

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Audiovisual translation (AVT) has been an important part of our daily life. With the rise of audiovisual (AV) media with cinema in the early 90s, until the shift to cloud-based streaming services like Netflix, Disney+ and Hulu, the need for AVT has only been increasing throughout the years (Diaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021). According to an article in detikFinance, in Indonesia specifically, the profit for Streaming Video on Demand (SVOD) in the last five years has grown over 72% (Simorangkir, 2024). This shows the existence of public demand for translation of these AV media. AVT plays an important role of being the bridge between the source language of the media (SL) and the audience of the target language (TL). Because of AVT, many people from different parts of the world could experience movies, news, and other audiovisual media that came from different countries without being fluent in the original language of the mentioned multimedia. It can even be said that AVT plays an important role in the global exchange of information.

AVT itself can be defined as translation of media that involves not only the verbal aspect of communication, but also other elements, such as the visual element (Diaz-Cintas, 2010). Because of this, AVT is typically related to the translation of multimedia, from movies, TV shows, to even video games. According to Bosseaux (2015), there are two categories of AV modes; the visual

dimension, such as the actors' movement, iconography and video editing, and the oral or acoustic dimension, such as spoken dialogue and sounds, such as sound effects and music. Despite the elements involved in the process of AVT, Bosseaux (2015) stated that the visual element of AV is often overlooked in AVT. This usually happens because of time and budget constraints that translators often face in contracted works (Diaz-Cintas, 2014).

Similar to the translation of literary works, it involves the process of transferring the meaning of SL text (in terms of AVT, the untranslated AV media itself) to the target language (TL) with the help of translation strategies. However, it starts to differ from literary translation with the way of applying the translation to the media itself. As the name suggests, AVT has different components that have to be considered by the translator, namely the audio and video (visual) elements. Different forms of AVT deal with this differently: some AVT modifies the audio element of the AV media, some modifies the video element instead, and some dabbles in modifying both the audio and the video aspect of said AV media. While today there are many forms of more specialized AVT translation with their own niche, such as voice-over, which is typically utilized for non-fiction stuff like documentary and news broadcast, subtitling for the deaf or SDH, which is similar to subtitling but it includes the unvocalized audio elements as well, and surtitling, which is written dialogue and lyrics shown in a live performance like opera and musical, in general, there are two common ways of doing AVT: dubbing and subtitling.

Dubbing is the act of translating an AV media through the replacement of the audio track. Unlike voiceover which only cares about translating the content of AV media, dubbing is done by translating the spoken dialogue and rerecording it while trying to match the articulation and lip movement as much as possible (Bosseaux, 2015). It also typically involved many people, such as the translator, the dialogue writers, the dubbing director, the dubbing actors and the sound engineers (Bosseaux, 2015). Alongside that, dubbing also requires specialized tools such as audio recording equipment and DAW (Stojanov, 2011). This method is often used for media targeting children or illiterate demographics since dubbing only requires a good listening skill (Diaz-Cintas, 2010). Dubbing is typically associated with nationalist attitude, as dubbing was often used for censorship in European countries (Pollard, 2021). Stojanov (2011) separated the process of dubbing into four points: detection or the transcription of the original dialogue, adaptation to TL, post-sync, and editing & mixing. Detection or transcription involves the transcription of the original dialogue, which can be done through specialized softwares for dubbing. Then, the dialogues get adapted according to TL, in which the dialogue should resemble the original mouth movement as close as possible. After that comes post-sync, which involves recording the lines according to the translated script. Lastly, for the last touches, the audio will be edited and mixed.

The other popular method of AVT is subtitling. Subtitling is the act of translating the spoken lines and other important matters in an AV media (Diaz-Cintas, 2010). Subtitle is typically shown on the lower middle part of the

screen, though sometimes it could be moved to not interfere with the visual. A good subtitle should be condensed enough so that it is readable for the viewers (Diaz-Cinta & Remael, 2014). Because of this, a subtitler must especially pay attention to the time constraint in subtitling. Subtitling tends to be more popular in third-world countries because it costs less money and is more time effective compared to dubbing (Diaz-Cintas, 2010). Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2014) explained that there are four steps in the process of subtitling. The first step is to determine the timing of when the subtitles should appear on the screen. Then, it is followed by the translation of SL. This is done preferably after watching the mentioned media so that the translator understands the context of said media. After that, it is followed by process (adaptation), where the translation is put on the screen through subtitling softwares. Lastly, revision is done for the final checks to minimize errors in the subtitle.

Both subtitling and dubbing have their own advantages and limitations. Subtitling allows the subtitler to translate the textual elements of the AV media, along with the viewers being able to enjoy the AV media with its original elements (Valdeón, 2022). However, Gottlieb (1994) pointed out that in terms of subtitling, the translator is confined to the technical limitations that subtitles have, this includes time, space and presentation, which leads to possible problems such as inability to edit the visual content and forced omissions which could lead to less coherence (Georgakopoulou, 2009). Meanwhile, dubbing offers better means of deletion of verbal content that the translator judges as unnecessary (Valdeón, 2022). Dubbing also allows minorities with conditions such as visual impairment

to access AVT media better (Georgakopoulou, 2009). However, dubbing can make the translated media seem less authentic, since dubbing involves replicating the original voice quality and intonation of the original actors. This means that even the slightest imperfection between the audio and the movement of the original actor could give dub listeners a hint that they are listening to a dubbed media (Bosseaux, 2015). Alongside that, dubbing is generally expensive and time-consuming (Tveit, 2009). Either way, there are challenges that persist in both dubbing and subtitling.

In the process of translating, one problem that translators could face is the translation of humor. Long and Graesser (1988, pp. 37) defined humor as *“Anything done or said, purposely or inadvertently, that is found to be comical or amusing.”* Meanwhile, Meyer (2015) stated that humor is hard to be fully defined, which reflected its flexibility to be included in social interaction. Meyer more broadly defined humor as the capacity to create, perceive and react to certain action or stimulus that elicits amusement.

Transferring humor to another language can be a challenging task for translators. This difficulty is often attributed to the linguistic and cultural aspect of the humor itself (Vandaele, 2010). Because of this, translators must consider the translatability of the humor, the humor’s adaptiveness in different languages, as well as the nature of language barriers itself (Zabalbeascoa, 2005). The meaning of humor itself can also depend on our own understanding of humor, which is again, directly affected by our cultural background (Schmitz, 2002).

To deal with these problems, including the translation of humor, translation strategies can be utilized to ease the process of translation. Many experts have compiled many different strategies that can be used in different situations. Some translation strategies deal with a specific field of translation. For subtitling specifically, one of the more well known is Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies, which is used to deal with problems commonly encountered in subtitling. Gottlieb identified eight strategies that could be utilized in subtitling, that being; (1) expansion, (2) paraphrase, (3) transfer, (4) imitation, (5) transcription, (6) dislocation, (7) condensation, and lastly, (8) decimation.

The strategy used to translate each line of the subtitle could differ based on the type of humor used in the show in order to make the translated lines fit the TL better. There are also other factors to be considered by translators such as the context of the lines. Because of this, this study aims to find the types of humor the show uses, and the strategy used to translate the humor, in this case, from English to Indonesian.

The data source of this study is the subtitle of the sitcom *The Good Place*, available on the streaming service Netflix. *The Good Place*, created by Michael Schur, tells a story about Eleanor Shellstrop, a woman who found herself in a neighborhood of the Good Place, an afterlife place equivalent to heaven, despite her living as a bad person when she was alive (NBC, n.d.) Along with her, the story also focuses on three other characters: Chidi Anagonye, an indecisive professor of Ethics and Moral Philosophy, Tahani Al-Jamil, a member of the high society, and the monk Jianyu, later revealed as Jason Mendoza, another misfit like

Eleanor who love to DJ. Along with them, there are also the curator of the neighborhood they resided in, Michael, and Janet, his assistant. Later, it is revealed that the neighborhood was not the Good Place, and is actually the Bad Place. The author picked this series because of its nature as a sitcom, which means it features a lot of comedy. One unique thing this series features is a lot of wordplay, such as censoring curse words with similar sounding sound, which could pose a challenge to translators. This study uses the first five episodes from the first season as the data source.

There have been studies done related to analysis of humor translation, including in relation to subtitles. One of such studies is titled *Humor Translation on Comedy Film Subtitles* by Maharani and Ediwan (2019). This study used qualitative research design. It analyzed the humor found in *9JKL* based on Raphael-West's (1989) theory of humor translations and the strategies used to translate them according to Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies. This study found that the movies used universal and culture specific humor, along with paraphrase, transfer, imitation and transcription strategies to translate said humor.

The second study is *Humor Translation Revisited: The Case of Woody Allen's "Annie Hall" Subtitled into Persian* by Kianbakht (2015). This study analyzed the subtitling strategies used to translate the humor of the movie *Annie Hall* in the Persian subtitle. Gottlieb's (2001) classification of subtitling strategies was used to analyze the subtitles, along with Schmitz's (2006) categorization of humor. The study found that the most used strategy in the subtitle is transfer, followed by dislocation.

The third study is *An Analysis of Verbal Humor and Translation Techniques used in The American Comedy Film “TED”* by Treetrapetch, Tipayasuparat, and Webb (2017). This study analyzed the humor in the Thai subtitle of the movie *Ted*. The analysis was done with the translation approaches by Nida (1964), the translation techniques by Baker (1992), and the translation techniques by Gottlieb (1992), as well as humor categorization by Long and Greasser (1988). The study found that the movie used 6 types of humor, with nonsense humor appearing the most, and 7 translation techniques were used to translate the humor, with transfer as the most used strategy.

The fourth study is *English-Vietnamse Translation Strategies of Subtitles Involving Humor in the TV Series “Modern Family”* by Nguyen & Le (2024). This study focuses on analyzing the subtitling strategies employed by fansubbers based on Raphaelson-West’s (1989) humor types and Diaz-Cintas & Remael (2007) subtitling strategies. The study found that literal translation is the most utilized strategy to translate universal jokes effectively, while cultural and linguistic jokes used other strategies, such as compensation, transposition, and lexical recreation, to create a dynamic translation.

The fifth study is *Humor Subtitling in Stand-Up Comedy Raditya Dika* by Agung (2021). This study analyzes the stand-up comedy performance by Raditya Dika in 2019 using humor categorization by Raphaelson-West (1989) and subtitling strategies by Gottlieb (1992). The study found that cultural humor, universal humor and linguistic humor are utilized, and the subtitling strategies of

transfer, expansion and paraphrase are used, with transfer as the most used strategy.

There are several overlaps between this study and the ones mentioned, one of which is the fact that many of these studies analyzed the data with Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies. Alongside that, two of the studies also analyzed different sitcoms. However, this study also has several key differences with the studies mentioned above. The most obvious difference is the data source. This paper will also use the taxonomy of verbal humor as discussed by Buijzen & Valkenburg (2004). There is also the difference of language, as this study focuses on comparing the Indonesian subtitles with the English subtitles provided in the streaming service Netflix.

1.2 Statement of Problem

- What types of humor is used in the series The Good Place?
- What are the translation strategies used to translate the humor in the series The Good Place?

1.3 Research Objective

The aim of this study is to find the types of humor used and analyze the strategies applied to translating humor in the series The Good Place.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study will be a qualitative study, using the descriptive case-study method. The qualitative approach is chosen because it can be used to explore a topic without numeric restrictions (Kumar, 2019). This open nature in turns allows the researcher to interpret the humor based on the researcher's understanding (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). The descriptive case-study design is chosen as according to Kumar (2019), the case study allows for a deep dive regarding a case related to a bigger phenomenon, where it can provide insight regarding common occurrences in said phenomenon, or in this case, in translation of humor.

The data will be taken from five episodes of the first season of the Good Place. The study will focus on the Indonesian subtitles and English closed caption of the series available on the streaming service Netflix. The humor found in the Indonesian and English subtitle will be collected and organized based on the categorization by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004). Lastly, the data will be compared to determine the translation strategy used in the subtitle based on Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on categorizing the humor used in the series The Good Place based on Buijzen & Valkenburg's categorization (2004) of humor. Buijzen & Valkenburg's taxonomy is chosen because it offers a clear taxonomy for humor that is specifically tailored for AV media. As for the subtitles, it is analyzed based

on Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies. It is chosen because it offers a clear and concise categorization of strategies that are used in subtitling.

1.6 Organization of Writing

This paper is divided into several chapters. The first chapter will introduce the topic of this study, which is the subtitling of humor. The second chapter will delve deeper into the topic of the paper. The third chapter will deal with the analysis of the data collected, which is the verbal humor found in the series *The Good Place*. Lastly, the fourth chapter will summarize the findings from the previous chapter.