



Translation Analysis of English Swear Words In Indonesian Subtitles of HBO Series *Game of Thrones*

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Abstract

This research analyzes the translation of English swear words into Indonesian in the subtitles of the HBO series *Game of Thrones* Season 2. The study aims to identify the types of swear words used, the translation techniques applied, and the quality of the translations in terms of accuracy and acceptability. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The data were classified using Jay's (2009) theory of swear word types, analyzed using Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, and evaluated using Nababan's (2012) translation quality assessment model focusing on accuracy and acceptability. A total of 183 swear words were found in the series. The most frequent type is sexual references, while vulgar slang appears the least frequent. From 18 translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir, only 7 were used, with established equivalent as the most dominant technique. The accuracy assessment shows 80 accurate, 41 less accurate, and 62 inaccurate translations, resulting in an average score of 2.09. Meanwhile, the acceptability assessment records 136 acceptable and 47 unacceptable translations, with an average score of 2.49. Overall, the results indicate that the translator tends to prioritize cultural appropriateness and naturalness in Indonesian rather than full semantic accuracy when translating swear words.

Key words: Swear words, Translation, *Game of Thrones*.

A. INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential part of human life because people use it to share information, ideas, and feelings with others. Pearson et al. (2000) explain communication as the process of creating meaning through messages. However, misunderstandings can happen, especially when taboo language or swear words are used. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) define swearing as the use of taboo language to express emotions and send a message to listeners. In society, people learn what is acceptable to say and what is not, depending on social and cultural norms.

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Although swearing is often seen as rude, offensive, or inappropriate, it is actually common in daily conversations. Swear words can serve different functions. They can be used to release emotions like anger, pain, or stress (emotional catharsis). Swearing can also strengthen social bonds by showing closeness and informality among people. However, it can also hurt relationships if the context, tone, or relationship between speakers is not suitable. These reasons make the study of swear words interesting, especially in linguistics and translation.

There have been several previous studies discussing the translation of swear words in various films and literary works. The first study entitled *Exploring Techniques and Quality Translation of Swear Words in Disney Movie "Zootopia" Subtitle* by Ramadhani (2024) identifies the types of swear words, translation techniques, and translation quality in the movie, showing that literal translation is the most dominant technique and the translation is mostly accurate and acceptable. The next study entitled *The Impact of Translation Techniques Toward Translation Quality of Javanese Swear Words in Subtitle Film Yowis Ben 2* by Aurilana (2022) found that deletion was the most used technique, which caused many translations to be inaccurate and unacceptable. Another related study entitled *Translation Techniques and Pragmatic Functions of Swear Words Found in The Movie Don't Look Up* by Nurfahmi (2024) shows that reduction was the most used technique, as the translator tended to avoid words that were not acceptable in the target language. Next, a study entitled *Translation Techniques of Swear Words Found in Colleen Hoover's Novel It Ends With Us* by Putri (2024) shows that expletive swearing was the most frequent type and established equivalent was the most dominant technique to make the translation acceptable in Indonesian. The last study entitled *Subtitling Strategies of Swear Words in Deadpool One & Deadpool Two Film* by Rohmawati (2021) found that paraphrasing was the most used strategy in Deadpool One, while deletion dominated in Deadpool Two, reflecting cultural differences in translating swear words.

This study focuses on analyzing the translation techniques used for English swear words in *Game of Thrones* Season 2 and evaluates the quality of their Indonesian subtitles. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how swear words are translated within a medieval fantasy setting while maintaining accuracy, acceptability, and cultural relevance in the target language.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the translation of English swear words in the Indonesian subtitles of *Game of Thrones* Season 2. The data were taken from the original dialogues and their official Indonesian subtitles on HBO. Swear words were identified by watching the series and manually noting the swear words and their translations.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

In this research, the data analysis was conducted based on Jay's (2009) classification of swear words, Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, and the Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model by Nababan et al. (2012).

According to Jay (2009), there are eight types of swear words, but the researcher only found seven types in the data, namely ancestral allusions, animal term, insults, religious/profane/blasphemy, scatological, sexual references, vulgar slang. From the eighteen translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002), the researcher identified seven techniques used in the Indonesian subtitles: Adaptation, borrowing, established equivalent, generalization, literal translation, modulation, and reduction. Additionally, the translation quality of each swear word was evaluated using Nababan et al.'s (2012) model, focusing on accuracy and acceptability to assess how well the original meaning and cultural nuances are conveyed in the target language.

Table 1 Data Analysis of Swear Words

No.	Types of Swear Words	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Ancestral Allusions	27	14.75%
2.	Animal Terms	6	3.28%
3.	Insults	18	9.84%
4.	Religious/Profane/Blasphemy	9	4.92%
5.	Scatological	37	20.22%
6.	Sexual References	84	45.90%
7.	Vulgar Slang	2	1.09%
	Total	183	100%

Based on the table above, total of 183 data containing swear words were identified in Game of Thrones. The most dominant type of swear word is sexual references with total of 84 occurrences or 45.90% of total data. Meanwhile, the least frequent types of swear word is vulgar slang, which appear only 2 times or only 1.09% of total data. Additionally, the types of swear words slurs were not found in the Game of Thrones season 2.

Table 2 Data Analysis of Translation Techniques

No.	Types of Translation Techniques	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Adaptation	24	13.11%
2.	Borrowing	2	1.09%
3.	Established Equivalent	70	38.25%
4.	Generalization	13	7.10%
5.	Literal Translation	1	0.55%
6.	Modulation	27	14.75%
7.	Reduction	46	25.14%
	Total	183	100%

From the total of 183 swear word data above, several translation techniques based on Molina and Albir's (2002) theory were identified. Among all techniques, the most frequently used technique is established equivalent, which appear 70 times, accounting for 38.25% of the total data. On the other hand, the least frequently used technique is literal translation, which appeared only once (1 time) or 0.55% of the total occurrences.

Table 3 Data Analysis of Translation Accuracy

No.	Translation Accuracy	Score	Frequency
1.	Accurate	3	80
2.	Less Accurate	2	41
3.	Inaccurate	1	62
Total			183
Average			2.09

In terms of translation accuracy, the data were assessed using Nababan's Translation Quality Assessment model, which categorizes translations into three levels. Accurate translations (score 3) appear the most frequently, with 80 occurrences, meaning that the message of the source text is conveyed correctly and completely into the target language without any distortion of meaning. Less accurate translations (score 2) occur 41 times, where the main idea is delivered but with slight shifts or minor meaning loss. Meanwhile, inaccurate translations (score 1) are found in 62 cases, indicating that the meaning is distorted, omitted, or incorrectly translated. Overall, the average accuracy score is 2.09, which means that the translation outcome is less accurate.

Table 3 Data Analysis of Translation Acceptability

No.	Translation Acceptability	Score	Frequency
1.	Acceptable	3	136
2.	Less Acceptable	2	0
3.	Inacceptable	1	47
Total			183
Average			2.49

For acceptability, out of the 183 data, acceptable translations (score 3) appear 136 times. These translations sound natural in Indonesian, follow cultural norms, and use expressions that are commonly understood by target language readers. There are no instances of less acceptable translations (score 2), meaning none of the translations were found to be grammatically correct but culturally or stylistically awkward. Meanwhile, unacceptable translations (score 1) occur 47 times, showing that these translations do not conform to Indonesian linguistic norms, sound unnatural, or feel inappropriate within the cultural context. Overall,

the average accuracy score is 2.49, which is higher than the average accuracy score. However, the translation qualities in terms of acceptability were still less acceptable.

2. Discussion

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher found 7 of the 8 types of swear words using Jay (2009) classification. The analysis of swear word types shows that from 183 data, sexual references are the most frequent, appearing 84 times. This indicates that characters in *Game of Thrones* often rely on sexuality-related expressions to insult, humiliate, or assert dominance over others.

The researcher also identified 7 translation techniques used among 18 translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002), which are: Adaptation, borrowing, established equivalent, generalization, literal translation, modulation, and reduction. The researcher found that the translator most frequently used techniques were established equivalent. This indicates that established equivalents are commonly preferred in the translation of swear words across different texts and contexts, reflecting the translators' effort to maintain the pragmatic force of offensive language in the target language.

In terms of translation quality, the findings indicate that the level of accuracy varies across the data, with 80 translations categorized as accurate, 41 as less accurate, and 62 as inaccurate. The average accuracy score is 2.09. Meanwhile, the acceptability aspect shows a higher result compared to accuracy, with 136 translations considered acceptable and 47 unacceptable and with an average score of 2.49. This finding shows that in audiovisual translation, translators often prioritize acceptability to meet cultural and censorship expectations, even if it slightly reduces the level of accuracy.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study analyzed the translation of English swear words in the Indonesian subtitles of *Game of Thrones* Season 2. The findings show that seven types of swear words were used, with sexual references being the most dominant, while slurs did not appear in the data. Among the eighteen translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002), only seven were applied, with established equivalent being the most frequent. Translation quality assessment indicates that most subtitles are both accurate and acceptable, although some translations show meaning shifts or softening to adapt to Indonesian cultural norms. Overall, the translator balances meaning, tone, and cultural appropriateness when rendering swear words into Indonesian.

For translators, this study highlights the importance of maintaining both meaning and cultural sensitivity when translating swear words in audiovisual media. Using techniques like established equivalent, modulation, and adaptation can help preserve the original emotion while making the subtitles appropriate for

the target audience. For future researchers, this study can serve as a reference for analyzing swear word translation in other genres, series, or languages. Further research could explore audience perception, compare official subtitles with fansubs, or include additional quality measures such as readability to gain a more comprehensive understanding of translation effectiveness.



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