

## Translation Equivalence in Horror Movie

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze how subtitling in *Pamali: The Corpse Village* preserves elements of fear and cultural meaning through various types of equivalence and pragmatic strategies. Using Baker's theory of equivalence, this research explores how subtitling influences the audience's experience of horror films. The research employs a descriptive qualitative analysis method. The data consist of dialogues taken from a film that have been translated into English, which are then categorized based on the types of equivalence used in the subtitling. Additionally, this study identifies pragmatic strategies in translating dialogues that contribute to conveying fear to the audience. The findings reveal that seven types of equivalence from Baker are applied in the film's subtitling. They include Equivalence at Word Level, Equivalence above Word Level, Grammatical Equivalence, Textual Equivalence: Thematic and Information Structure, Textual Equivalence: Cohesion, Pragmatic Equivalence, and Beyond Equivalence. In transferring the source meaning, subtitling through these seven types of equivalence can successfully transfer the core message. In preserving elements of fear and cultural meaning, in some cases, subtitling may lead to some consequences. Subtitling through Equivalence at Word Level may slightly diminish the cultural and horror element inherent in the SL text caused by the occurrence of non-equivalence words in the SL texts. Equivalence above Word Level when working on the translation of idiom by paraphrasing, Grammatical Equivalence focusing on grammatical Person, and Pragmatic Equivalence may also lose the cultural meaning of the SL texts. Textual Equivalence achieved through the change of thematic structure may reduce the element of fear of the movie.

**Keywords:** *equivalence; horror movie; subtitling; translation*

### Introduction

Subtitling is a form of audiovisual translation where the translated text of dialogues in movies, television shows, and other audiovisual media is displayed at the bottom of the screen. The purpose of subtitling is to convey messages, conversations, or information from the source language to target language viewers who do not understand the original language, while still maintaining the original context and meaning. As part of translation, subtitling presents its own challenges. In subtitling the translators do not work freely, but they are faced with a certain space and time limitation for target texts available for the target readers. Therefore, according to Venuti (1995), subtitling requires precise and effective techniques to ensure that the conveyed message is accurate and understood by audiences across different countries.

Movie is not just a form of entertainment but also a means of information exchange between countries. However, in the context of international movies, language is one of the biggest barriers preventing the audience from fully understanding the message conveyed. Every language has its own way in expressing meaning. Therefore, translation of movies in the form of subtitling is crucial as a bridge between the source language and the target

language, providing a deeper understanding of the intended message. According to Baker (2011), subtitling not only translates words literally but also must preserve the meaning, and emotional nuances present in the original language.

A number of studies have investigated equivalence in translation. Research by Mohd Jasni & Abdul Halim (2022) classified the categories of equivalence used in movie subtitles. Their study, titled "Equivalence in the Translation French-English in the Movie Subtitles 'Les Intouchables'," applied theory proposed by Nida & Taber (1969) and identified three types of strategies to achieve equivalence in movie subtitling: addition (Nida & Taber, 1969) strategy, deletion strategy, and category shifts. Another research working on movie subtitles and investigating translation equivalence of cultural words was carried out by Sudiansyah et al. (2021). Deploying the theory proposed by Nida & Taber (1969), this research found out that both formal and dynamic equivalence are applied in subtitling cultural words from English into Indonesian.

In Movie Series the Study by Puja et al. (2023) the title "Strategies to Translate Idiomatic Expressions in HBO Series Succession" is aimed at identifying translation strategies for idiomatic expressions using HBO TV series entitled Succession from English into Indonesian. The data analysis is referred to idiom translation strategies by (Baker, 2011). The study identified three types of idioms: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. To translate these idioms, five different strategies were employed. These strategies included paraphrasing, using an idiom with a similar meaning but a different form, using an idiom with both similar meaning and form, omitting the figurative aspect of the idiom, and completely omitting the idiom itself.

In the context of short stories, the study by Septarani (2022) aims to investigate the translation procedures for finding equivalent words, titled "Translation Procedures and Equivalence in Children Bilingual Short Story." Utilizing theories from Newmark (1988) and Nida & Taber (1969), the research identified two strategies for translating equivalence in meaning: Formal Equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence. The research by (Susini et al., 2019) aims to understand the shifts that occur to achieve translation equivalence by examining linguistic re-contextualization in the translation of meditation texts from Indonesian to English. The study, titled "Material Clause Re-contextualization in Indonesian-English Translation," applies Pragmatic Translation Equivalence (House, 2015) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 2014). The findings show that material clauses in Indonesian are translated into relational clauses of attribution, relational clauses of identification, or material clauses with different process types. This research reveals that to achieve equivalence in translation, the source texts are re-contextualized in the target language by the translator. The re-contextualization is viewed from linguistic and cultural contexts.

In the context of Instagram machine translation, the study by (Antika, 2022), titled "Translation Shifts and Equivalence Strategy Produced by Instagram Machine Translation," employs theories from Catford (1965) and Nida (1964). The aim of this research is to identify the types of translation shifts and the types of translation equivalence found in the translation of Instagram captions from English into Indonesia. The analysis shows that two strategies, namely Formal Equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence, effectively conveyed meaning. The study by Susini et al. (2021), titled "Translation Alternatives of Indonesian Public Signs," aims to analyze the translation of public signs from Indonesian into English in Bali, using Translation Equivalence theory by House (2015) and translation strategies by Malone (1988). The findings show that public signs were translated using substitution, amplification, reduction, condensation, and re-ordering strategies. These strategies resulted in several translation alternatives, which in

some cases led to changes in pragmatic and textual meaning. This research emphasizes that equivalence in translation is achieved by adapting the translation strategies applied for the source texts.

Reflecting on the previous studies, this study differs from earlier studies. The studies carried out previously were on different focus and with different perspectives. Mohd Jasni & Abdul Halim (2022) and Sudiansyah et al. (2021) worked with theory of equivalence by Nida & Taber (1969), Puja et al. (2023) with theory of translation strategies by Baker (2011), Septarani (2022) with theory of translation procedure by Newmark (1988) and translation equivalence by Nida & Taber (1969), Susini et al. (2019) with theory of translation equivalence by House (2015) and Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday (2014), Antika (2022) with theory of translation shifts by Catford (1965) and translation equivalence by Nida (1964), and Susini et al. (2021) with theory of translation equivalence by House (2015) and translation strategies by Malone (1988). This present study focuses on subtitling in a horror movie and applied theory of translation equivalence by Baker (2011). Audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling in horror movies, faces unique challenges in conveying emotional nuances from the source language to the target language. In addition, research on subtitling in horror movies is still rare, especially those that focus on how fear and tension are maintained in subtitling. This research is expected to contribute to the field of translation by adding knowledge, particularly in applying equivalence theory in translating movies. The study will not only provide insight into effective translation strategies but also offer a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by translators. The findings can serve as a reference for other translators facing similar situations, especially in the context of audiovisual translation. Translators can use the results of this study to translate movies while preserving the essence of the story, tension, and meaning that the director intended to convey.

## Method

The method not only helps collect and analyze data but also serves as a framework that guides the research process to ensure the credibility and success of the goals to be achieved. This research uses a qualitative method, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the data and its context, enhancing the understanding of translation equivalences in horror movies.

This research uses the Indonesian horror movie titled *Pamali: The Corpse Village* as the data source, which can be easily accessed on the legal streaming platform Netflix. This movie was chosen because it went viral and was released in 2023. Moreover, the movie contains various dialogues that reflect fear and tension, which are integral to the storyline.

This present study is a qualitative research. Qualitative research can be conducted by an individual or group to describe social or human issues, aiming to understand and explore meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data was collected by applying observation method. It was carried out through some steps. Firstly, the movie was watched carefully and repeatedly. Secondly, the dialogues were transcribed. Lastly, the important aspects of the dialogues, whether the dialogues successfully transfer meaning or not, were documented by note-taking technique. The meaning conveyed was analyzed using pragmatic strategy to determine whether the fear elements are preserved. The selected data were then grouped. In analyzing data, descriptive qualitative method was

applied. The data were analyzed based on the Bakerian seven types of equivalence. The source and target texts were compared to find out the type of equivalence.

## Results

Based on the data collected, it is found that the translator applied several equivalences in the subtitles. They are: Equivalence at Word Level, Equivalence Above Word Level, Grammatical Equivalence, Textual Equivalence: Thematic and Information Structure, Textual Equivalence: Cohesion, Pragmatic Equivalence, and Beyond Equivalence. Further analysis explains how each type of equivalence is applied in the movie's dialogues, along with supporting examples. This explanation includes the original dialogue, the subtitle translation, and the reasoning behind the chosen type of equivalence.

### Equivalence at Word Level

In translation, translators often face challenges where a word in the source language (SL) does not always have a direct equivalent in the target language (TL). In Mona Baker's book, this is referred to as Non-Equivalence at the Word Level. The book outlines eleven common types of non-equivalence at word level and There are eight strategies used to solve this problem. In this study, several relevant dialogues will be analyzed with a deep semantic meaning approach to determine whether the intended meaning in the SL is effectively conveyed in the TL.

#### Datum 1

SL: "Aku ketemu jurik!" [1:18:29]

TL: "I saw a ghost" [1:18:29]

In this case, the word "jurik" is translated into "ghost", where the translator applies the strategy of translation by a more general word (superordinate) because "jurik" is a culturally specific term that does not have a direct equivalent in English. By translating it as "ghost", the core meaning is preserved, but the specific nuance of "jurik" is slightly lost since "ghost" is a broader term in Western culture.

In terms of denotative meaning, both words share a similar basic definition. However, in terms of connotative meaning, "jurik" tends to be more terrifying as it is associated with specific folklore, whereas "ghost" has a broader meaning and can refer to various types of spirits in Western culture.

### Equivalence Above Word Level

In movie translation, maintaining meaning above the word level is a major challenge, especially in subtitling, which has space and time limitations. The above word level aspect includes collocations and idioms, which often cannot be translated literally due to cultural and linguistic differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). Therefore, this analysis evaluates how above word level equivalence is applied in the subtitling.

#### Datum 2

SL: "Jaga mulut, jaga sikap, Deden." [0: 22:09]

TL: "You should be careful with what you say or do." [0: 22:09]

The phrase "Jaga mulut, jaga sikap, Deden." in Indonesian is an idiom because its meaning cannot be directly inferred from the individual words. Literally, "jaga mulut"

means to physically guard one's mouth, but in everyday conversation, it is used as a warning for someone to be mindful of their words. Similarly, "jaga sikap" literally means to guard one's attitude, but its actual meaning is to behave properly and respectfully. Since the true meaning cannot be understood just by looking at the individual words, this phrase is categorized as an idiom. This phrase is translated as "You should be careful with what you say or do," which is a common expression that conveys a similar meaning. In English, there is no direct idiom that captures "jaga mulut, jaga sikap" in the exact same way as in Indonesian. The translation strategy used here is translation by paraphrase, as the translator chose to explain the idiom's meaning using clearer words in the target language. This translation successfully conveys the intended message, even though it does not use an idiom.

### **Grammatical Equivalence**

Grammatical equivalence refers to the grammatical aspects that differ between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). It focuses on how grammatical structures influence the way a message is translated from one language to another. There are five main categories of structural differences, such as: Number, Gender, Person, Tense and Aspects, and Voice. The following datum shows how Grammatical Equivalence is applied in subtitling.

#### **Datum 3**

SL: "Kubur Ibu di tempat Bapak, ya, Neng?" [1:00:52]

TL: "Bury me with your father." [1:00:52]

In the translation from the source language (SL) "Kubur Ibu di tempat Bapak, ya, Neng?" to the target language (TL) "Bury me with your father.", there is a change in terms grammatical Person. The change in Person occurs because, in the SL the speaker uses the word "Ibu" to refer to herself, which is grammatically a third-person form. However, in the TL, this is translated as "me", which is a first-person form in English.

This shift happens because, in English, it is more common for speakers to refer to themselves directly using the first-person pronoun rather than the third-person form, as commonly used in Indonesian. While this change does not drastically alter the meaning, it makes the speaker's reference to herself more direct in the TL. Overall, while this shift results in a more direct expression in the TL, the intended meaning of the SL text remains the same in TL. "Ibu" in Indonesian is equivalent with "me" in English.

### **Textual Equivalence: Thematic and Information Structure**

In subtitling translation, textual equivalence, particularly in the aspect of thematic and information structure, plays an important role in ensuring that the message in the source language (SL) is effectively conveyed in the target language (TL). The thematic structure of a clause determines the starting point of information and how a message is developed within the discourse context. Halliday's Theme and Rheme theory, as cited in Mona Baker's book, was referred to in analyzing the aspect of thematic and information structure in translation.

The theme in a clause can be either an unmarked theme (a general theme, usually the subject) or a marked theme (a more prominent theme, such as a time or place adverbial placed at the beginning of the clause) (Halliday, 2014). In the subtitling process, changes in thematic structure from SL to TL can affect the focus of information and the audience's understanding of the intended message. Therefore, analyzing thematic choices in subtitling is crucial to determining the extent to which meaning is preserved or altered

due to discourse structure differences between the two languages. The following is the datum found.

#### **Datum 4**

SL: "Hari ini sudah empat Put, yang meninggal" [0:28:49]

TL: "He's the fourth death today." [0:28:49]

In SL, the Theme is "Hari ini," which functions as a Marked Theme because it is a time expression (adverbial group) placed at the beginning of the sentence. This structure emphasizes that the number of deaths has increased today, making time the main focus before providing information about the number of victims. The Rheme is "sudah empat Put, yang meninggal," which provides further information that four people have died today. In TL, the Theme changes to "He," which is an Unmarked Theme because the sentence directly starts with the main subject (pronoun). Meanwhile, the time information "today," which was previously a Marked Theme in SL, is moved to the end of the sentence as part of the Rheme. Despite this shift, the main meaning remains intact, conveying the core information about the number of deaths today, although the focus of the information has shifted. In this subtitling, the translator achieves the translation equivalence by changing the theme which affects the change of focus of information.

#### **Textual Equivalence: Cohesion**

In translating a text, maintaining coherence and connections between different parts of the text is crucial to ensuring that the intended meaning remains intact and is well understood by readers in the target language. For this reason, the aspect of cohesion plays a significant role. In this study, the analysis of cohesion in subtitling is based on the concept of textual equivalence as proposed by Baker (2011). This analysis aims to examine how cohesive elements in the source text, are preserved or adjusted in subtitling to maintain clarity and coherence in the target language. The following datum illustrates this.

#### **Datum 5**

SL: "Puput sudah meninggal, Mila, Dia sudah jadi korban" [1:09:22]

TL: "Puput is dead, Mila, she became a victim." [1:09:22]

In the SL dialogue: "Puput sudah meninggal, Mila, Dia sudah jadi korban" and its TL equivalent: "Puput is dead, Mila, she became a victim" cohesion is demonstrated through reference, as explained in Halliday and Hasan's theory. The use of the pronoun "Dia" in SL, translated as "she" in TL, is an example of reference, where the pronoun "dia" or "she" refers back to "Puput", who was previously mentioned. Additionally, this dialogue also contains lexical cohesion, as the word "meninggal" in SL is translated as "is dead" in TL, and "korban" is translated as "victim". These demonstrate lexical cohesion through collocation, as they maintain the semantic relationship within the text.

Overall, the meaning in this subtitling is conveyed quite well, though there is a slight difference in the translation of the phrase "sudah jadi korban" into "became a victim". In Indonesian, "sudah jadi korban" can imply that Puput experienced an event that led to her death. Meanwhile, in TL, the phrase "she became a victim" sounds more neutral and does not strongly emphasize the connection between Puput's death and her victimhood. The use of textual equivalence in the aspect of cohesion is well-maintained by preserving reference relationships and lexical cohesion.

## Pragmatic Equivalence

In the process of subtitling horror movies, translators do not only focus on lexical meaning equivalence but must also preserve the communicative effect conveyed in the dialogue. One crucial aspect of this analysis is pragmatic equivalence, as proposed by Mona Baker, which emphasizes that translation must effectively convey implicit meaning, cultural context, and communicative intent in alignment with the source language.

To further understand how these elements are preserved in subtitling, this study explores how subtitling maintains the intensity effect through the application of pragmatic equivalence. The analysis of one datum found is explained below.

### Datum 6

SL: "Kamu ga pernah dengerin saya Mila!"

"Puput meninggal gara- gara ulah kamu." [1:09:40- 1:09:45]

TL: "You never listened to me, Mila!"

"Puput died because of You" [1:09:40- 1:09:45]

In the first utterance, SL: "Kamu ga pernah dengerin saya, Mila!" is translated as TL: "You never listened to me, Mila!" Literally, this utterance states that Mila never listens to the speaker. Both the SL and TL contain elements of anger, blame, and frustration, classifying it as an expressive act, which causes Mila to feel guilty. The TL in this dialogue successfully captures the same meaning and emotional intensity as the SL.

Then, in the second sentence, SL: "Puput meninggal gara-gara ulah kamu." is translated as TL: "Puput died because of you." This sentence directly conveys that Puput died due to Mila's actions. The SL: "Puput meninggal gara-gara ulah kamu." carries anger, accusation, and emphasis, making it an expressive act with a strong psychological impact on Mila, reinforcing her sense of guilt. However, in its TL translation: "Puput died because of you," the phrase is more fact-based and informative, making it a representative act instead.

The SL utterance contains a high emotional charge and explicitly places blame. The phrase "gara-gara ulah kamu" in the SL has a strong negative connotation, implying that Mila is directly responsible for Puput's death. However, its translation into TL as "because of you" sounds more neutral and lacks the same accusatory emotional weight. As a result, the horror intensity in the SL is not fully preserved in the TL.

## Beyond Equivalence: Ethics and Morality

Beyond Equivalence, as a translation approach, emphasizes that meaning cannot always be conveyed through word-for-word equivalence but must be adapted to the social and cultural context to remain relevant to the target audience. Therefore, translators need to adapt the message while preserving its essence without stripping away the values embedded within it. Through the analysis of Beyond Equivalence, this study explores how meaning in dialogue can be conveyed more deeply by considering the moral, cultural, and ideological aspects of the source language. The example in this analysis will be explained below.

### Datum 7

SL: "Kalian makamin Bu Imah sesuai amanah beliau." [1:20:00]

TL: "You need to bury Mrs. Imah the way she wanted to be buried."  
[1:20:00]

The word "amanah" in the Indonesian cultural context carries a deeper meaning than its direct translation as "wanted." "Amanah" in Indonesian embodies trust, moral

responsibility, and religious duty. In Islam and Indonesian culture, "Amanah" is something that must be upheld because it carries moral and spiritual consequences. However, in the translation "You need to bury Mrs. Imah the way she wanted to be buried," the word "amanah" is translated as "wanted," which only reflects the deceased's personal wish without emphasizing the moral obligation attached to it in the source language. From the perspective of Beyond Equivalence, subtitling should not only focus on meaning equivalence but also consider cultural values, ethics, and ideology embedded in the original dialogue. In this case, the target- language subtitle loses an essential aspect of the concept of "amanah" namely, the sense of duty and trust.

## Discussion

The whole types of equivalence as proposed by Baker (2011) which include Equivalence at Word Level, Equivalence above Word Level, Grammatical Equivalence, Textual Equivalence (Thematic and Information Structure, as well as Cohesion), Pragmatic Equivalence, and Beyond Equivalence are found in the subtitling of *Pamali: The Corpse Village*. In general, subtitling achieves equivalence successfully. The core message of the SL text can be transferred into the TL. In some cases, each type of equivalence results in different sense in target texts.

When the translation equivalence is achieved through Equivalence at Word Level, the subtitling may slightly diminish the cultural and horror elements inherent in the source text such as the translation of the word "jurik" into "ghost". This deals with what known as non-equivalence by Baker (2011). Subtitling which shows Equivalence above Word Level is presented through the translation of idiom which is also possibly translated into non-idiom in English. To achieve the equivalence of an idiom "jaga mulut" in English, the translators applies the strategy of paraphrasing "You should be careful with what you say". The cultural meaning may be lost through this subtitling. Indonesian and English have different way in expressing grammatical Person which is also very important in subtitling strategies. One of the data found shows that grammatical Person to refer to first person singular represented by "Ibu" in Indonesian is translated into "me" in English. Although it deals with grammatical features, the translator must also be aware of the cultural context of the text. Through the analysis of the dialogues using Halliday's Theme and Rheme theory, the textual equivalence in the movie is achieved by changing the structure of the Theme so that the focus of information will also change. The change of focus of information may lead to the change of audience's acceptance of the horror's atmosphere of the movie.

SL: "*Hari ini sudah empat Put, yang meninggal*".

TL: "*He's the fourth death today*".

The SL and TL in this dialogues have different thematic structure. How the text is structured will influence the audience's personal feeling about the movie. In some cases, in subtitling through Pragmatic Equivalence, the horror intensity may not be preserved in the TL such as when subtitling "Puput meninggal gara-gara ulah kamu" into "Puput died because of you". It also loses the essential concept of the SL text such the concept of "amanah" which shows the sense of duty and trust.

## Conclusion

The subtitling of *Pamali: The Corpse Village* shows that all types of equivalence which include Equivalence at Word Level, Equivalence above Word Level, Grammatical Equivalence, Textual Equivalence (Thematic and Information Structure, as well as

Cohesion), Pragmatic Equivalence, and Beyond Equivalence are present in the subtitles. Through all types of equivalence, subtitling of the movie successfully transfers the meaning of the SL text.

Each type plays a distinct role in preserving meaning and ensuring the effectiveness of the translation. Equivalence above Word Level, particularly in translating idioms and collocations, helps retain cultural meaning while adapting it for the target audience. Textual Equivalence, through Thematic Structure and Cohesion, maintains coherence and logical flow, even if thematic placement differs between the source and target languages. Despite certain shifts, the overall meaning remains intact, ensuring that the film's atmosphere and message are effectively conveyed. These findings emphasize the importance of carefully selecting translation strategies to balance linguistic accuracy and audience comprehension in horror film subtitling.

In preserving elements of fear and cultural meaning, in some cases, the subtitling may lead to some consequences. Subtitling through Equivalence at Word Level may slightly diminish the cultural and horror element inherent in the SL text caused by the occurrence of non-equivalence words in the SL texts. Equivalence above Word Level when working on the translation of idiom by paraphrasing, Grammatical Equivalence focusing on grammatical Person, and Pragmatic Equivalence may also lose the cultural meaning of the SL texts. Textual Equivalence achieved through the change of thematic structure may reduce the element of fear of the movie.

## Suggestions

This research focuses on the equivalence of subtitles on a movie referring to Bakerian theory. Translators are commonly faced with a number of conditions in translating subtitles due to the limitation of space available for the target texts. By this study, it is recommended that further researches could be carried out to solve the difficulties in translating subtitles. The further researches could be expanded by applying other theories.

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