

## SUBTITLING STRATEGIES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN SLANG EXPRESSIONS IN INDONESIAN SUBTITLES TEXT OF LEE'S *BARBERSHOP 3: THE NEXT CUT*

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe (1) the types of African-American slang expressions found in the film, (2) the subtitling strategies in translating the African-American slang expressions applied by the subtitler, and (3) the degree of meaning equivalence of the African-American slang expressions in the English movie text of the *Barbershop: The Next Cut* and their Bahasa Indonesia subtitling text.

This research was a descriptive qualitative approach. The data were all African-American slang expressions in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. The main instrument of the researcher was the researcher himself, while the data sheet was employed as the secondary instrument. The data were categorized based on three theories, those are: the slang type proposed by Willis, subtitling strategies proposed by Gottlieb, the degree of meaning equivalence by Bell. The trustworthiness of the data was enhanced this research by using triangulation.

This research showed three findings. The first one is the African-American slang expressions found in the *Barbershop: The Next Cut* film showed that Standard Word is used slightly more than New Invention. The narrow gap between the two types indicates that the film tried to balance the use of the established words and the new ones. The second one is concerned with the subtitling strategies applied by the subtitler in translating the African-American slang expressions. Seven strategies were applied with Transfer being the most dominant and then followed by Expansion, Imitation, Paraphrase, Condensation, Deletion and then Decimation. The occurrence of Transfer as the most used strategy indicates that the subtitler attempted to maintain the meaning and the form of the African-American slang expressions so that the message can be delivered well. The last one is concerned with the degree of meaning equivalence in the translation of the African-American slang expressions in the *Barbershop: The Next Cut* film. Partly-equivalent meaning appeared the most, followed by Different meaning, No meaning and Fully-equivalent meaning. Such a phenomenon indicated that the subtitler succeeds in translating the African-American slang expressions although they were not translated into Indonesian slang expressions.

**Keywords:** Slang, slang types, subtitling, subtitling strategies, meaning equivalence, *Barbershop: The Next Cut*

### INTRODUCTION

Communication is seen as one of the most vital aspects in the world. To make communication goes in the right way a medium is needed to support the interaction between people and the thing associated the most with communication is language. There are so many languages spoken in this world and each is different from the others. Translating one language

to another is not as easy as it looks because there are several expressions that do not have the equivalences in the target language (TL). However, there is one thing that can fill the gap of that diversity and that is translation. Newmark (1988:5) defines translation as “*rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text*”. Translation

bridges the space between two languages and ensures the message is conveyed and thus communication can be maintained effectively. One thing that gains a benefit from the existence of translation is slang. Eble (1996: 11) defines slang as an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness in society at large. It is considered unique because it is self-consciously used and mostly meant to be different from others by creating particular identity. One of the most popular slang is African-American slang whose main users are none other than the African-Americans. Nowadays, many slang terms in America have been adopted from African-American slang. There are two types of slang according to Willis (1964:195) those are, (1) coming from or giving a new meaning to a standard word and (2) new inventions or at least having only a slight connection with established word. The examples of the latter are *on fleek* (very good), *YOLO* (You only live once) and *twerk* (a type of dance performed by shaking the rear end of your body part). Pop culture in America has given an enormous effect on the use of African-American slang, and vice versa. One of the manifestations of this event is in film where dialogues, including slang expressions, are presented in a form of subtitling. According to Gottlieb (1998) in Luyken (1991), Subtitling can be defined as “the translation of the spoken (or written) source text of an audiovisual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen.” In translating slang expressions that appear in a movie, there are ten subtitling strategies that can be applied according to Gottlieb (1992:166), those are: expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion and resignation. The applications of these strategies can be found in Malcolm Lee’s *Barbershop: The Next Cut* film which focuses on

the life in a black barbershop in South Side, Chicago. The area itself is dominated by African-Americans with a tremendous number of over 93% from 752, 496. The film portrays the daily lives of African-Americans in Chicago that are notoriously known for its high rate of crime. One of the reasons why the bad label is attached to the city is the gang culture in Chicago. Most of the gang members are African-Americans and they tend to oppose each other. The black-on-black violence dominates the statistics of crime in Chicago. In numbers, African-Americans are responsible for being the murdered and murderer with 75% and 71% respectively. Based on all these facts, the research believes that the slang expressions produced by the casts in the film are the slang expressions that are regularly used in the daily lives of African-Americans. With the availability of the Indonesian subtitle, it helps Indonesian people to be familiar with African-American slang. However, to regard a certain slang expression as correctly translated or not a parameter is needed. This is where equivalence of translation plays an important part to make the translation more acceptable and understandable. As stated by Roman Jakobson (in Munday, 2001: 5) “for the message to be equivalent in ST and TT, the code-units will be different since they belong to two different sign systems or languages, which partition reality differently”. Every language has its own characteristics which means that the equivalence of the message translated from SL to TL will be different. According to Bell (1991: 6), there are four equivalence degrees: Fully equivalent meaning, partly equivalent meaning, different meaning and no meaning. The African-American slang expressions are not only used by African-Americans due to the emergence of pop culture which has played a vital role in popularizing it. This could be an obstacle for any translator because the boundary between slang and culture is undoubtedly strong. If a translator from Indonesia tries to render a source text containing

African-American slang expressions to the Indonesian target text then quite possibly a misinterpretation of the message would be unavoidable. On top of that, the limited number of strategies in subtitling is also a problem. As we know, subtitling strategies are not as free as common translation due to its rules being different in the field of processing the transferred text. Last but not least, the equivalence of the translation which is the decisive factor to the quality of translation itself.

The objectives of this research are: (1) to describe the type of African-American slang expressions found in Lee's *Barbershop 3: The Next Cut* film, (2) to analyze the strategies used in translating the slang expression from English to Indonesian language, and (3) to describe the degree of meaning equivalence in the translation of African-American slang expressions in the English text of *Barbershop 3: The Next Cut* film and their Bahasa Indonesia subtitling text.

This research is expected to help others who have different interests. Those who could have benefits from this research are: (1) other researchers, in terms of guiding them in researching the same topic as the researcher has, (2) other students, in terms of possessing even better quality in interpreting African-American slang expressions, (3) translators, in terms of translating African-American slang expression and improving the ability of translating African-American slang.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The qualitative method based on the analysis of subtitling was the main technique in this research. It aimed to describe the choice of strategies rather than analyzing calculative prediction. Moreover, this research had no relation with generalization due to qualitative chosen as the approach instead of quantitative. Bungin (2007: 68) states that a descriptive qualitative design is not purely qualitative since it is still

influenced by quantitative tradition especially in putting theory to the collected data. The data were all utterances containing slang expressions that the researcher collected manually from the dialog in the film. The sources of data were English text and its Indonesian translation from the film *Barbershop: The Next Cut*. The main instrument of this research was none other than the researcher himself. He played the vital role in collecting, observing and analyzing the data. The secondary instrument of this research was data sheet that has helpfully contributed in guiding the researcher. The data sheet held a key part in noting the slang expressions found in the film. As for the data collection, the content analysis technique was the method used and the application of this very technique was by taking all the data supporting the research questions. Subsequently, the data that have been selected would eventually meet the focus of the research. The activities done to collect the data were watching the movies, listening to the dialogues, reading the captions, and taking notes of what the research speculated as slang expressions. The researcher worked on the data analysis after the data collection process because he wanted to gather all the data possible. He sorted out the gathered data and dismissed some data containing same slang expressions with same subtitling strategies. Here are the steps taken by the researcher: (1) watching the *Barbershop: The Next Cut* film with English subtitle text attentively, (2) pausing the film every time a slang expression appears, (3) switching the subtitle of the film into Indonesian subtitle text to see the translation of a particular African-American slang expression, (4) taking notes of every slang expression appearing in the film along with its translation which then will be turned into data, (5) sorting out and dismissing some data due to similarity between several slang expressions and also their translation, (6) categorizing the data by using Willis' type of slang expression and Gotlieb's subtitling strategies, (7) determining the degree of

meaning equivalence of the translated slang expressions. To obtain trustworthiness, the data findings of this research were triangulated by two translation students and the result was consulted and discussed with the supervisor.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of African-American slang expressions in Indonesian subtitles text of Lee's *Barbershop 3: The Next Cut*, the researcher found 108 data related to the categories of types of slang, subtitling strategies and degree of meaning equivalence.

In categorizing the African-American slang expressions, the researcher applied the theory proposed by Willis. He classified slang into two types: standard word and new invention. To translate the African-American slang expressions in the film, subtitling strategies proposed by Gottlieb. Those are expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion and resignation. The equivalence of translation is needed and that is why the translator needs a degree of equivalence. The researcher applied Bell's theory which consists of four equivalence degrees, they are: fully equivalent meaning, partly equivalent meaning, different meaning, and no meaning.

The first example is the application of the expansion strategy in translating standard word resulting in partly equivalent meaning.

ST: **Ghetto** office.

TT: *Kantor orang melarat.*

(Datum 59: 00.43.50/Sw/Ex/Pe)

In the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the word 'ghetto' is described as 'an area of a city where many people of the same race or background live with bad living condition.' the word 'ghetto' is also used to describe something that is poor or unsophisticated. Since 'ghetto' is a cultural term and has no exact equivalence in the Indonesian language, the subtitler translates it

using the expansion strategy by adding an explanation in the form of an adjective in the target language which is *melarat*. The translation of this datum is partly equivalent because the expression *orang melarat* is not a slang expression in Indonesian language. The meaning and the message itself is delivered well which leads this datum to be categorized as equivalent.

The second example is the application of the paraphrase strategy in translating new invention resulting in different meaning.

ST: **Ben Frank style.**

TT: *Segini saja.*

(Datum 23: 00.12.19/Ni/Pr/Dm)

Ben Frank is a nickname for Benjamin Franklin who was one of the founding fathers of America. He is featured on the front side of the American one hundred-dollar bill. So to speak, 'Ben Frank style' is an expression used when giving a one hundred-dollar. The subtitler translates the expression using the paraphrase strategy because it cannot be reformed syntactically the same. Ben Frank is listed as an adjective in this context, while 'style' is categorized as the headword which is a noun. However, in the TT the structure of the word has been changed. *Segini* is a noun, while *saja* is an adverb according to *kbbi.web.id*. The message in TT is not delivered well because the meaning is different from the original message in ST. Therefore, it is categorized as different meaning, as the slang expression in ST is not translated as slang expression in TT.

The third example is the application of the transfer strategy in translating new invention resulting in fully equivalent meaning.

ST: **Bruh**, we got a problem right now.

TT: **Bro**, kita memang sudah bermasalah sekarang.

(Datum 65: 00.43.26/Ni/Tr/Fe)

'Bruh' is another way of saying 'bro' which is used to greet a male friend. The subtitler opts to use transfer strategy in translating this African-

American slang expression, as he translates it into 'bro'. As a result of this translation, its degree of meaning equivalence belongs to fully equivalent meaning due to the TT being a slang expression as well.

The next example is the application of the deletion strategy in translating standard word resulting in no meaning.

ST: It wouldn't have mattered how bad the Instagram **hoe** was.

TT: *Tidak peduli bagaimanapun buruknya Instagram.*

(Datum 31: 00.16.30/Sw/DI/Nm)

According to *dictionary.com* the word 'hoe' (plural: hoes) is a derogatory term for women and listed as an African-American slang expression. The origin of the word is from African-American or Southern-American's pronunciation of the word 'whore'. To regard a woman as a 'ho' might vary, for example when a woman often has sex with different partners, or when a woman is so easy to have sex with, or when a woman frequently shows off her body for public consumption. There is no legitimate description or requirement for a woman to be labelled as a 'hoe', but it is mostly and widely associated with prostitutes. However, this reference is not transferred in TT as there is no translation of the 'hoe' slang expression at all which causes it to fall into the category of deletion strategy and no meaning for the degree of meaning equivalence.

The next example is the application of the imitation strategy in translating standard word resulting in different meaning.

ST: **Nigga!**

TT: **Nigga!**

(Datum 38: 00.26.32./Sw/Im/Dm)

According to *dictionary.com*, "nigga is a term used to address a black person." The term itself is one of the most well-known terms that exclusively belongs to African-Americans. Such a term is used to address a close friend and usually the male ones. It is derived from the word 'nigger'

which is a derogatory term. The word 'nigga' is considered offensive for African-American people when used by people of other races. However, if it is used by African-Americans themselves, it is seen as an indication of showing solidarity and affection especially if it is used to address fellow African-Americans. Due to cultural obstacle in this context, the subtitler does not translate it which means that imitation is the strategy used in this context. It leads to the meaning being different in TT as there is no change at all.

The next example is the application of the condensation strategy in translating new invention resulting in partly equivalent meaning.

ST: Ain't nobody wants to see your **butt cheeks** hanging out.

TT: *Tak ada yang mau melihat **pantatmu** menyembul dari celanamu.*

(Datum53: 00.41.16/Ni/Cn/Pe)

'Butt cheeks' is a slang word for a buttock with the addition of the word 'cheeks' as it consists of two rounded parts that resemble left cheek and right cheek of human's face. The subtitler uses condensation strategy by omitting the word *cheeks* because it is the least important word and the omission of it does not affect the meaning or the message in the TT. However, although the meaning is equivalent, the translation in TT is not in a slang expression which makes it fall into the category of partly equivalent meaning.

The last example is the application of decimation strategy in translating standard word resulting in partly equivalent meaning.

ST: No, that's some **real shit**.

TT: *Tidak, itu **benar**.*

(Datum 98: 01.22.38/Sw/Dc/Pe)

*Urbandictionary.com* describes the 'real shit' expression as 'a piece of news or factual information that is not only considered 100% correct, but also socially relevant.' The flexibility of the word 'shit' is proved here once again, as it can be used as a replacement of many noun words. In this context, 'shit' refers to the truth that Calvin

claims and it is complemented by the adjective word 'real' which is the key message of the text. Knowing that the key element of the message is already stated in the word 'real', the subtitler then decides to omit two words from the text, one of which is also important in the ST; 'shit'. The subtitler translates it into the word *benar* which shows that the meaning is delivered well in TT. However, since the meaning is not translated it into a slang expression in TT, it is categorized as partly equivalent meaning.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussions of this research, there are several conclusions that can be put as in the following points:

1. The first point is concerned with the first objective of the study which is about types of slang proposed by Willis, and they are Standard Word and New Invention. These two types of slang are found in *Barbershop: The Next Cut* with Standard Word coming out as the more used between the two. It is found in the 54.63% of the data with the exact number of 59. Meanwhile, New Invention is applied with 45.37% as the result of 49 data found in the film. These phenomena prove that the film tries to balance the already established words with some new words as it is confirmed in the percentages of both slang types.

2. The second point is concerned with the second objective of the study which regards to the subtitling strategies based on Gottlieb's theory that are applied in translating the African-American slang expressions in the film. Out of ten subtitling strategies proposed by Gottlieb, only seven strategies are used in translating the African-American slang expressions in the film. They are Expansion (12.11%), Paraphrase (9.26%), Transfer (57.41%), Imitation (10.18%), Condensation (8.33%), Decimation (0.93%) and Deletion (2.78%). Transcription, Dislocation and

Resignation fail to make any appearances in the film. On the other hand, transfer is the most used strategy with the occurrence of 59 times out of 108 data. This indicates that the subtitler wants to translate the African-American slang expressions by maintaining the meaning and the form so that the message can be delivered well.

3. The third point is concerned with the third objective of the study which is related to the degree of meaning equivalence in the translation of African-American slang expressions in the *Barbershop: The Next Cut* film. Most of the translation of the African-American slang expressions in the film is equivalent as the frequency of equivalent meaning is most dominant with 62.96% while the non-equivalent meaning occurs in 37.04% of the data. Based on the category of equivalent meaning, Fully-equivalent meaning only appears once in the data resulting to the contribution of 0.93%. In contrast, Partly-equivalent meaning tops the list of appearance with 62.03%. As to the non-equivalent meaning, Different meaning contributes to 34.36% of the data followed by No meaning which appears three times making it the second lowest occurring with 2.78% data. The fact that Partly-equivalent meaning dominates the appearance list shows that the subtitler succeeds in delivering the African-American slang expressions into the Indonesian subtitle without using the Indonesian slang expressions.

### Suggestions

In order to improve the quality of translation studies particularly the audiovisual translation, some suggestions are proposed as follows:

1. To Translators

To be a good translator, possessing English skill is not enough. There are a lot of things needed in order to improve the quality of a translation work, one of which is mastering the background of the culture of the source language. As in the case of this study, other translators need to study about African-American's culture

especially the things that are usually associated with African-Americans.

## 2. To Students Majoring in Translation

It is suggested that they expand their knowledge by doing research on movies that contain African-American slang expressions. This is needed because many words originated from African-American people have become globally popular, due to the contribution of hip-hop. The students are expected to gain much information about some words that they are not familiar with before.

## 3. To Other Researchers

Slang is a language that lacks consistent characteristics. There is no exact parameter of classifying whether a certain expression is slang or not. The expansion of social media contributes massively in the popularization of slang. This makes people confused about the real origin of the slang word due to the word becoming more universal. Since slang has a strong bound with culture and the characteristics of the user, it is suggested to other researchers who also conduct a study concerning with African-American slang expressions to be more aware of the African-American culture and history. Slang is also ever-changing and this is why keeping up with the trends is a must in order to understand the African-American slang expressions.

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