

Translation Strategies for Slang in the Subtitles of "My Stupid Boss 2"

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis strategi penerjemahan yang digunakan dalam menerjemahkan istilah slang (bahasa gaul) Indonesia ke dalam teks terjemahan bahasa Inggris dalam film *My Stupid Boss 2*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif berdasarkan teori ketidaksetaraan pada tataran kata milik Mona Baker. Data dikumpulkan melalui pengamatan berulang terhadap film, dengan fokus pada 11 ungkapan slang yang bersifat informal, idiomatik, dan spesifik secara budaya. Analisis meliputi analisis tekstual komparatif, klasifikasi strategi, dan evaluasi fungsional. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa parafrase merupakan strategi yang dominan (81,8%). Strategi lain yang digunakan meliputi substitusi budaya, kompensasi, kesetaraan satu-satu, dan peminjaman. Strategi gabungan diterapkan untuk mempertahankan nada, humor, dan nuansa emosional dari teks sumber. Penggunaan peminjaman yang minimal menunjukkan kecenderungan untuk menaturalisasikan ungkapan untuk memenuhi harapan audiens sasaran. Hasil penelitian menyoroti kompleksitas penerjemahan bahasa gaul dalam media audiovisual, di mana penerjemah harus mempertimbangkan tidak hanya makna linguistik tetapi juga fungsi budaya dan pragmatik. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada bidang ini dengan berfokus pada arah yang kurang dieksplorasi, yakni menerjemahkan bahasa gaul Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris, berbeda dengan sebagian besar penelitian sebelumnya yang menekankan penerjemahan dari bahasa Inggris ke bahasa Indonesia. Disarankan agar penerjemah dibekali dengan kompetensi budaya yang kuat dan strategi adaptif untuk menyampaikan ekspresi informal secara efektif dalam subtitle.

Kata kunci: *My Stupid Boss 2*, slang, strategi penerjemahan, subtitle.

Abstract

This study aims to identify and analyze the translation strategies used in rendering Indonesian slang into English subtitles in the film My Stupid Boss 2. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method based on Mona Baker's theory of non-equivalence at the word level. Data were collected through repeated observation of the film, focusing on 11 slang expressions that are informal, idiomatic, and culturally specific. The analysis includes comparative textual analysis, classification of strategies, and functional evaluation. The findings show that paraphrasing is the dominant strategy (81.8%). Other strategies used include cultural substitution, compensation, one-to-one equivalence, and borrowing. Combined strategies were applied to preserve the tone, humor, and emotional nuance of the source text. The minimal use of borrowing indicates a tendency to naturalize expressions to meet target audience expectations. The results highlight the complexity of translating slang in audiovisual media, where translators must consider not only linguistic meaning but also cultural and pragmatic functions. This study contributes to the field by focusing on the less-explored direction of translating Indonesian slang into English, in contrast to most previous studies that emphasize English-to-Indonesian translation. It is suggested that translators be equipped with strong cultural competence and adaptive strategies to effectively convey informal expressions in subtitles.

Keywords: *My Stupid Boss 2*, slang, translation strategies, subtitles.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in films as it reflects character identity, cultural background, and social interaction. In film, "language" refers to the various visual and auditory techniques filmmakers use to communicate meaning, emotions, and stories to the audience (Ramrao, 2016). One of the most dynamic and expressive forms of language in film is slang. Slang is a psychosocial and cultural phenomenon (Mezhov et al., 2020). The differences in language systems and cultures become the main problems of slang translation.

The translation of slang is influenced by some factors; the role of censorship and the difference in the writing traditions of cultures (Istiqomah et al., 2019). A slang is a vocabulary (words, phrases, and linguistic usages) of an informal register, common in everyday conversation but avoided in formal writing and speech (Yultisa & Mardiah, 2018). It also often refers to the language exclusively used by the members of particular in-groups in order to establish group identity, exclude outsiders, or both. The word itself came about in the 18th century and has been defined in multiple ways since its conception, with no single technical usage in linguistics. Slang is considered an independent non-literary language formation existing in a language formation existing in a language (Tambunsaribu, 2019). Zuckermann stated that "Slang refers to informal (and often transient) lexical items used by a specific social problem, for instance, teenagers, soldiers, missionaries, and thieves". Translating slang in movie subtitles is particularly challenging because it requires more than just literal equivalence; it demands an understanding of both linguistic and cultural nuances (Subhiya & Afriano, 2024).

Mona Baker's theory of translation strategies, as outlined in her influential book *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, presents translation as a complex, context-dependent problem-solving process rather than a straightforward word-for-word substitution. She identifies various types of challenges that translators face when working between different languages and cultures, and categorizes these into different linguistic levels: word level, above word level, grammatical level, textual level, and pragmatic level. For each level, Baker provides a range of strategies that a translator might use depending on the nature of the problem and the specific context of the translation task (Baker, 2010, 2018).

At the word level, translators may encounter a lack of direct equivalents in the target language, and can employ strategies such as using a more general term, a cultural substitution, a loan word with explanation, or even omitting the term when necessary. Above the word level, challenges like fixed expressions and idioms may require paraphrasing or finding functionally similar idioms. Grammatical differences between languages such as in tense, voice, or gender may be resolved through grammatical shifts or restructuring. At the textual level, Baker emphasizes

maintaining coherence and flow, which might involve adjusting connectors or sentence structure. Finally, the pragmatic level requires attention to implied meanings, tone, and the translator's understanding of the original context to preserve the intent behind the message,

The movie *My Stupid Boss 2* is a comedy that continues the humorous and chaotic adventures of its predecessor, heavily relying on colloquial language and slang to deliver its comedic effect. The interaction among characters frequently involves slang expressions that are culturally loaded and context-specific (Novitasari & Negara, 2017). Translating such expressions into Indonesian requires more than linguistic knowledge it demands cultural insight and strategic decision-making to ensure the translated version retains the spirit and humor of the original (Al-Shlool, 2025). In subtitle translation, additional constraints such as limited screen space and timing must be considered. Subtitles must be concise, readable, and synchronized with the dialogue, which adds another layer of difficulty in conveying slang accurately. This makes the role of the translator particularly crucial in balancing faithfulness to the source text and accessibility for the target audience (Alieva & Sheripova, 2024).

Previous studies have explored various strategies in translating slang, particularly in Western films. (Istiqomah et al., 2019) regarding Slang Language Subtitle Strategy in the Movie Entitled "The Social Network". The focus in this study is analyzed the subtitle strategies used in *The Social Network* and emphasized how cultural and linguistic differences become major barriers in translating slang expressions. Previous studies have analyzed more Western films, which are often in the drama or action genre while this study examines a local Indonesian comedy film (*My Stupid Boss 2*), which is rich in cultural expressions. Similarly, (Senja, 2015) regarding Subtitling Strategies of Slang Expressions in the English and Bahasa Indonesia 'Good Will Hunting' Movie Texts. The focus in this study is examined the subtitling of slang in *Good Will Hunting* and found that strategies such as paraphrasing and omission were often used to adapt culturally unfamiliar terms into Indonesian. Previous research typically focused only on technical or linguistic strategies while this study also considers the emotional and humorous functions of slang in the film. Also similar to research conducted by (Tambunsaribu, 2019) regarding The Morphological Process of Slang Words Used by Teenagers in Jakarta.

The focus in this research takes a sociolinguistic approach by analyzing how slang is formed among Jakarta teenagers, highlighting the deep cultural roots and social functions of slang in Indonesian youth culture. Previous research generally classified strategies in isolation while this study identifies the combined use of strategies such as paraphrasing with compensation and cultural substitution. This study aims to examine how slang expressions in the *My Stupid Boss 2* Movie are translated into Indonesian. This is similar to the research conducted by (Subhiya & Afriano, 2024) regarding Translation Strategies of Slang Words in the Subtitle of *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. Similar in analyzing film subtitles, but the cultural context of the source language is

different (Western vs Indonesian). The focus is to identify the types of slang that appear and the translation strategies applied to address them. This study seeks to understand how translators handle the challenges of translating slang and which strategies are most effective in the context of film subtitles. Previous studies focused on translating slang from English into Indonesian while this study is focuses on the opposite direction translating slang from Indonesian into English.

However, most of these previous studies have focused on translating English-language slang into Indonesian, with an emphasis on Western cinematic contexts. In contrast, research examining the translation of Indonesian slang into English especially in the form of subtitles for local films remains limited. This gap is significant considering the growing international interest in Indonesian media. Moreover, few studies have explored how informal expressions in Indonesian films are rendered for global audiences while maintaining the humor, tone, and cultural resonance of the original.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive (QD) approach (Kim et al., 2017) which is particularly suitable for capturing the contextual and cultural subtleties embedded in language use specifically, the use of slang in audiovisual translation. This approach was chosen as it allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of linguistic phenomena within their original context, namely film dialogue and its subtitles (Farahi, 2024). In line with Mona Baker's theoretical framework (1992), this approach focuses on identifying and classifying translation strategies used to handle non-equivalence at the word level, especially in translating culturally bound expressions such as slang. The qualitative descriptive approach was applied systematically in this study through four key stages:

1) Data Collection through Contextual Observation:

The researcher conducted multiple viewings of the film *My Stupid Boss 2*, identifying 11 prominent slang expressions in the Indonesian dialogue and their corresponding English subtitles. These expressions were selected based on their informal, idiomatic nature and cultural specificity.

2) Comparative Textual Analysis:

Each slang expression from the source text was compared with its translation in the target text. This comparative process aligns with Baker's emphasis on lexical-level equivalence, allowing the researcher to pinpoint the precise translation strategy used for each case.

3) Classification Using Baker's Strategies:

The analysis employed Mona Baker's taxonomy of strategies to handle non-equivalence, including; Paraphrase, Translation by cultural substitution, Translation by

omission, Translation by a more general or specific word, Borrowing (transference), and Compensation.

4) Functional Evaluation of Strategy Effectiveness:

In line with qualitative descriptive research, the emphasis was not only on identifying what strategies were used, but also on assessing their functional impact namely, how well the translation retained the pragmatic function (e.g., sarcasm, insult, humor) and cultural meaning of the original slang.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the identified slang expressions in the Indonesian source text and their corresponding English translations in the subtitle of "My Stupid Boss 2". The analysis focuses on the translation strategies applied, based on the framework of Mona Baker and Peter Newmark, particularly paraphrase, cultural substitution, borrowing, transference, compensation, and one-to-one equivalence (Abdelaal & Abdelaal, 2020).

3.1 Results of Slang Identification and Translation Strategies

This study successfully identified eleven (11) prominent slang terms from the Indonesian film "My Stupid Boss 2". These identified slang terms present a diverse range in terms of their linguistic form, communicative function, and the inherent difficulty in finding precise linguistic equivalents in English. A rigorous analysis of these slang terms, leveraging the theoretical framework of Mona Baker concerning strategies for addressing non-equivalence at the word level, has yielded the findings detailed in the table below.

Table 1. Slang Word Translation Strategies Used in Translating Slang Words in "My Stupid Boss 2" Movie

No.	Translation Strategy	Freq.	Example from Data	Percentage (%)
1	Paraphrase	9	"Tempe bener sih" → "Stupid, fool, silly"	81.8%
2	Cultural Substitution	2	"Masih gres itu lho" → "Fresh from the showroom"	18.2% (combined)
3	Compensation	2	"Kutukupret" → "That sleazy bastard"	18.2% (combined)
4	One-to-One Equivalence	3	"Lo" → "You", "Gembrot" → "Fat"	27.3%
5	Borrowing (Transference)	1	"Bossman" → "Bossman"	9.1%

Interpretation:

- 1) The most dominant strategy is paraphrase, indicating that many Indonesian slang terms lack direct English equivalents.
- 2) Combined strategies such as paraphrase with cultural substitution or compensation are used to preserve emotional tone and cultural relevance.

- 3) One-to-one equivalence is applied only when semantic and contextual alignment is possible.
- 4) Borrowing is minimally used, reserved for terms that are already familiar in both languages.

Table 2. Slang Translation Examples and Strategies

No	Indonesian Slang	English Translation	Strategy Used	Explanation
1	Masih gres itu lho	Fresh from the showroom	Paraphrase + Cultural substitution	Captures the meaning of something brand new using a metaphor familiar to English audiences.
2	Bossman	Bossman	Borrowing (Transference)	Maintains the term used in Indonesian, originally from English, showing linguistic re-borrowing.
3	Tempe bener sih	Stupid, fool, silly	Paraphrase (Non-related word)	"Tempe" as slang has no literal equivalence; translation conveys the pejorative meaning.
4	Nyoblos/nyontreng	Vote	One-to-one equivalence	Functionally accurate; generalizes specific Indonesian voting terms.
5	Kutukupret	That sleazy bastard	Paraphrase + Compensation	Strong insult rendered through emotionally equivalent phrase.
6	Judes	Tone down your nastiness	Paraphrase + Functional adaptation	Transforms description into an imperative to reflect communicative intent.
7	Indehoi	No office romance allowed	Paraphrase + Contextualization	Captures situational meaning, adapting to professional context.
8	Srondol	So smug, asshole, bunch of cowards/fools	Paraphrase + Multiple Equivalents	Multivalent insult rendered with multiple TL expressions due to high contextuality.
9	Gembrot	Fat	One-to-one equivalence	Direct physical description translated without shift in connotation.
10	Lo	You	One-to-one equivalence	Informal pronoun equivalence accurately rendered.

11	Kampungan	You look like you've never seen one	Paraphrase + Compensation	Implicit insult about being unsophisticated is rendered through situational expression.
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3.2 Discussion of Implications in Film Translation

The comprehensive analysis of these slang terms within the context of "My Stupid Boss 2" unequivocally affirms the profound complexity inherent in translating informal language, particularly within cinematic works. Film dialogues, unlike written texts, are intrinsically linked to visual cues, character delivery, and the overall narrative flow, which adds layers of challenges to linguistic transfer (Yang & Qin, 2024). Mona Baker's theoretical framework proves exceptionally valuable in systematically categorizing these challenges and articulating effective strategic solutions for translators (Thi & Chau, 2024).

The findings of this study have several important implications for the field of film translation, particularly in the context of rendering culturally loaded and emotionally nuanced expressions like slang. The predominance of the paraphrasing strategy (81.8%) underscores the significant challenge of achieving lexical equivalence in cross-cultural audiovisual contexts. Paraphrasing, while effective in preserving general meaning, often requires translators to make interpretive decisions that can subtly shift tone or cultural nuance. This highlights the translator's role not merely as a linguistic mediator but as a cultural negotiator.

The use of combined strategies such as paraphrase with cultural substitution or compensation reflects an effort to preserve both the semantic content and the pragmatic impact of the source text. These combinations show how translators must balance fidelity to meaning with functional equivalence, particularly when dealing with humor, sarcasm, or insults, which are highly context-dependent. For example, in the translation of "kutukupret" into "that sleazy bastard", the translator opted to match the intensity and connotation rather than the literal form, demonstrating the principle of dynamic equivalence in action.

Additionally, the presence of one-to-one equivalence (27.3%) in terms such as "lo" to "you" suggests that not all slang poses a translation dilemma. When informal registers in both languages align in usage and function, straightforward equivalence becomes possible. This reinforces the idea that while some slang is deeply embedded in cultural specificity, others operate at a more universal level of informality and social interaction.

The minimal use of borrowing (9.1%), as in “Bossman”, reflects a tendency to naturalize rather than foreignize the translation, aligning with the conventions of target audience expectations. However, this also points to the occasional effectiveness of borrowing when the term is already accessible or carries a humorous or stylistic function.

Collectively, these findings emphasize the complexity of translating slang in films, especially in maintaining the pragmatic effect, emotional tone, and cultural resonance. Translators must adopt a flexible, context-sensitive approach that goes beyond literal translation, guided by both theoretical strategies and creative decision-making (Khalifa, 2025). The implication for translation pedagogy is clear: training in audiovisual translation should emphasize cultural literacy, functional pragmatics, and adaptive strategies to prepare translators for the nuanced task of rendering colloquial speech.

Furthermore, these results support the relevance of Mona Baker's framework in tackling non-equivalence at the word level, but also suggest the utility of integrating Newmark's communicative and semantic translation dichotomy to assess the appropriateness of a given strategy in preserving intended audience impact. For practitioners, the implications lie in the need to strike a balance between fidelity and audience engagement, ensuring that translated dialogues resonate authentically within the target culture without distorting the source message (Ding, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

This research has analyzed the strategies used to translate Indonesian slang in the English subtitles of the film *My Stupid Boss 2*, applying theoretical frameworks by Mona Baker. This study concludes that translating Indonesian slang in *My Stupid Boss 2* primarily relies on paraphrasing due to the lack of direct English equivalents. Other strategies such as cultural substitution, compensation, one-to-one equivalence, and borrowing were also used to maintain meaning, tone, and cultural context. These findings highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and strategic flexibility in subtitle translation. Translators must not only transfer meaning but also preserve the original intent and audience impact (Gambier, 2016).

It is suggested that translators be trained in both linguistic and cultural competencies, especially in handling informal language in audiovisual media. Media producers should collaborate with skilled translators to ensure subtitle quality. For future research, broader studies involving different films or languages and audience reception analysis are recommended to deepen understanding of slang translation effectiveness.

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