

**Translation Techniques and Pragmatic Functions of Swear Words Found in
The Movie *Don't Look Up***

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify the use of translation techniques and pragmatic functions of swear words found in the movie "Don't Look Up". This research is a descriptive qualitative method. The findings show that there are 117 data of cursing utterances and the most frequently used translation techniques in translating cursing utterances are reduction technique with a percentage of (37.6%) of the total data, adaptation translation technique (35%), and literal translation and transposition techniques with 9 data each (7.6%). Furthermore, discursive creation and particularization translation techniques are 2 data each (1.7%). In contrast, the least used translation techniques are modulation, amplification, and borrowing (0.8%). The second finding is that the most frequent pragmatic function of swearing utterances is expletive swearing with a percentage of 51.2%. The pragmatic function as auxiliary swearing is 21.3%, abusive swearing with a percentage of 17.9% and the least pragmatic function of swear words is humorous swearing with a percentage of 9.4%.

Keywords: translation technique, pragmatic function, swear word

INTRODUCTION

Swear words, often known as taboo words, are words that are commonly regarded as rude or impolite in specific situations. Nevertheless, swear words can serve significant pragmatic purposes in communication, such as conveying passion, highlighting a statement, or establishing a connection with others, and even being used as humor. As Ljung (2011) argued that swearing is typically linked to the use of offensive language. Swear words are one of the challenges for translators in translating. The translator must take into account both the literal meaning and the context of the text in order to ensure that the translation accurately reflects the intended meaning and purpose. Hence, translation techniques are crucial in ensuring that the original message, subtleties, and meaning can be accurately rendered into another language without sacrificing the quality or essence of the original.

The translation of swear words has been the subject of numerous studies conducted in various languages and with a variety of objectives. Arrasyid et al (2022) conducted research about the translation strategies of swear words in French. Abdelaal & Al Sarhani (2021) identified the subtitling strategies of swear words and taboo expression in the movie "Training Day". Lestari & Sutrisno (2023) analyzed taboo words by using euphemism strategies. Ngaliyah & Cholsy (2024) focused on taboo for taboo strategies employed in translating taboo words in a novel. Sutrisno & Ibnu (2021) investigated the subtitling strategies used for the word "fuck". Sajarwa (2021) examined the usage of swear words based on social class and gender. The findings of this research suggest that the swear words employed by the French upper class differ from those utilized by the lower class. The related study regarding pragmatic functions conducted by Khalaf & Rashid (2019). This research aimed to examine the pragmatic functions of swear words in several American criminal dramas and their Arabic subtitles.

From the findings of the previous research, it is clear that there are only a few studies that have been conducted on the translation of swear words by analyzing the pragmatic functions. It can be seen that the research of swear words is still limited to the level of translation techniques and strategies. This research aims to enhance comprehension of the translation of swear words in satirical movies. This will ensure that the translated version properly expresses the original message as well as the feelings of the characters by analyzing the pragmatic functions of swear words. As Parker & Riley (2014) state that pragmatics is primarily concerned with the context in which language is used. Therefore, text subtitles, which are the utterances immediately preceding the text, are suitable to pragmatic evaluation

Swear words are easily recognized in several forms of communication, including daily interactions and electronic and non-electronic media such as comics, radio, television, movies and the internet. One of the films that contains various swear words in its dialog is *Don't Look Up* (2021). This movie is an American satire comedy film depicting the narrative of two astronomers who make the alarming discovery of a comet on a collision course with Earth. The film contains an abundance of swear words, which the characters employ to convey a range of emotions such as anger, frustration, and fear. According to Crystal (1995), swear words can make someone feel better. This means that swear words can be used to relieve stress, rage, or anger because the person who uses them will feel good and be able to let out their feelings. In fact, many people today use swear words when they talk to each other, which shows that swear words are becoming more common in society.

From the description above, it is assumed that the translator's choice of translation technique will affect the translation result, especially the purpose of its pragmatic function when translating the swear words. Furthermore, within the Indonesian context, the translator is obligated to ensure that the translation remains acceptable within the target language culture and adheres to the Government Agency Regulation on film censorship about language usage in the film. As a result, the researcher developed two research questions. Firstly, what techniques does the subtitler employ when translating the swear words? Secondly, what are the pragmatic functions of the swear words found in the movie *Don't Look Up*?

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. According to Moleong (2005), the objective of a qualitative research approach is to achieve a complete understanding of a phenomenon that is experienced or observed by research participants and to describe it in a

context that is both natural and specific. As the data in this research were expressed using words, sentences, and clauses that conveyed meaning beyond mere numbers and frequencies. The study utilized a descriptive-qualitative approach to effectively observe and interpret the various meanings of English swear words, focusing on their pragmatic functions and translation strategies.

The data of this research are taken from Netflix movie under the title *Don't Look Up*. The researcher chose this movie because there are many dialogs in the form of swear words that support the source of research data. The movie was named one of the ten best films of 2021 by the National Board of Review and the American Film Institute. In addition, the film also received several nominations as best film and won Best Original Screenplay at the 74th Writers Guild of America Awards. It also broke the record for the most viewing hours in one week on Netflix and became the most-watched movie in 28 days after its release.

The data collection process started with seeing the movie along with Indonesian subtitles to ensure a thorough understanding of the dialogue's context. The following step entailed collecting swear words from the English subtitles and determining the appropriate translation into Indonesian. The writer employs content analysis as a research design. Ary et al. (2010) define content analysis as the systematic examination and interpretation of recorded information included in various mediums such as movies, audiotapes, textbooks, and written materials.

After data collection is complete, the researcher follows these steps to analyze it. First, the researcher used web dictionaries for accuracy. Second, identifying the translation techniques of the swear words and the pragmatic functions of swear words found in the movie '*Don't Look up*'. The final stage is to conduct an analysis of them based on the theory. The theory used is pragmatic functions proposed by Andersson and Trdugill (1990) and translation techniques presented by Molina and Albir (2002).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Translation Techniques

In the beginning, it was explained that in order to find the most acceptable equivalency of words in the target language, some techniques are required in the process of translating. Eight different sorts of translation techniques were discovered to be utilized in the process of translating swear words in the film *Don't Look Up*. Molina and Albir (2002) had proposed a total of eighteen different translation strategies. The following is a table that provides a summary of the eight different sorts of strategies that are utilized, as well as a description of each of these individual techniques:

Table 1. Translation Techniques of Swear Words in the Movie *Don't Look Up*

No	Trasnlation Techniques	Frequency	Percentage
1	Reduction	44	37,6%
2	Adaptation	41	35%
3	Literal Translation	9	7,6%
4	Transposition	9	7,6%
5	Established Equivalence	7	5,9
6	Discrusive Creation	2	1,7%
7	Particularization	2	1,7%
8	Modulation	1	0,8%
9	Amplification	1	0,8%
10	Borrowing	1	0,8%
Total		117	100%

Based on Table 2, the reduction translation technique is the most commonly employed technique, with 44 utterances (37.6%), the reason why translators utilize reduction strategies is because they are attempting to preserve the standards of politeness of the language that they are translating into. In addition to cultural background, the choice of reduction technique might also be impacted by the existing rules in that country. According to Sutrisno and Ibnu (2021: 37), the Indonesian Film Censorship Board is vested with the ability to censor films, which includes the authority to censor everything from titles and topics to images, scenes, sounds, and words. The adaptation translation technique in the second position with 41 utterances (35%), and literal translation and transposition techniques in the third position with 9 utterances each (7.6%). Furthermore, discursive creation and particularization translation techniques are 2 data each (1.7%). In contrast, modulation, amplification, and borrowing are the least used translation techniques (0.8%). Each translation technique used by the translators will be discussed in the following section.

a) Reduction

The reduction translation technique is commonly employed by translators when translating the swear words. Out of the total number of utterances, 44 of them, which accounts for 37.6%, are translated using the reduction translation technique. Reduction techniques involve removing words or expressions from the target language without altering the meaning of the words or expressions according to Molina and Albir (2002).

SL: unless you assholes are taking me to the Batcave

TL: Kecuali aku dibawa ke Batcave (01:34:54)

The word "assholes" is used by Kate to describe her feelings to the people who are taking her because she doesn't like that her head is covered with a black cloth and she doesn't know where they are going. Based on that example, the translator deleted the swearing word, namely "asshole". According to Cambridge dictionary (2024) asshole is one of the vulgar body parts. Usually, the word "asshole" is used to express anger in the source language. The translator doesn't translate the word "asshole" in the target language by employing the reduction technique. If translated, the word asshole has an equivalent in the target language, which is "brengek", "bajingan". However, the translator chooses to omit the swear word in order to avoid using controversial words when translating from Source Language (SL) to Target Language (TL). The

reduction of the swear words in the target language does not affect the meaning, it is just that the abusive function aimed at the interlocutor is less well conveyed.

b) Adaptation

This technique is employed to substitute the cultural components of the source language with corresponding cultural aspects from the target language's culture.

SL: Holy shit!

TL: Astaga! (02:14:06)

In this example, there is a swear word, "Holy shit," which is translated as "astaga" using an adaptation technique. The adaptation technique centers on identifying swear words that align with the cultural aspects of the target language. The phrase "holy shit" has a similar meaning to the Indonesian word "astaga," which is better suitable for use in the Indonesian language.

c) Literal Translation

Molina and Albir (2002) define literal translation as the process of translating a document by word-for-word translation. The technique of literal translation means copying word by word whose structure is in accordance with the rules of the target language. For example:

SL: or we can fuck

TL: atau kita bisa bercinta (00:20:07)

The swearing took place when Brie was drunk with her coworkers because she was anxious about the thought of the end of the universe that night. She intended to give suggestions for activities that she enjoyed. In the example above, there is a swear word "fuck" which is translated into the target language as fuck. If translated literally the word "fuck" is an activity that shows sexual activity. In the target language, it is also translated word by word using literal translation technique. Literal translation is a translation technique that directly translates each word from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), without altering or adding any information (Molina & Albir, 2002).

d) Transposition

Transposition involves substituting the grammatical structure of SL with that of TL. This strategy is employed to modify the original SL structure in order to attain a similar outcome. This may involve converting plurals to singulars, altering the placement of adjectives, and modifying the overall sentence structure.

SL: Completely lost their fucking mind

TL: Sudah benar-benar gila! (00:50:38)

In the example above, Mr. Mindy swears at the government people who do not think about the safety of their people and choose to make profits by enriching themselves. The translator uses the transposition translation technique which can be seen in the phrase "Completely lost their fucking mind" translated into "sudah benar-benar gila!". The use of this translation technique is by changing the sentence structure in the source language almost entirely but still maintaining the meaning in the target language.

e) Established Equivalence

The application of terms that have been widely or often used in the dictionary or in the target language in accordance with the characteristics of the source language.

SL: I'm starting to think that all this "end of the world" stuff is bullshit

TL: Aku mulai berpikir soal kiamat ini omong kosong (00:48:59)

In the example above, Yule uttered a swear word while talking to Kate. At that time, the estimated day of the comet's fall to the earth was getting closer. The use of the swear word "bullshit" is translated into "omong kosong" in the target language by using the established equivalence translation technique. This is because the term used is often used in the dictionary in the target language.

f) Discursive Creation

The discursive creation translation technique generates a momentary equivalency in the target language that cannot be predicted based on the source language (Molina & Albir, 2002).

SL: They're putting around this line of bullshit

TL: Itu hiasan menarik yang ditambahkan (01:09:01)

The swear words in the example above occurred when Kate was discussing with Dr. Mindy and Dr. Ogilvy about the government's policy regarding the handling of comets that began to approach the earth by letting the comet fall so that scientists could examine the material it brought. According to Kate, the solution is absurd, so she uttered the slur "bullshit". In this example, the translator uses the discursive creation technique to translate "They're putting around this line of bullshit" into "Itu hiasan menarik yang ditambahkan" into the target language. Translation in the target language is very different or unpredictable from the source language but easier to understand.

g) Particularization

The particularization translation technique involves translating a phrase from the source language (SL) into a more specific term in the target language (TL) (Molina & Albir, 2002).

SL: They found a bunch of gold and diamonds and rare shit on the comet

TL: Mereka menemukan banyak emas, berlian, dan materi langka di komet itu (01:07:47)

The dialogue in the example above is spoken by Dr. Mindy who is upset with the decision of the meeting with the government. The translator uses the particularization translation technique when translating the word "shit" into "material" in the target language to make the word shit more specific so that the audience in the target language can understand clearly.

h) Modulation

This translation strategy involves altering the point of view, focus, or cognitive category in accordance with the source text (Molina & Albir, 2002).

SL: It's fucking fact

TL: Ada bukti (00:44:17)

The utterance in the example occurred when Dr. Mindy was on one of the television stations to explain the development of the comet situation that he researched. He had tried to convince the public that the comet hurtling its way towards planet earth is not a good thing, but the presenter did not respond well. Therefore, he emphasized the fact that the comet exists by uttering the swear word "it's fucking fact". The translator used the modulation technique by translating it into "ada bukti".

i) Amplification

The amplification translation technique involves incorporating additional information in the target language (TL) that is not present in the source language (SL) (Molina & Albir, 2002). For example:

SL: And cars, clothing, and shit

TL: Dan mobil, baju, dan lainnya yang bisa musnah (00:31:06)

The speech was spoken by Jones as the chief of staff of the government to motivate people to launch the rocket into space. In the example above, the translator uses the Linguistic Amplification technique by adding information to the target language that is not found in the source language, which can be seen in the word "shit" in the source language translated into "lainnya yang bisa musnah" to enhance the message more more comprehensive for the audience. The example didn't give a clear definition of the word "shit," which could have led to confusion among the audience.

j) Borrowing

Borrowing technique takes words or expressions from the source language. This borrowing can be pure borrowing (pure borrowing), or borrowing that has been naturalized (adapted to the morphology and phonetic system of the target language). The data found shows naturalized borrowing, as shown by the following examples:

SL: You tell your parents that President Orlean and Isherwell are sociopaths and fascists!

TL: Beri tahu orang tuamu, Presiden Orlean dan Isherwell adalah sociopat dan fasis. (00:43:48)

The utterance in the example above was spoken by Dr. Mindy when appearing on television, before he was educated not to be afraid of comets but because the government's decision did not try to protect the people, he became emotional by throwing offensive words, namely sociopaths and fascists! In this case, the translator uses borrowing technique, it can be seen by the change of the words sociopaths and fascists translated into Indonesian into "sociopat dan fasis". The borrowing is naturalized (adapted to the phonetic and morphological system of the target language).

2. Pragmatic Functions

Generally, the swear words used in the movie are intended to convey displeasure rather than dehumanize or insult the person being spoken to. According to Andersson and Trudgill

(1990) there are four pragmatic functions of swearing, namely expletive, auxiliary, abusive, and humorous swearing. The table below shows the different functions of swearing.

Table 2. The Pragmatic Functions of Swear Words

No	Pragmatic Functions	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expletive Swearing	60	51,2%
2	Auxiliary Swearing	25	21,3%
3	Abusive Swearing	21	17,9%
4	Humorous Swearing	11	9,4%
	Total	117	100%

Based on table 2 above, it can be concluded that the results of this research found 117 data of cursing utterances which are divided into four pragmatic functions. The pragmatic function of swear words that are most often spoken is the expletive function as much as 60 data with a percentage of 51.2%. Expletive swearing is frequently used in speech to demonstrate the character traits and behaviors of individuals in movies when using swearing to express personal emotions in everyday life. The pragmatic function as auxiliary swearing is 21.3%, abusive swearing with a percentage of 17.9% and the least pragmatic function of swear words as humorous swearing with a percentage of 9.4% of all data found in the movie *Don't Look Up*. The following is an explanation of the pragmatic functions of swear words found in this research.

a) Expletive Swearing

The function of expletive swearing is the most common in this research. Expletive swearing is used to express personal emotions such as shock, anger, and frustration. Expletive swearing is not directed to others but to accommodate the speaker's feelings when experiencing situations or events that are being experienced reflexively. Examples of expletive functions found in *Don't Look Up* movie captions are as follows:

Dr Mindy: What the fuck? Is this real? (02:14:08)

The provided data examples contain instances of swear words, namely the word "fuck". This word is used by the speaker to express their strong feelings upon encountering a shocking scenario, namely the discovery of a comet that poses a potential threat to the planet Earth. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024), the term "fuck" is a vulgar phrase that refers to engaging in sexual intercourse with another person. In this example, the swear word "fuck" is not intended to provoke or harm people but rather serves as a means for the speaker to express his emotions when encountering reflexive situations. Thus, the swear words expressions discovered serve as expletives.

b) Auxiliary Swearing

The function of these swear words is to provide emphasis through swear words. Auxiliary swearing is also known as lazy swearing because this swear word functions as an addition only that can describe or replace words to emphasize its meaning. As in the following data example:

Kate: When we're all 100% for sure gonna fucking die! (01:43:07)

The swear words were uttered by Kate when she was appearing on one of the television programs to tell the comet findings that were very dangerous for humans on earth should be taken seriously but were not taken well by the government and the media. Therefore, she was very angry by using swear words “fucking die!” to emphasize her statement that everyone will die. The example data refers to the pragmatic function of swear words as auxiliary swearing.

c) Abusive Swearing

The pragmatic function of using swear words is opposite of expletives swearing. Abusive swearing is employed to target and degrade others, often through derogatory nicknames, racist language, and other forms of verbal attack. Abusive swearing is commonly utilized for this purpose. Examples in this movie is:

Bina: Why don't you mind your own business, you old fuck? (01:48:50)

The dialogue happened when Dr. Mindy was in the waiting room and met one of her favorite artists. So he pretty much knows the life of the artist named Riley Bina. He was curious about the continuation of the artist's relationship by asking directly. But Dr. Mindy's question was rudely responded by Bina by answering using an offensive swear word, namely, old fuck. From the context, the swear word used aims to attack the interlocutor. Therefore, the example of data above is included in the abusive function because it intends to verbally attack or hurt the interlocutor by using the “old fuck” which is interpreted as “kakek” in the target language. The word is addressed to Dr. Mindy who is much older than the artist but because of her meddling, she rudely mocks Dr. Mindy's age which is no longer young.

d) Humorous Swearing

Humorous swearing is directed at others but is not abusive or emotional because the purpose is to make a joke and does not intend to offend the other person. This swearing has a function that does not hurt others, instead it sounds funny and fun. Humorous swearing is usually directed at people who are close to the speaker. It can be a way for speakers to praise something or someone. For example in the following data examples:

Yule: You're driving me fucking crazy, Kate. (00:54:59)

The swear word in the example addressed to Kate does not make her feel offended but sounds pleasant because it is an expression of praise for Kate expressed by Yule who has just become her lover. As the opinion of Wijana and Rohmadi (2007) that pragmatically swear words are not only used to show unpleasant conditions for speakers, but can also be used to praise, show surprise and create intimacy. In the example above, the swearing fucking crazy refers to humorous swearing because it intends to praise and show closeness to the interlocutor without making her feel offended.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to find out the translation techniques and pragmatic functions of swear words in the movie *Don't Look Up*. The result shows 117 data of swear words which are divided into four pragmatic functions, namely expletive, auxiliary, abusive, and humorous swearing. Out of eighteen translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002), ten translation techniques were applied in the translation of the swear words in the data of this research. The most frequently used translation technique is reduction because the translator tries to avoid

words that are not necessarily accepted in the target language, which is Indonesian. It is hoped that this research can provide useful guidance for future researchers and movie translators who experience obstacles in translating swear words. This research supports previous research by adding an understanding of translation techniques and pragmatic functions of swear words.

This research is limited because it only examines movies translated into audiovisual form. Future research can look at more specific data, such as the use of swear words in stand-up comedy. It would be better if the next research could categorize the severity of the swear words. Future researchers are also expected to focus on discussing one technique and its application so that the analysis will be more advanced.

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