parsed structure of a phrase or sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecision (IND)</td>
<td>Occurs when the candidate gives more than one option for a given translation unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfinished (UNF)</td>
<td>Unfinished passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage (U)</td>
<td>Occurs when conventions of wording or phrasing in the target language are not followed (“We don’t say it that way”). Correct and idiomatic usage of the target language is expected. This category includes definite/indefinite articles, idiomatic use of prepositions (e.g., “married to,” not “with”), and collocations (“committed a crime,” rather than “performed a crime”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text type (TT)</td>
<td>Occurs when some component of the translation is either inappropriate for the implied target audience of an exam passage (educated monolingual speakers of the target language) or fails to comply with specifications stated in the Translation Instructions (TIs).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method of the study is descriptive qualitative. Content analysis technique was employed in this study. The data used in this study is the subtitle translation both in English and Bahasa Indonesia on the Joker (2019) Movie. The data was obtained from Netflix. The ATA Framework version 2021 was applied to analyze in classifying the error types. To collect the data, the author watched the movie and transcribed the subtitles both the English and the Bahasa Indonesia. After that, the author analyzed the errors found using the ATA framework classification of errors.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A number of error types were discovered based on the category of the ATA Framework version 2021 in the English-Indonesian translation subtitle of Joker (2019) movie shown on Netflix. There were five types of errors found on this study, they are omission, misunderstanding, faithfulness, literalness, and other errors that do not include in the category, The results are briefly shown on the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Misunderstanding</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Faithfulness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Literalness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other errors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The Errors Found in the Subtitle Translation
3.1. Omission Error

Data 1

SL: Put ‘em in a room, let ‘em sit there and talk until they get it over with.

TL: Suruh mereka berdiskusi sampai dapat jalan keluar.

In this text, the subtitle in Indonesian omits the first and the second clauses of the sentence. The Indonesian subtitle best is performing all the elements of the SL. The translation in Indonesian is supposed to be “Kumpulkan mereka dalam satu ruangan, biarkan mereka duduk dan berdiskusi sampai menemukan jalan keluar.” This statement was told from a citizen interviewed in a radio and suggested the authorities to held a meeting in order to handle the super rats problem.

Data 2

SL:

Arthur: I live right here in the city, with my mother. [audiences laughing]

Murray: Okay. Hold on. Hold on. There’s nothing funny about that. I lived with my mother before I made it. Just me and her. I’m that kid whose father went out for a pack of cigarettes, and he never came back.

TL:

Arthur: Aku tinggal di kota ini, bersama ibuku. [penonton tertawa]


The conversation between Arthur and Murray was taken on a live show with Murray as the host. Here, Murray told his story back when he used to live with his mother. He also emphasized that he only lived with his mother by saying “Just me and her”. This statement showed Murray’s sympathy towards Arthur that living just with his mother is okay. However, on the Indonesian subtitle, the emphasis from Murray is omitted by the translator.

3.2. Misunderstanding Error

Data 3

SL:

Arthur: I’ve been using it as a journal, but also as a joke diary. Funny thoughts or observations. I think I told you, I’m pursuing a career in stand-up comedy.

Psychiatrist: No, you didn’t.
TL:


Psikiater: Belum diisi.

The context of the conversation was in a room while Arthur was being asked by the psychiatrist for some questions regarding to his mental health. In that scene, Arthur told the psychiatrist that he had already told her about him pursuing a career in stand-up comedy. The nurse then replied “no” which means she stated that Arthur had not told her yet about his plan. In the subtitle translation of Indonesian, it was mistranslated into “belum diisi” which refers to Arthur’s journal that he had not write his dream in his journal. This delivers the different meaning and context of the speech.

Data 4

SL:

[Arthur’s joke inside his journal]

“I just hope my death makes more cents than my life.”

TL: “Kuharap kematianku lebih masuk akal dari hidupku.”

Here, as Arthur stated he wanted to be a comedian, he tried to make joke by wrote it down on his journal. The word ‘cents’ supposed to be replaced with a word ‘sense’ in normal situation. But, Arthur tried to replace the word which has the same sound yet has different meaning. However, the Indonesian subtitle is not translated properly as what Arthur means. It is considered to be translated as a joke, “kuharap kematianku lebih menghasilkan banyak uang dari hidupku.”

3.3. Faithfulness Error

Data 5

SL: He must not be getting my letters.

TL: Dia pasti tidak menerima surat-suratku.

A faithfulness error occurs when the target text does not respect the meaning of the source text as much as possible. Destroys the flow, changes the emphasis, or obscures the author’s intent, an error may be marked. The Indonesian subtitle did not emphasize the word “must”. In this context, Penny told Arthur that she was strongly sure that the letters she sent must not be received by the receiver. However, the TL did not emphasize the the sureness of Penny and the suitable translation should be “dia pasti tidak menerima surat-suratku.”
Data 6

SL:
Arthur: Just thinking of a joke.
Psychiatrist: Do you want to tell it to me?

TL:
Arthur: Aku hanya memikirkan sebuah lelucon.
Psikiater: Katakan leluconnya.

In the SL, the psychiatrist was asking Arthur whether he wanted to tell the joke or not. Meanwhile, in the Indonesian subtitle, the utterance of the psychiatrist was not translated into a question following the SL. The target text does not respect the meaning of the source text as much as possible. If recasting a sentence or paragraph—i.e., altering the order of its major elements—destroys the flow, changes the emphasis, or obscures the author’s intent, an error may be marked.

3.4. Literalness Error

Data 7

SL: Three less pricks in Gotham City, only a million more to go.

TL: Gotham City kurang tiga orang jahat, tinggal satu juta lagi.

The result of the Indonesian translation is considered as literalness error. This happened because the translation that follows the source text word for word results in an awkward and/or unidiomatic rendition. The result is better replaced with “Penjahat di Kota Gotham sudah berkurang tiga orang, tinggal tersisa satu juta orang lagi.”

3.5. Ambiguity Error

Data 8

SL: [news anchor on TV] [news anchor] and finally, tonight, just when you thought it couldn’t get any worse, authorities are saying the city is under siege by score of rats. And not just any rats, but super rats, who are hard to kill.

TL:
Terakhir, saat kita berpikir keadaan tak mungkin bisa lebih buruk lagi, polisi mengatakan kota diserang sejumlah tikus. Bukan tikus biasa, tetapi tikus super yang sulit dibunuh.
This error happened when either the source or target text segment allows for more than one semantic interpretation, where its counterpart in the other language does not. The SL use the term ‘authorities’ which can refer to the government and/or police. However, the TL applied the term ‘police’.

3.6. Other Error

Data 9

SL: Next stop, Bedfork Park.

TL: Stasiun berikut, Bedfork Park.

The Indonesian subtitle above considered as other error due to there is no clearly fit types of errors. The error is the word “park” is not translated properly into Indonesian which supposed to translate into “taman.”

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, we can discover that there are six types of errors occurring from English-Indonesian translation results retrieved from Joker (2019) movie shown on Netflix. The translation errors found are omission, misunderstanding, faithfulness, literalness, ambiguity, and other errors. However, we can conclude that the most common errors are omission, misunderstanding, and faithfulness. Each of them consists of two errors. The errors translation above implicate the result of the quality of the translation. The inaccuracy of the translation results in the information conveyed being incomplete and tends to be incorrect that leads to misunderstanding.

For further research, it is suggested to obtain more data to confirm more scientific results. For translators, it is important to focus on the target audience, mode of thinking, and improve the translation skills.

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