

Analyzing Errors in Students' Subtitle Products

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Abstract: Subtitling has constraints that are different from other types of translation. In the pedagogical field, lecturers in subtitling courses must ensure that the students are aware of the constraints to creating a qualified subtitle. The constraints in subtitling frequently cause errors in the subtitles composed by the students. This article discusses the errors found in students' subtitle products. The researchers took the subtitles of *Miacademy* Youtube channel videos composed by EFL students studying in one of the state universities in Central Java, Indonesia. Nine videos of *Miacademy* and their subtitles were analyzed to find the errors in the subtitles. The results revealed that the most frequent error is errors in spatial parameters, specifically on the excessive number of characters per line. The second most dominant error is the errors in the temporal parameter in which most of the students still found problems in obeying the rules of the maximum duration for either a full two-line or a single-line subtitle. Punctuation and letter case errors result from students' lack of comprehension in mastering the target text language convention. Error in target text editing mainly occurs due to the too-long subtitles, segmentation that is not syntactically acceptable, the decision to omit or retain the source text, and the occurrence of dialect. Further analysis showed that the students need to practice adjusting their translation with the constraints. Likewise, a subtitling brief must be conducted before the lecturer delivers the task to the students by helping the students analyze the possible problems and solutions when composing the subtitles.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching audiovisual translation is a challenge for lecturers (Janecová, 2012). Even though the fundamental theories of translation or, indeed, the course of written translation have been introduced to the students, lecturers need to ensure that the students are aware of the distinctive features of audiovisual translation. These unique characteristics of audiovisual translation influence the process experienced by the students when they are asked to compose the audiovisual translation.

Generally, two popular types of audiovisual translation are subtitling and dubbing. Of those two types of audiovisual translation, subtitling is famous for its more affordable production cost and faster process than dubbing (Koolstra et al., 2002; Bogucki, 2004; Matamala et al., 2017). Cintas & Remael (2007) define subtitling as translation practice in the form of written text, generally presented on the lower part of the screen, to narrate the original utterances of the speakers, as well as the image appears and sometimes to inform the soundtrack. Being prevalent as a category of constrained translation, the distinctive features of subtitling cannot be ignored. Liu (2014) underlines at least four specific characteristics of subtitling, including the content (written translations), position (the foot of the screen), presentation (synchrony), production (post-production activity), and nature (additive). This statement highlights the consequence of a subtitler to consider not only the meaning of the source text but also the technical aspects. Occasionally, the technical aspects may influence the meaning of the target text. It is undeniably true that subtitlers must decide whether to put the meaning over the technical aspect or vice versa.

In the context of translation courses in universities, students are still classified as nonprofessional translators, which means they still learn how to produce qualified translations. In other similar contexts, teaching subtitling reveals the same phenomenon. Students usually still learn to adjust the meaning they want to transfer to the target text with the subtitling constraints. The attempt to grasp the meaning without any distortion and adjust it with the subtitling standard, which refers to the constraints in the technical aspect, sometimes leads to errors in the subtitle instead. On the other hand, the course of subtitling is known as a practical course rather than a theoretical one. The students must apply the theories into practice by composing subtitling products. Thus, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is applicable for subtitling courses. By applying PBL, the students are expected to work in a team, overcome the problems in subtitling, and increase their critical thinking in solving the issues. These benefits are highlighted by Izzah & Diana (2021), saying that, generally, in EFL class, PBL may result in students' improved collaboration and teamwork skills, bonding between students, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

This research was conducted in UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The subjects of this research are students who took the Subtitling course as their elective course. In the pre-research stage, the researchers interviewed some students to find out the possible problems encountered by the students when composing the subtitles. It is found that the students experience at least four problems, they are: (1) the reduction of meaning when translating the source text into the

target text to adjust the viewer's understanding, (2) the limited space available for the subtitle forces the subtitlers to rearrange the translation, (3) the limited time available for the subtitle to appear made the subtitlers face the difficulties in adjusting the subtitle appearance on screen, and (4) the animation as the visualization appears too quick resulting the limitation of subtitle as the explanation of the animation. These difficulties are in line with the theory from Hatim & Mason (2000) regarding the difficulties in composing subtitles: reduction of the text, medium factors, and matching the visual image.

The difficulties mentioned by the students influenced the quality of the subtitle they produced. Errors are found in some aspects, including the aspect of meaning and a technic. Understanding the errors in students' subtitle products is expected to be a reflection or self-examination for the lecturers in teaching subtitling. Lecturers can identify the possible errors that become the main problems for students in composing subtitles. Furthermore, students can also learn from the errors that occurred to avoid the same or similar problems while creating subtitles in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Enormous research on translation appears to highlight the steps taken by the translators in conveying the meaning of the source text into the target text. Indonesian researchers on translation often underline the analysis of the translation strategies or techniques with the various data sources, such as song translation (Pratama, 2017; Anwar, 2020), idiom translation (Suryawan & Winaya, 2018; Wicaksono & Wahyuni, 2018), subtitling (Dhari & Suarnajaya, 2017; Pahamzah & Syariifah, 2019), etc. On the other hand, some studies also focus on translation errors. However, most of the studies of translation errors focus on the translation by means of written translation, done by either professionals or students, rather than errors in the subtitle (Wongranu, 2017; Jahanshahi & Kafipour, 2015).

Meanwhile, research on subtitles usually correlates the functions of subtitles to enhance foreign language mastery (Alabsi, 2020; Pratama et al., 2021). Halim (2019) discusses errors in subtitles, analyzing the subtitle of *Upin and Ipin* in which the subtitler is categorized as professional since the source of data was taken from the official subtitle of the movie. Meanwhile, Kasriyati et al. (2019) analyze the errors in the EFL students' subtitles at Lancang Kuning University. Both research conducted by Halim (2019) and Kasriyati et al. (2019) merely highlight the aspect of meaning.

Like any other type of audiovisual translation, a subtitle is a poly-semiotic form of translation where meaning is not the only single aspect to be considered. When composing translation in the form of subtitles, subtitlers must also contemplate a wider aspect rather than just meaning. Considering these important aspects for subtitlers, Cintas & Anderman (2009) mention the three significant constraints in subtitling: the textual, linguistic, and technical. The textual constraint is related to the correlation between the verbal and visual elements, while the linguistic constraint leads to the dispensability of the verbal elements. Meanwhile, the technical constraint is associated with the mechanical procedures in composing subtitles which usually refers to the subtitling standard. The technical aspect, including space, time, and presentation, is an exceptionally important thing that must be pondered. Ignoring the technical aspect or the subtitling standard usually results in an unreadable subtitle. Indeed, since the notion of subtitle is composed to be read to help the viewers with the language barriers, readable subtitles by taking technical aspects into account is paramount. Unfortunately, research on subtitle errors involving the technical part has rarely been done.

Attempting to fill the gaps of the aforementioned previous studies, this research analyzes the errors in subtitles made by EFL students by considering both the meaning and the technical aspects. The EFL students in this research are those electing the optional translation courses in one of the state universities located in Central Java, Indonesia. These students have learned about the basic theory of translation, translation practices, and audiovisual translation. In analyzing the data, the researchers employ the theory of subtitling standard by Karamitroglou (1998).

The purposes of the standards proposed by Karamitroglou (1998) are to provide maximum comprehension and appreciation of the film to the target viewers by maximizing the readability and acceptability of the subtitle. The standards are categorized as: the layout/spatial parameter, the duration/temporal parameter, the punctuation and letter case, and the target text editing.

In order to fill the gap in the previous research on the same topic of subtitling, in which most of them emphasize the meaning rather than considering the subtitling constraints, the use of Karamitroglou's (1998) theory in this research is an attempt to accommodate the detail of the constraints, as stated by Cintas & Anderman (2009). Moreover, this aspect cannot be neglected as subtitling constraints are the distinctive features, parts that cannot be put off when analyzing subtitles. The underlying theory of the analysis is that as a type of constrained translation, subtitling does not only engage with the problems of conveying the verbal aspect

but also considering other technical restriction which makes this type of audiovisual translation unique compared to other types of translation. These description highlights the differences of this research with previous researches discussing on subtitling products.

METHODS

This research is qualitative, employing an ethnography design. The researchers obtained the data from the products of subtitles composed by the students of the Subtitling course in UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The students had achieved courses in translation studies, including basic theories of translations, translation practices, interpreting, and audiovisual translation. During the Subtitling course, they were also taught how to apply the subtitling standard by Karamitroglou (1998). Indeed, in composing the subtitle, they also had been asked to follow the subtitling standard of Karamitroglou (1998). The data source is the subtitles of *Miacademy* videos, an English learning channel on Youtube, composed by the students. There are nine videos that 18 students translated, and each video was translated by a pair of students. The titles of the videos are: Dog Breeds, Farm Animals, Literary Genres: Fiction Part 1, Literary Genres: Fiction Part 2, Literary Genres: Nonfiction, Reading a Book, States of the USA, The Five Senses, World Trip: Africa. Before doing the tasks, the students had been taught to compose the subtitles using Aegisub software and learned to follow the subtitling standard as proposed by Karamitroglou (1998). The data are analyzed in the form of each frame following the occurrence of each subtitle on the videos.

Using ethnography design in qualitative research, the analysis was conducted by applying the four steps of ethnography research: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and finding cultural themes (Spradley, 2007). In domain analysis, the researchers watched the videos with the students' subtitles and then decided on parts of the data source that can be classified as the data. In taxonomy analysis, the researchers analyzed the data according to the categorization of the errors. Each categorization of errors was then analyzed to find the empirical correlation in the componential analysis. The last step is finding the cultural theme by contemplating the whole findings with the existing theories or previous studies to find the comprehensive patterns related to the research problems.

FINDINGS

The categories of errors are divided based on the aspects of subtitling standards as proposed by Karamitroglou (1998). This standard covers all the constraints in subtitling,

including the textual, linguistic, and technical aspects. The researchers analyzed each frame of the subtitles to find the errors. Although the students had been taught and asked to follow the subtitling standard, surprisingly, from 1023 data of frames of the subtitles, there are numerous errors with the frequency of 701 errors. The distribution of errors is presented in the following table:

Table 1. The errors in the students' subtitle products

Types of technical errors in subtitle	Frequency	Percentage
Layout	245	34.96%
Duration	175	24.96%
Punctuation & Letter Case	63	8.99%
Target Text Editing	218	31.09%

Spatial Parameter or Layout

There are some standards of layout in the subtitle. The students fulfilled the general layout aspects, such as the position on the screen, number of lines, text positioning, typeface and distribution, and font color and background. However, most of them violated the aspects of the number of lines and characters.

ST: ...they kept them as helpers around the home. Not just as pets.

TT: ...mereka juga menjadikannya sebagai pembantu di rumah tidak hanya sebagai hewan peliharaan

The datum above violates the layout constraints, resulting in the subtitle's error. The subtitle above appears as a single line, but the number of the characters is 77, with more than 35 characters in a line as the maximum number of characters allowed to appear.

ST: You can go practice what you learned on our fun online games and quizzes.

TT: Kamu bisa mempraktekkannya melalui permainan seru kami dan kuis.

Similarly, there are 65 characters in a single line subtitle in the datum above. Further analysis shows that most of the students still focused on word-for-word translation, which is very dangerous to be applied in the subtitle as there is a parameter of limited space. The excessive number of characters may influence the viewers' reading process as too many characters may consume more time to read. Indeed, Karamitoglou (1998) underlines that an

increase in the number of characters, attempting to fit over 40 per subtitle line, reduces the legibility of the subtitles because the font size is also inevitably reduced.

Temporal Parameter or Duration

It can be denied that reading a subtitle is an automatic process when viewers watch audiovisual products with subtitles. However, subtitlers must realize that viewers only have limited time to read the subtitles. Thus, a standard of temporal parameter or duration must be fulfilled. The error in duration means the subtitle violates the time constraint. The researchers found that errors in this category influence each other. For example, when the subtitlers violate the maximum duration of a full two-line subtitle, it will also affect the leading-in time or lagging-out time rules.

ST: And last, but not least, the Western region of the United States is where you can find beautiful beaches, green forests, mountains, and natural wonders.

TT: *Terakhir di wilayah barat Amerika dimana kita dapat menemukan pantai, hutan, gunung, dan alam lainnya.*

The above subtitle appears as a two-line subtitle. However, it appears for 7 seconds which violates the standard of a full two-line subtitle with a maximum of 5½ seconds. Thus, it also affects the lagging-out time rule as the subtitle still stays when the utterance ends. It might also influence the leading-in time as the next subtitle will appear too soon without giving ¼ seconds pause as the standard tells.

ST: Hi, my name is Kylie, and welcome to Dog Breeds.

TT: *Halo, nama saya Kylie. Selamat datang di Ras Anjing. Gug.*

Based on the maximum duration per line standard, the subtitle above exceeds the maximum duration allowed. The maximum duration per line is 3½ seconds, while the duration of the subtitle above is 5 seconds. Similarly, this error also results in other violations within the duration category.

Punctuation and Letter Case

Punctuation and letter case is crucial in written translation as they are in the subtitle. The subtitlers must be aware of the convention of the target text language, including the punctuation

and letter case rules. A seemingly simple error such as a full stop mark at the end of a declarative sentence still belongs to a serious error in the subtitle.

ST: ...they kept them as helpers around the home. Not just as pets.

TT: ...mereka juga menjadikannya sebagai pembantu di rumah tidak hanya sebagai hewan peliharaan

The datum above shows that the subtitlers do not put the full stop mark at the end of the subtitle. This result may confuse the viewer as the viewer may think the subtitle is not finished yet. The students made this kind of error very often. They forgot that subtitles must also follow the rules of acceptability, including the standard of punctuation and letter case.

ST: Welcome to Literary Genre: Fiction Part 1.

TT: *Selamat datang di genre sastra fiksi bagian 1*

The other violation of the subtitling standard, which causes the error, can be seen from the datum above. The subtitlers forgot to adjust the source text's oral language into the target text's written form. This case, also called textual constraint, results in their inability to adjust the context of the source text, which tells about the video's title. As it tells about the video's title, each word must be initialized with the capital letter *Genre Sastra: Fiksi Bagian 1*.

Target text Editing

Target text editing usually influences the readability aspect. The subtitlers must be able to divide the translation into an easily read subtitle, for example, using a single or two-line subtitle. The analysis shows that the students have difficulty deciding whether to produce a single or two-line subtitle. The following data shows how subtitlers still tend to produce long subtitles that violate the standard.

ST: these nerve endings tell our brain when we are in danger or when we are feeling something nice

TT: *Ujung saraf ini memberi tahu otak kita ketika kita dalam bahaya atau ketika kita merasakan sesuatu yang menyenangkan.*

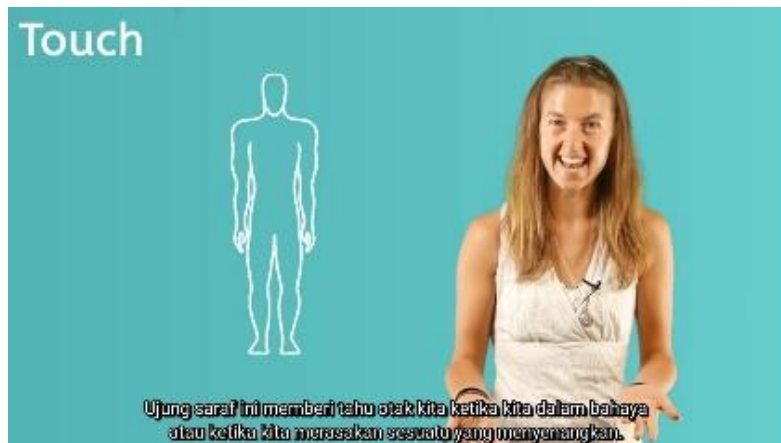


Figure 1. Error in target text editing

There are no problems with the meaning aspect of the subtitle above. However, if it is analyzed from the technical aspect, the subtitle is too long, and target text editing is needed. The long subtitle should be divided into two lines instead of a single line. In addition, the subtitle should follow the principle of the segmentation at the highest nodes and segmentation of the line length. In making this attempt, subtitlers must also consider the first rule of a spatial parameter of the layout by obeying the number of maximum characters per line.

ST: Hello! My name is kylie, and welcome to Farm Animals.

TT: *Hai, aku Kylie dan selamat datang di peternakan hewan.*

Retaining the linguistic element of the original is also a must in subtitling. Thus, subtitlers must be aware of the language structures of both the source text and the target text. The phrase Farm Animals in the source text refers to the video's title. The error occurs as the subtitlers follow the rules of noun phrases in English when they have to apply the target language rules. The result is a fatal error that creates a very different meaning. The appropriate subtitle must be *Hewan Ternak*.

ST: The word genre, is actually pronounced genre.

TT: *Kata 'genre', pengucapannya adalah genre ('ʒɒnrə).*

Target text editing rule also includes the directions on how to retain dialect. In the case of dialect appearing in the source text, subtitlers are often faced with a dilemma of whether to preserve what is said by the source text or focus on the target text. The data above shows the different pronunciations of *genre* in English and Indonesian. The way Indonesians pronounce

genre is just like the way it is written. However, there is actually a piece of additional information in the source text that what is written in English is quite different from the pronunciation. The subtitlers attempted to provide this information in the target text by giving the phonetic transcription. However, it results in irrelevant verbiage errors. This kind of transcription is unnecessary and may confuse the viewers, general viewers with no background knowledge of how to read phonetic symbols, as they do not know how to read the transcription. Indeed, this condition is quite troublesome for subtitlers. The role of the subtitlers as decision-makers is examined whether to put the meaning over the form or vice versa.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research showed that various errors still occurred in the students' subtitle products. Spatial error or layout error occurs as the most dominant error. The students tended to create long subtitles by using too many characters. They forgot to realize that the spatial parameter is crucial in the case of subtitling. Meanwhile, it is also found that the error types in the duration category influence each other. For example, when the subtitlers violate the maximum duration of a full two-line subtitle, it will also affect the leading-in time or lagging-out time rules. Furthermore, the error in layout usually also results in the error in duration, as these two aspects are related. Long subtitles will take longer to appear on the screen, which may violate both layout and duration parameters.

This result is supported by the previous study by Khalaf et al. (2014), concerned with problems in amateur subtitling English into Arabic. Based on the result of the study, some amateur subtitlers face the difficulty in reducing the source text resulting in the subtitle going beyond the maximum character per line and even line per subtitle. The spatial parameter or layout also correlates with the target text editing aspect. The students needed to edit their translation results and adjust the editing version with the subtitling standard. If Khalaf et al. (2014) mention reduction strategies, the discussion is then related to the subtitling strategies as a solution to overcome difficulties in subtitling. It is not only reduction that the subtitlers can apply in order to fulfill the spatial or layout standard since some subtitling strategies must be recognized.

As proposed by Gottlieb (1992), various types of subtitling strategies should be introduced to students. In this case, reduction may refer to condensation, decimation, resignation, or deletion. The lecturer may explain the differences between each strategy and

how to apply them in the subtitling practice. Thus, it is hoped that the students can apply the strategy when composing the subtitles.

Punctuation and letter cases which seem easy, are a paramount issue for students. Students tended to forget how to use appropriate punctuations, capital letters, and even affixes in their native language, Indonesian. Dealing with this issue, Sajna (2013) mentions errors in the mother tongue as the subtitlers do not master their native language completely. The students focused more on the source text and forgot to adjust their translation with the target language convention. This result is also in line with the research conducted by Murtiningsih (2013). She revealed that college students still have problems properly using the Indonesian language. The problems are errors in writing words that do not fit the context, errors in using affixes and prepositions, errors in terms of standard spelling, and errors in using ambiguous words.

Further analysis of punctuation errors revealed that some viewers ignored this error since the original message remains unchanged. In contrast, Khalaf et al. (2014) revealed that punctuation errors such as dashes and interruption dots tend to confuse the viewers. The subtitle, which contains a number of punctuation errors, is not enjoyable. Considering this contradictive argument on the use of punctuations in the subtitle, it is possibly fairer to teach the students about the FAR model of qualified subtitles as proposed by Pedersen (2017). The “R” in the name of the model, which refers to “readability,” suggests subtitlers are concerned about the use of punctuation to produce qualified subtitles. When the subtitler leaves the full stop mark in a declarative sentence, for example, there is a possibility that the viewers would think that the sentence is unfinished that which may influence the readability of the subtitle. Therefore, it is surely reliable to obey the rules of the appropriate use of punctuation to create a better subtitle.

The last category of errors is the violation of target text editing. This category directs the subtitlers not only in the technical aspect but also in textual as well as linguistic aspects. Unfortunately, the results revealed that most students were still unaware of those three aspects. Furthermore, it seemed that the editing step was left behind, and the subtitles' quality was not guaranteed. Considering target text editing, there is a theory of translation process from Nida & Taber (1974), which is very ideal to be applied for any type of translation. The translation process has three important steps: analyzing, transferring, and revising or editing. The last step is crucial as in this step, translators or even subtitlers may ensure whether the result of their draft is correct or probably need to be revised in order to guarantee the readability and the

whole quality of the translation. Leaving this step behind will result in unexpected errors in the translation.

The need for conducting an appropriate step in teaching Subtitling

It is not an easy task for students whose knowledge and experience composing subtitles are still at a beginner level. Although the students in this study are EFL students who have learned various translation theories and practices, audiovisual translation is only learned for one semester, subtitling for seven meetings and dubbing for another seven meetings. Therefore, it can be said that the task of composing *Miacademy* subtitles is a new experience for them. As subtitling and translation generally need quite a long training to be successful, students need to learn from their mistakes and attempt to revise their errors.

There is a concept of *translation brief* where translators have a chance to analyze the possible problems and find solutions before completing their duties. This concept is applied in written translation and oral translation or interpreting. Lecturers in the Subtitling course can use a *subtitling brief*, similar to a *translation brief*, before asking the students to finish their task of composing subtitles. Specific theories on subtitling, such as subtitling constraints, subtitling strategies, subtitling standards, and criteria of qualified subtitles, should be taught with some examples on the application. Thus, students will achieve not only the theories but also the practices.

Furthermore, Neves (2004) highlights four steps in teaching subtitling: media text analysis, script analysis, translation/editing, and spotting/cueing. In designing these steps, Neves (2004) initiates from his experience in Portugal that students who attend subtitling courses aim to produce a qualified translation and increase their ability in foreign language mastery. This fascinating fact appears as the combination of translation and audiovisual influences students' foreign language ability. The media text analysis covers the basic knowledge in the making of media text, the analysis of narrative, and the genre of the audiovisual products. Script analysis is also considered an important step where students and lecturers may discuss the possible problems and solutions on the verbal aspect as well as the other semiotic elements that need to be translated. The translation/editing step is the core process where subtitlers conduct their job to convey the meaning of the original soundtrack by considering the constraints in subtitling. Neves (2004) underlines the important editing step by saying that "... subtitler's art is that of effective editing...". The last step is spotting/cueing by means of adjusting the translation with the subtitling standard used by the subtitlers.

Considering the steps proposed by Neves (2004) in teaching Subtitling, it seems that the Subtitling course needs a longer time than just seven meetings for one semester. Reflecting on the course condition where this research took place, seven meetings to teach comprehensive materials seem inadequate. Hybrid teaching strategies combining several media, such as face-to-face and online media, will be a better solution for the success of the teaching-learning activities and the student's achievements.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the EFL students who have taken translation courses for three semesters still produce errors in their subtitle products. The errors found present their lack of awareness in apprehending subtitling as a distinctive type of translation whose features are different from written translation in general.

The students need to realize the constraints in subtitling and how to deal with those constraints. Theories of subtitling and translation that have been learned must be applied so that the practice of composing subtitles may produce better results. Indeed, subtitling course needs to be designed effectively by the lecturers. The steps proposed by an expert may be a consideration to create a better teaching-learning process, whether face-to-face or online. Besides, the design of the course must also be adjusted with the learning objectives so that the activities during the course will be in harmony with the department's vision.

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