

HUMOR LOSS IN THE SHORT FILM ONCE UPON A SNOWMAN

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Abstract

This article discusses how the humorous elements of the short animated film *Once Upon a Snowman* are conveyed to Indonesian by means of translation using subtitle media. The analysis in this study aims to find out whether humor in English is also considered funny in Indonesian. The results of the study show that there is complexity in translating humor using language features. The animated film *Once Upon a Snowman* adopts an interpretive-communicative translation method and in doing so several compromises are made. Especially through simplification which often results in a loss of humor

Keywords: Humor, Translation

INTRODUCTION

Disney is one of the production houses that has succeeded in releasing box office quality films and one of them is the frozen family animated film. Frozen itself is a film made by Disney Animation Studios which was released by Walt Disney Picture in 2013 and managed to get a box office title with revenues of more than \$1,276 billion. The film also has several sequels and one of them is *Once Upon a Snowman* (OUaS). OUaS was released on Disney+ on October 23, 2020. OUaS is part of the Frozen film franchise. This short film certainly contains humor because it aims to entertain. is something that gives rise to laughter in the individual due to the presence of stimuli from within (not physical stimuli) that are generated from what others do or say ¹. In every country, even a tribe, the characteristics of humor differ from one another. So the question arises whether an expression containing humor can be translated from one language to another.

This is one of the challenges faced by translators in translating from the source language (BSu) to the target language (BSa). This family animated film is a film created with the aim of being enjoyed by audiences of all ages and circles. Thus, translators have challenges in retaining elements that interest the audience. The next challenge is the use of language related to the culture in which the film was produced.

The phenomenon of "humor loss" in translation is a scourge for translators (English-Indonesian or Indonesian-English) who struggle to present jokes or antics in their translations. They are encouraged to know and understand the humor prevailing in both languages. A translator must not only assess whether the target reader understands the humor in a given source language text, but is also required to guess or know whether the humor is

¹ Chovanec, and Ermida. *Language and Humour in the Media*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 12, 2012)

acceptable as humor in the target culture. A humor can contain completely unknown concepts in the target language culture; may be related to religious beliefs, social customs, and so on.²

Translating a phrase that contains humour is a challenge that translators often face. Given that good translation quality re-engages the features of the source language text (BSu) to the target language (BSa), the translated text is accurate in terms of the content of the message, and can be easily understood by the target reader.³ Translators are required to find the closest natural word equivalent to bridging the two languages. If a translator fails to understand or does not even recognize a joke in your BSu text, then the appeal of the translation is weak and does not interest the target reader.

This study seeks to find out how translators translate humor in the animated film *Once Upon a Snowman*, which in the translation of humor itself has challenges in translating language, cultural, and word play mismatches. What is meant by word play is a communicative confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures that are more or less that have similar forms and more or less the same meaning.⁴

Translation Techniques

The translation process is an attempt to "bring" the meaning of a source text or source language to the target text or target language. Translation is a process of transferring meaning from a text in the source language (SL) to the text in the target language (TL) which is carried out by the translator.⁵ The main aim of translation is to produce various types of text, written or spoken, into other languages so that it has a broader target.⁶

In general, there are three types of theories used in humor, namely essentialist, teleological, and substantial. The essentialist theory refers to the opinion that humor exists because there are necessary and sufficient conditions to give rise to a phenomenon. Teleological theory describes the purpose of a phenomenon and how the mechanism is formed and determined by the purpose. While the substantive theory aims to find an explanation of phenomena in the "content" of a phenomenon. In general, there are four theories regarding the translation of humor, namely:

1. Theory of Disadvantage

The Incongruity Theory states that humor occurs in moments of realization of the contrast between the concepts involved in a particular context and the real objects considered to be related to those concepts.

2. Superiority Theory

² Yuliasri and Allen. "Humour Loss in the Indonesian Translation of *Harry and the Sorcerer's Stone*". Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics 9 (1): 119–27. (may, 2019). Accessed at February 20, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v9i1.14185>

³ Nababan, Nuraeni and Sumardiono. *Pengembangan Model Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan*. Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra 24 (1): 39-57. (Juni 01, 2014). Accessed at February 23, 2023. <http://hdl.handle.net/11617/2220>

⁴ Delabastita, *Focus on the Put: Wordplay as a Special Problem in Translation Studies*. International Journal of Translation Studies 6 (2): 223–43, (January 1, 1994). Accessed at February 01, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.6.2.07del>

⁵ Hatim and Munday. *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book*, (Routledge: Routledge Applied Linguistics, 2004)

⁶ Ordudari. *Translation Procedure, Strategies, and Methods*. Translation Jpurnal 11 (3):8. (2007). Accessed at January 20, 2023. <http://translationjournal.net/journal/41culture.htm>

Humor is about ridiculing other people. This theory states that people laugh when they feel superior to others.⁷

3. Relief Theor

This theory argues that humor is a means to reduce and relieve psychological tension caused by social rules and boundaries, especially when discussing certain topics that are considered taboo.⁸

4. Theory of Linguistic Humor

This theory focuses on the linguistic meanings used to convey humor, ignoring non-verbal forms of humor, such as slapstick or slapstick humor. This theory approaches humor from a syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic perspective.

Translation techniques and translation strategies are two different things. Translation strategy is a general approach adopted by translators either consciously or not in translating. Can say that the translation strategy is an important part that forms translation competence translation techniques among Indonesian translators are as follows:⁹

1. Borrowing, namely borrowing words in the source language and using them in the target language.
2. Calque, namely borrowing words from the source language and translated into the target language literally, or word for word.
3. Modulation, namely a change in point of view.
4. Amplification, namely using more markers to cover syntactic or lexical gaps.
5. Generalization, namely translating terms to be more general.

Thus, translators have various techniques in translating humor. Indonesian translators themselves have guidelines in translating so that cultural norms can be obeyed and cultural taboos are not violated.

⁷ Schwarz. *Linguistics Aspects of Verbal Humor in Stand-up Comedy*.

⁸ Raskin. *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Vol. 24. Springer Science & Business Media.

⁹ Molina and Albir. *Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach*. Meta: Journal Des Traducteurs/Meta: Translators' Journal 47 (4): 498–512. (December, 2022). Accessed at December 20, 2022. <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/008033ar>

Humor Translation

The process of translating humor is a challenging activity because humor has a close relationship with the fields of language and culture. This relationship is usually an obstacle in the process of translating humor. In general, there are two types of problems faced by translators in translating humor. The problem is the relationship of humor with language and humor with culture.¹⁰

1) Humor and language (Language-specific)

Humor based on linguistics, such as phonetics, phonology, or morphological ambiguity, seems difficult to translate. It may be impossible to capture the original humorous message, especially when one is dealing with language-dependent humor. The use of humor that utilizes language features can be conveyed implicitly or explicitly, either in writing or orally. This kind of humor is often used in television shows or in everyday life. For example, the sentence "He's cracked as a crab!" which have almost the same phonetic or sound. The use of humor that utilizes this linguistic feature in Indonesian can be seen in puns such as the sentence "The singer who likes cycling is Selena Gowes." This is one of the uses of language features to create humor.

2) Humor and culture (Cultural-specific)

The second problem is cultural specificity. Some humor is more difficult to translate because it is tied to certain socio-cultural realities, customs or foods. Much of this type of humor does not translate well. As a consequence, the expression will clearly not be funny for speakers of the target language. For example, the context is in the fasting month. A grandfather takes medicine and is reprimanded by his grandson. "That's Bodrex medicine, you can take it at any time," replied the grandfather.

"If a joke is not translated as a joke, the translation is bad". This statement is a slap in the face for translators to pay close attention to the details of the process of translating humor. It is necessary for a translator to understand the ins and outs of linguistics and the culture of both the source and target languages before translating a text. So that the phenomenon of "humor loss" will no longer appear in translating a work.

If the translator is able to bring a humorous effect in the target language text, he has done his job properly and correctly. The desire to be "faithful" and the fear of being "disloyal" to the original text haunts many translators. This loyalty can be maintained when humor is not tied to linguistic and cultural aspects, because it is possible to find equivalents in the target language. However, this loyalty can be ignored if humor is tied to linguistic and cultural aspects that have a high level of complexity.

¹⁰ Low, Peter Alan. "Translating Jokes and Puns." *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 19 (1): 59–70. (March, 2011). Accessed at January 12, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2010.493219>

METHOD

This study uses a taxonomy of elements of humor developed by Martínez-Sierra. This taxonomy is a further development of what was initiated by Zabalbeascoa (1993,1996,2005) which talks about various types of humor. Martínez-Sierra that the category of humor is not only limited to certain country humor or humor that depends on a particular language. There are eight elements of humor, namely¹¹:

- a) Community-and-Institution, is an element of humor that refers to concrete cultures such as police, celebrities, organizations, films, books, and others.
- b) Community-Sense-of-Humor, is an element of humor that is more popular in a community compared to other communities based on the preferences of that community.
- c) Linguistic, is an element of humor based on language features.
- d) Visual, is humor which is the process of creating humor because it can be seen directly, not because it is read.
- e) Graphic, is humor that comes from written messages inserted in screen images.
- f) Paralinguistic, is an element of humor that refers to non-verbal sounds, such as emotional expressions.
- g) Sound, refers to the sound that appears on the screen as a special effect.
- h) Non-marked, refers to other elements of humor that do not have a special category but are funny.

It should be underlined that the main difference between Indonesian humor and American humor lies in different socio-cultural factors. Americans tend to make humor open and aggressive because they are used to and familiar with the culture of openness so they can easily divert or reverse the humor. Meanwhile, most Asian people or Asian cultures, including Indonesia, tend to be more closed with humor related to sex or things that are considered taboo. The humor related to matters such as sex, race or other sensitive matters is presented implicitly and is acceptable as long as it does not offend a particular community or individual.

Furthermore, humor will be categorized using the humor classification initiated by Berger. Berger categorizes humor into four classifications, namely: a) word play, b) ridicule, c) grotesque, and d) farce.¹²The findings will be analyzed using the classification initiated by Molina & Albir. Then, the results obtained will be analyzed further to find out whether the selection of certain translation techniques can affect the meaning and humor from SL to TL and whether there is a loss of humor in the process.

¹¹ Martínez-Sierra, Juan José. "Translating Audiovisual Humour. A Case Study." *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 13 (4): 289–96. (January 5, 2009). Accessed at December 10, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09076760608668999>

¹² Berger. *An Anatomy of Humor*. (Routledge, 2017)

FINDING

By using the humor identification technique initiated by Berger, the data that has been obtained will be grouped according to the type of humor and will be analyzed to find out the techniques used in translating the humor.

| No | Type of Humor |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | Word Play |
| 2 | Game of Words (Puns) |
| 3 | Ridicule |
| 4 | Farce |

DISCUSSION

Word Play

Word play is a type of humor that is often encountered. This humor focuses on the harmony of sound and rhyme as opposed to the meaning of sentences or utterances.

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| Scene 1 |
| Minutes in film: 01:22 |
| Contexts: Olaf is walking alone in the middle of a forest covered in thick snow and is questioning his identity. |
| Source Language: So, I'm made of snow and I'm walking on snow. Oh, that's kind of weird. |
| Target Language: Jadi, aku terbuat dari salju dan berjalan di atas salju. Itu agak aneh. |

In terms of language, the sentence that Olaf uses in SL is a sentence that rhymes because it uses the word "snow" successively in two different sentences. Logically, it would be impossible for a snowman to walk on snow. Subtitle makers use literal translation or direct translation techniques. Direct translation as a translation technique that occurs when there are exact and identical structural, lexical and even morphological similarities between two languages. Direct translation occurs in the example above where the translator directly translates sentences from English into Indonesian. Even though using direct translation, the rhymes in BSu can be brought to BSa. So that the effects of word play can be carried over and the humor contained in SL can be carried over to TL.

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| Scene 2 |
| Minutes in film: 02:01 |
| Contexts: Olaf is in the shop getting a nose for him. |
| <p>Source Language: Oaken: Welcome to Wandering Oaken's.</p> <p>Olaf: Wandering Oaken's? Do you know that if you scramble up those letters, it's an anagram for Naked Norwegians?</p> <p>Oaken: Mmm?</p> |
| <p>Target Language: Oaken: Selamat datang di Wandering Oaken's</p> <p>Olaf: Wandering Oaken's? Tahukah kau jika mengacak huruf-huruf, itu adalah anagram untuk orang Norwegia yang telanjang?</p> <p>Oaken: Mmm?</p> |

In the second example, the word play rests on an anagram of the word "Wandering Oaken's". In BSu, this sentence can be formed into another sentence that contains humor, namely "Naked Norwegians". In translating the conversation in that scene, the translator uses direct translation, so that the word "Naked Norwegians" which should be related to "Wandering Oaken's" becomes irrelevant in Indonesian because it is interpreted as "naked Norwegians". In meaning, there is nothing wrong in this translation because in Indonesian "Naked Norwegians" has that meaning. However, the humor in the sentence is not conveyed. This is because the word naked is translated as naked. So the word game that uses an anagram from the word "Wandering Oaken's" which is the basis of the humor fails to be carried from the source language to the target language because the anagram cannot be transferred to Indonesian. So that the humor in the source language fails to be transferred to the target language

Game of Words (Puns)

Puns as humor which takes advantage of the ambiguity of words or phrases and presents a challenge for the translator because these puns take advantage of the special features of a particular language. ¹³For example, the use of puns is used in the following scene:

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| Scene 3 |
| Minutes in film: 04:41 |
| Conteks: Olah's body parts are separated and he asked the body parts not to be far apart. |
| Sources Language: |

¹³ Low, Peter Alan. 2011. "Translating Jokes and Puns." *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 19 (1): 59–70. (March, 2011) Accessed at December 10, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2010.493219>.

| |
|--|
| Olaf: Everybody, stay together. Use the buddy system. |
| Target Language: Olaf: Semuanya, tetap bersama. Ikuti irama tubuhmu. |

In this scene, the humor relies heavily on puns. Olaf uses the phrase “... buddy system” instead of “... body system”. The words buddy and body themselves have a similar pronunciation and sound. The translator chooses to use the modulation translation technique. The phrase “use the buddy system” is translated as “follow the rhythm of your body”. Linguistically, the translation is more natural than if the translator uses a direct translation technique which will get the translation as follows: "Use the friendship system." The use of direct translation techniques is not appropriate in this context, because the translation results will feel unnatural and strange. The use of the modulation technique can be said to be appropriate, because the translation results feel natural in TL, but this technique eliminates the puns in SL. So that the play on words and humor contained in BSu are not caught and not transferred to BSA and the humor in BSu cannot be understood by the audience in BSA

Ridicule

Ridicule is part of insulting humor which refers to the activity of demeaning other people to create humor. This humor includes aggressive humor because it can attack and hurt other people's feelings.

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| Scene 4 |
| Minutes in film: 02:09 |
| Conteks: Olaf was in the shop getting a nose for him. |
| Sources Language: Olaf: And I can't even read. I genuinely don't know how I just did that. |
| Target Language: Olaf: Aku bahkan tidak bisa membaca. Aku sungguh tidak tahu bagaimana bisa melakukannya. |

This scene becomes funny because Olaf mocks himself because he just realized that he can't read but he knows an anagram of a word. The translation technique used in translating this utterance is direct translation. This can be seen from the similarities in morphological and syntactic forms between SL and BS. This direct translation technique itself is quite effective in transferring humor from SL to TL.

Farce

Farce is a type of childish visual humor. This humor is physical, involving situations such as stepping on one's own feet, or sitting on a chair that has been rolled so that it falls over. Berger (2017) refers to this humor as objectified insults. This humor itself is very popular, both in Indonesia and America, which combines insult humor, bodily functions, and the visual effects of the joke itself.

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| Scene 5 |
| Minutes in film: 04:10 |
| Conteks: Olaf fell off a cliff after being chased by a pack of wolves. When he fell, Olaf's body was separated |
| Sources Language: Olaf: I'm falling apart. Is this a skill or a flaw? Skill! Skill! Flaw! |
| Target Language: Olaf: Aku hancur berantakan. Ini keahlian atau apa? Hebat! Hebat Tidak! |

The humor to be conveyed is not too complicated. The humor in this scene is a combination of jokes and wordplay. Visually, the audience is shown a scene where Olaf is falling from a cliff with his body scattered, followed by him stating the sentence "I'm falling apart" can be interpreted as "I'm falling apart". In that scene, Olaf, literally, Olaf is falling apart because his body parts are separated from each other. In this sentence the translator also uses direct translation techniques in the sentence. However, the impact of the humor can be maintained for Indonesian audiences.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In the discussion above, the short animated film *Once Upon a Snowman* is considered as an entertaining and funny family film. There are allusions and humorous scenes in this animated film that cover the four categories identified by Berger, namely language, logic, identity and action. Apart from that, the combination of wordplay (wordplay and pun), ridicule and jokes managed to make the audience laugh. However, in several scenes there is a loss of humor that exists in the source language but cannot be found in the target language. Translators are faced with ways to convey humor so that existing humor can be transferred to the target language.

This study shows that although language translators have achieved functional equality in translating elements of humor, there are some elements, especially those that depend on linguistic humor, which are not easy to translate or have not been successfully translated. With regard to the disadvantages and advantages of translation, Indonesian subtitles in the short animated film *Once Upon a Snowman* adopt interpretative communicative translation

methods. In doing so, several compromises in translation were made, especially in reducing complexity and without compensating for maintaining a level of humor.

Low (2011) proposes several solutions as alternative steps that can be implemented to translate humor, which include:

1. Find humorous equivalents in the target language, whenever possible. This step must take into account the context of both languages.
2. Create jokes that are verbally connected to the BSU, thereby achieving dynamic equivalence.
3. Use different humor because in this case humor is a more important aspect than the SL equivalent.
4. Borrow humor from BSU, and provide an explanation of the humor. This is an alternative that exploits the use of borrowing and descriptive translation techniques.

If the translator is able to bring a humorous effect in the target language text, he has done his job properly and correctly. The desire to be “faithful” and the fear of being “disloyal” to the original text haunts many translators. This loyalty can be maintained when humor is not tied to linguistic and cultural aspects, because it is possible to find equivalents in the target language. However, this loyalty can be ignored if humor is tied to linguistic and cultural aspects that have a high level of complexity. So translators can use the suggestions put forward by Low (2011) in his journal entitled "Translating jokes and puns" as explained in detail above. As a result, the point in translating humor is to present a humorous atmosphere in the target text that makes the target readers laugh.

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