

## VERBAL HUMOUR AND ITS TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN THE INDONESIAN SUBTITLES OF UNFROSTED FILM

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the types of verbal humour and their translation strategies in the Indonesian subtitles of the film Unfrosted. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze 30 dialogue samples containing verbal humour expressions. The results of this study indicate six types of verbal humour out of the twelve types identified in Shade's theory (1996). The findings of this study reveal six types of verbal humour out of the twelve types identified in Shade's theory (1996). The most frequent type is wit, followed by sarcasm and satire, while irony, parody, and farce are the least frequent, with only one occurrence each. This study also identifies four out of ten translation strategies from Gottlieb's theory (1991) applied in the film, with paraphrase being the most dominant, followed by condensation and transfer, and the least frequent expansion strategy, which is two times. This study concludes that studying various types of verbal humour is very important because there are multicultural differences in conveying humorous meanings. This study emphasizes that various translation strategies must successfully maintain the meaning of humour. This study provides valuable insights into the field of linguistics, into the types of verbal humour and translation strategies in film subtitles.*

**Keywords:** *Verbal humour; translation strategies; subtitling; audiovisual translation; linguistics*

### INTRODUCTION

Humour is one of the elements necessary for humans, especially when interacting in everyday life. Humour plays various significant roles for humans, namely being able to connect with others socially, creating a healthy environment, and cognitively obtaining pleasure or entertainment in various situations for everyone. Humour comes from the Latin word "air" and settles on the mixture of the body and can consistently describe human feelings. Humour is also interpreted as cleverness in proving or expressing the humorous part of the condition that usually encourages humans to relieve stress and create social collaboration. According to (Dewey & Abdullah Sidek, 2024), humour also plays a role in creating good social relationships in a positive environment learning by encouraging and motivating students to learn. Research from (Oliveira et al.,

2023) also states that humour can improve good and genuine relationships in psychic happiness, helping to regulate the control of body emotions and self-energy. Therefore, studying and digesting humour to be accepted and understood in every multicultural context, especially in translation in film media, is essential.

Verbal humour is a language utterance that produces humorous effects, such as wordplay or related irony and is usually present in spoken or written dialogue to entertain the intended audience. (Shade, 1996), as explained by (Adhitya et al., 2022), categorizes verbal humour into eleven types. 1) Wordplay, which applies wordplay to produce humor based on the definition, sound, or ambiguity of words or riddles; 2) Riddles are verbal humor that uses answer and question patterns answer and question formats; 3) Jokes are a form of humor delivered and designed by someone who

can make others laugh or chuckle. Jokes are divided into five parts: 1) Wordplay, which applies wordplay to produce humour based on the definition, sound, or ambiguity of words or riddles; 2) Riddles are verbal humour that uses answer and question patterns answer and question formats; 3) Jokes are a form of humour that is delivered and designed by someone who can make others laugh or chuckle; Satire is one of the humour language techniques to attack other people's behaviour.

The sixth types of humor is 6) anecdote which is a short narrative related to actual or imaginary experiences, especially those with personal stories; and 7) Farce is a type of joke that aims to present various scenes or situations that are exaggerated, uncontrolled, ridiculous, strange, and unreasonable; 8) Irony refers to an approach that expresses the desired message in a situation that is contrary to what is expressed or a contradiction between what is said, what is done, and what is expected to happen; 9) Sarcasm is an expression that hurts someone's feelings or expresses a negative judgment with a contradictory and humorous meaning; 10) Tall Tales utilize exaggerated humor when some realities and events surrounding the characters, settings, and plots are present in the story; 11) Wit is a type of humor that is delivered through unexpected methods and then affects the success of connecting conflicting ideas. By understanding the various types of verbal humour, we can better estimate and enjoy the variety of humour language expressed in interacting in life.

Understanding verbal humour, especially multiculturally, can be a threat because there are elements of cultural, sociocultural, and linguistic differences that transmit various ways in which verbal humour can be understood. Lack of understanding and confusion in verbal humour can cause disputes amid social correlation. According to (Lu, 2023), humour observed internationally will be responded to according to the meaning of

verbal humour in their respective cultures. In addition, (Hasan et al., 2021), explain that verbal humour usually contains double or contradictory meanings in its language with a careful combination of strategies, namely, with external knowledge in understanding the meaning of verbal humour. Therefore, studying verbal humour is very important, especially in a multicultural context, because translation can positively impact limiting differences in language and culture.

The main obstacle in maintaining meaning in verbal humour is the accuracy of applying the translation strategy. Translation strategy is a technique or method that a translator usually applies to accurately translate a foreign text's meaning, understanding, or meaning from the source language into the target language. According to (Gottlieb, 1992), there are 10 translation strategies. 1) imitation strategy considers the linguistic nature and cultural origin of the source language; 2) transfer strategy applies knowledge of one language to understand another, aiding second and third language acquisition. The paraphrasing strategy is used when the source language's sentence structure cannot be directly adapted into an equivalent form in the target language; 3) transcription strategy is usually applied when using rarely known terminology, third languages, and absurd language from the source language; 4) condensation is a strategy in which the translator adds precision by eliminating redundant elements; 5) expansion refers to the original text uses definitions due to cultural differences and is not found in the target language.

Decimation as the 6th strategy eliminates essential elements that confuse the audience and contain taboo words; 7) deletion usually eliminates some parts of the dialogue, such as reduplication, filler words, and question tags; 8) resignation is a zero-sum translation strategy that results from the inability to translate the message as a whole; and 9) dislocation translation strategies usually place more importance

on the effects than on the original content of a given dialogue. With a clear understanding of the ten translation strategies, a translator can utilize them to overcome obstacles when translating verbal humour into subtitles so that the film's target audience can adequately fulfil the meaning of humour.

In understanding the ten translation strategies in verbal humour, it is essential to assess the application of subtitles as the primary device when conveying the meaning of humour. Subtitles provide the audience with access to the content of the film. According to (Huang & Wu, 2023), subtitles can be used as vital text to be displayed at the bottom of the monitor so the audience can capture the creation audiovisually. According to (Permadi, 2021), The quality of good subtitles is also assessed by a good translation strategy. Therefore, subtitles play an essential role in the context of verbal humour translation so that the target audience can enjoy and understand the message in the film.

This study focuses on the types of verbal humour and their translation strategies, especially those found in the comedy film *Unfrosted*. The film *Unfrosted* is a historical comedy directed by Jerry Seinfeld which tells the story of the competition between two cereal companies, Kellogg's and Post, in the United States in the 1960s. This film features pop culture, namely, getting used to having breakfast with cereal. Studies on verbal humour and film translation strategies have gathered extensive views in recent sessions. (Ayu et al., 2019) examined the types of humour and translation strategies in the film *9JKL*. Using Raphael-West's (1989) theory of types of humour and Gottlieb's (1992) translation strategies to identify two main types of verbal humour: universal and cultural. Meanwhile, their findings found several translation strategies in the film's subtitles, including transfer, imitation, paraphrase, and transcription.

In addition, studies conducted by

(Dela, 2019), (Dore, 2019), and (Xia et al., 2023) explore the challenges of translating verbal humour in subtitles and audiovisual texts, mainly focusing on preserving the cross-cultural meaning of humour.

However, this study takes a different focus by explicitly investigating the types of verbal humour and translation strategies used in the subtitles of the film *Unfrosted*. Unlike previous studies, this study does not aim to evaluate the accuracy of audiovisual subtitles, challenges, and difficulties in translation, nor to determine the most effective translation strategies. Instead, it focuses on understanding the types of humour and strategies in films.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method which is an approach that attempts to present a structured and actual concept about a phenomenon being studied (Furidha, 2024). The research procedure began with repeatedly watching the film to understand the context and storyline. Then, the data were collected by recording all types of verbal humour that appear and recording the translation of the translated text into the target Indonesian language in the film *Unfrosted*. The types of humor were then classified based on (Shade, 1996) theory, and the translation strategies used in translating verbal humor in the dialogue were analyzed using (Gottlieb, 1992) framework. Data from the film *Unfrosted* were taken as dialogue transcripts, comprising 30 selected samples containing verbal humour expressions. This film was chosen intentionally because it contains verbal humour, so studying is essential.

The instrument used was content analysis, which involved systematically identifying categorizing, and interpreting the dialogue to uncover patterns and themes related to verbal humour, including its types and translation

strategies, while also recording the frequency of each humour types as part of the analysis.

The initial data analysis technique was carried out by calculating the frequency of each type of verbal humour and translation strategy; which then was validated. According to (van der Loo & de Jonge, 2020), data validation can verify data suitability and accuracy requirements.

The findings on types of verbal humour were presented as an analysis based on the types and characteristics of each category in the same way as the findings on translation strategies in subtitled dialogues were presented by comparing the source texts and Indonesian target texts in films, analyzing the translation strategies used with that cultural their suitability in order maintain the essence of humour in the target language.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the Unfrosted film, 30 dialogue samples were analyzed. There are six types of verbal humor out of the twelve identified in Shade's theory (1996) are present. The most frequently occurring type of verbal humor is wit (13 occurrences), followed by sarcasm (8 occurrences), (satire 5 occurrences), while irony, parody, farce and pun are the least frequent, with only one occurrence each. Regarding translation strategies, four out of ten strategies from Gottlieb's theory (1991) are used in the Unfrosted film. The most dominant strategy is Paraphrase (17 occurrences), followed by Condensation (7 occurrences), and Transfer (4 occurrences). The Expansion strategy appears the least, with only two occurrences.

### Types of Verbal Humour

#### Wit

identified, the example in datum 1 is a categorization of verbal humour of the wit type that involves reasoning games in the form of creative ideas that arouse

laughter.

#### Datum 1

-Hey, did you get my memo about the frogman prize inside? Some kids are eating them.

-If they're frogmen, they'll find their way out.

(1:33:22)

-It might even be nutritious.

-It's not possible.

-It's like a balloon popping out of a steering wheel in an accident. It's insane.

-I tasted it.

-Where?

-Out of a dumpster. (1:24:41)

The character's responses unexpectedly contain surprising words and expressions within the dialogue. Examples of such expressions include "They'll find their way out" and "It's like a balloon popping out of a steering wheel in an accident." These expressions create an illogical similarity that triggers laughter. However, the character's skill in delivering these responses reflects intelligent humor, making the dialogue a clear example of verbal humor classified as wit. The humor effect arises from connection of clever ideas in the speech, resulting in humorous dialogues.

### Sarcasm

Sarcasm is an expression that can hurt someone's feelings or convey destructive criticism with contradictory and funny meanings. Datum 2 shows examples of 8 verbal humour dialogues found in sarcasm, including harsh words and sharp sarcasm, but packaged with humour.

#### Datum 2

Wit is a type of humour delivered unexpectedly that influences the success of connecting conflicting ideas. Of the 13 dialogues The expression of the character Miss Marjorie Post "You're a rash on my buttocks, Ludwin" insults Ludwin, but humour arises because of the roughness of the insult. Likewise, in Stan's dialogue,

"Oh. Those lactose lowlives", which is translated as "The milk lovers are savages", the actual meaning of the phrase "milk lovers" typically refers to someone who enjoys milk. Still, adding the word "savage" at the end of the sentence changes its meaning, turning it into a criticism and insult directed at a group of milk lovers. This raises the element of sarcasm as the word "savage" contrasts with the initial meaning of "milk lovers". The sarcasm in the word "savage" harms the expression and creates a humorous effect in the dialogue.

### Satire

Satire is one of the humorous language techniques used to attack someone's behaviour or criticize a social topic or an institution.

Datum 3 is an example of 8 dialogues that contain a type of satire in the form of subtle criticism with a humorous language style.

#### Datum 3

1. Why do they keep showing up to this?
2. Mixing religion and cereal, why?
3. To keep sales down? (1:28:52)
4. There's a half-eaten Baby Ruth in the pocket.
5. Well, chew it slowly. That's history.
6. Hmm. (44:18)

The expressions of the characters Cabanna and Poppy, "Mixing religion and cereal, why? So that sales continue to fall? Contains satire and criticism of aspects of trade and religion, expressed in a subtly mocking manner. Satire also appears in expressions related to historical symbols, such as criticisms of them for triggering laughter. For example, in the expressions of Cabana and Stan in the film, "There's a half-eaten Baby Ruth in my pocket. Well, chew it slowly. That's history." The meaning behind this expression portrays chocolate as a symbol of history, trivializing it to create a funny effect. The elements of the satire are seen in the expressions in the dialogue,

significantly when they added hyperbole or irony to create humour.

### Parody

Parody involves a different expression of ideas, topics, or imitations when designing a sentence with a literary work, music, or film to create a humorous effect. Datum 4 illustrates how parody is found in a single occurrence that can communicate a different idea or issue by resembling elements in an unusual situation.

#### Datum 4

Greetings, Kellogg's brethren. Praise be.

Hey, Aisaiah. You know Isaiah Lamb from Quaker (1:29:14)

The phrase "Greetings, Kellogg brothers. Praise be to God" follows the greeting and style of language in Christianity, which is usually used in worship. However, the character Isaiah in Unfrosted spoke unusually, especially during an awards night for various cereal business companies. Similarly, in character Cabanna who said, "Hey, Aisaiah. You know Isaiah Lamb from Quaker", the words "Isaiah" and "Quaker" both highlight the term for followers of the Quaker religion, creating wordplay that connected with the beginning of Isaiah's dialogue produced a humorous effect. Thus, the element of parody arises from the religious tone and the wordplay, creating humour in the film.

### Farce

Farce is a type of humour that aims to present various scenes or situations that are exaggerated, uncontrolled, ridiculous, strange, and unreasonable. Datum 5 presents one example of 4 dialogues containing exaggerated and ridiculous situations by the character Thurl, which are explained in the dialogue.

#### Datum 5

Bob, Bob, for a moment, I wondered if there was something that could be done, perhaps about the temperature inside my head? I'm literally soaked up inside, you see.

I'll get the boys in the lab to look into it Great. Thank you. Where is the lab? - There is no lab (1:31:53)

From Thurl's character in the dialogue phrase, "Maybe it's the temperature inside my head? I'm soaked inside, and you see," the strange and exaggerated Highlight of the Problem. Thurl's situation, dealing with the heat in a costume, is absurd and unusual. Mr.

Cabanna's humorous response follows this, "I'll have the boys in the lab look into it," which gives hope to Thurl's situation. However, the lab in question does not exist, introducing an element of Farce. The verbal humor in the dialogue comes from Thurl's absurd situation, combined with his absurd responses, which brings humor to the film.

### **Pun**

#### **Datum 7**

Pun is a wordplay to produce humour based on the definition, sound, or ambiguity of words. The dialogue presented in Datum 6 is also implemented; there is only one dialogue with double meanings and wordplay to create humour.

#### **Datum 6**

Trat Pop. I... I kinda like it.

Now, that's cool. It's a secret code name, like UFO or NASA. -Or bra, Booby restraining apparatus.

That is no what it means.

I have reason to believe otherwise. (25:12)

From the example dialog, Stan's expression related to their company's cereal product "Trat Pop" Then there is a character, namely a child, who interprets the name of the product as "Or bra, Booby restraining apparatus", where the expression can mean something that can be interesting or interpreted silly and innocent as "bra or women's underwear, and breast pads". So, what is said is associated with inappropriate and silly meanings because it is interpreted and associated with cereal food products for children, plus the response from the

character Stan "That is not what it means", thus creating a humorous effect characterized by verbal humour in the dialogue, namely wordplay.

### **Translation Strategies**

The following are 3 of ten translation strategies using Gottlieb's theory (1991), found in the dialogue of the film Unfrosted.

#### **Paraphrase Strategy**

Paraphrasing strategy is a strategy implemented when a series of words from the source language (SL) cannot be directly adapted into an equivalent sentence structure in the target language. Datum 7 demonstrates the paraphrase strategy by analyzing two dialogues selected from 17 dialogue data.

The dialogue "They got a fruit-filled pastry dingus" is translated into Indonesian as "They have a fruit-filled pastry product", very concrete from the word "dingus", which usually means silly in America is changed to "They have a fruit-filled pastry product", the translator translates it so that the audience who is not familiar with the term can better understand the meaning of the word "dingus". However, the humorous element also changes due to the unique meaning of "Dingus"; the sentence "Transportable, possibly, heatable" is translated as "Easy to carry, can be heated"; the meaning of this sentence shows that the information presented is very different but still maintains its actual meaning.

#### **Condensation Strategy**

Condensation is a strategy that involves consolidating the original text through a summary to explain only the necessary content in the target text. In datum 8, it is explained that two dialogues use the condensation strategy used by translators in translating verbal humour dialogue.

#### **Datum 8**

ST: -It might even be

nutritious.

It's not possible.

It's like a balloon popping out of a steering wheel in an accident. It's insane.

I tasted it.

Where?

Out of a dumpster.

TT: -Bahkan, mungkin bernutrisi.

Mustahil.

Tu seperti balon yang keluar dari roda kemudi saat kecelakaan. Ide gila.

Aku sudah coba.

Dimana?

Bak Sampah

The expressions in dialogue 1, "It's not possible", "Out of a dumpster", the translator translates into the target language as "Absolutely", and "trash bin", where the original text of the translation is summarized, but still maintains the essence of humour in the target language.

### **Transfer Strategy**

The transfer strategy is applied when the expression in the source text (ST) is translated accurately and correctly into the target language. In datum 9, two dialogues are presented from 4 dialogues that use the transfer strategy used by the translator in translating verbal humour dialogues.

### **Datum 9**

ST: You look good, Stan.

You look the same.

Well, I just lost 25 pounds.

TT: -Kau tampak menawan, Stan.

Kau tak berubah.

Berat badanku turun 11 kilogram.

The expression "You look good, Stan. You look the same. Well, I just lost 25 pounds" WAS translated into "You look charming, Stan. You haven't changed; my weight has dropped 11 kilograms". The translated sentence applies simple language that is easily recognized by the target Indonesian audience, ensuring efficiency in transferring the humorous essence of the original language.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study of verbal humour and its translation strategies in Unfrosted film has increased our insight and interpretation of the difficulties of translating verbal humour in film subtitles. The results of the study found that there are six types of verbal humour out of the twelve identified in Shade's theory (1996), namely wit, which is the most dominant occurrence (15 occurrences), followed by sarcasm (8 occurrences), (satire five occurrences), while irony, parody, farce and pun are the least frequent, with only one occurrence each. Four out of ten strategies from Gotlieb's (1991) theory were found in the movie Unfrosted. The most dominant strategy is Paraphrase (17 occurrences), followed by Condensation (7 occurrences) and Transfer (4 occurrences). The Expansion strategy appeared the least, with only two occurrences.

The results of this study explain that verbal humour in the comedy film Unfrosted has various indications that require various translation strategies, with the dominance of the paraphrase strategy indicating the importance of extensive adjustments in translating verbal humour multiculturally. A comprehensive description of the types of verbal humour and their translation strategies also presents a new perception of how the components of verbal humour and their translation strategies can be conveyed and maintained by adjusting the different cultural contexts of each target language and film audience. This knowledge involves expanding the theory of types of verbal humour and translation strategies by examining how the theory can be utilized appropriately to connect multicultural differences in successfully delivering humorous meanings. Therefore, this research needs to be in the process of academic understanding and enrichment of studies in linguistics, especially the relationship between types of verbal humour and translation strategies applied in film subtitles, to add

to the field of movie subtitle translation research.

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