

*e-journal of linguistics*

**STRATEGIES APPLIED IN ENGLISH INTO INDONESIAN TRANSLATION OF  
PRISON SLANG WORDS IN “THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION”  
MOVIE SUBTITLING**

Agus Darma Yoga Pratama  
e-mail: [agusdarmayoga85@yahoo.com](mailto:agusdarmayoga85@yahoo.com)  
Warmadewa University

Ketut Artawa  
e-mail: [artawa56@yahoo.com](mailto:artawa56@yahoo.com)  
Study Program of Linguistics, School of Postgraduate Studies,  
Udayana University

Ida Bagus Putra Yadnya  
e-mail: [putrayadnya@yahoo.com](mailto:putrayadnya@yahoo.com)  
Study Program of Linguistics, School of Postgraduate Studies,  
Udayana University

Made Sri Satyawati  
e-mail: [srisatyawati@hotmail.com](mailto:srisatyawati@hotmail.com)  
Study Program of Linguistics, School of Postgraduate Studies,  
Udayana University

**ABSTRACT**

The rapid advancement of technology and the presence of Internet have a tremendous impact on translation industry. There are various types of translation domains, one among which is subtitling. This study deals with: 1) strategies applied in the English into Indonesian translation of prison slang words in “The Shawshank Redemption” movie subtitling using the theory on translation strategies proposed by Gottlieb (1992); and 2) the most frequent strategy and type of translation (literal to idiomatic translation) of the prison slang words using the theory on translation typologies proposed by Larson (1984).

There are 12 prison slang words found in the movie and used as data in this study. Some of the prison slang words appear more than one time, but there are only 24 sentences and phrases containing prison slang words used as data in this study. Among the data, the most frequent translation strategies used are the ‘transfer’ strategy, followed by three occurrences of ‘condensation’ strategy and two deletions. Most of the translations are



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idiomatic translations. Some are literal translations yet they do not really distort the meaning intended in the prison slang words concerned. In conclusion, translating prison slang words is not an easy job. The subtitler must do adequate research to understand which meaning is intended by the author with the help of visual images, gestures and tones used by the actors in the movie.

*Keywords: Subtitling, Translation Strategies, Prison Slang, Transfer, Condensation, Deletion, Idiomatic, Literal*

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization provides abundant opportunities for translation jobs which include subtitling. Subtitles enable more audience to understand the language used by the actors in a movie especially if the language is not the audience's mother tongue. Subtitling means providing the written translation of the movie dialogs on screen.

Subtitling is not an easy job as there are some constraints that can be encountered by subtitlers, one of which is the restriction in the number of visual verbal signs on the screen due to the space and time available. De Linde and Kay (1999) argue that the subtitling process is influenced by the material structure of a program and the semiotic relations operating between text and image which must be processed by viewers. Thus, subtitling is a complex process which the subtitlers must undergo.

One of the interesting things in this respect is to observe the translation of slang words or expressions in movies. Slang is very informal, sometimes offensive, language that is used especially by people who belong to a particular group, such as young people or criminals, etc, (Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English, 2016). Slang is different from jargon in that jargon means words used by people who do a particular job or are interested in a particular subject that ordinary people cannot easily understand.

Slang words or expressions are commonly found in movie conversations especially in informal settings. Since slang is vocabulary, idiom, etc, that is not appropriate to the standard language or to formal context and normally contains metaphorical meaning,



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translators may find it challenging to translate slang words. The meaning of slang words may depend on the context of situation. Thus, in analyzing the meaning of slang, the pragmatic aspect also needs to be taken into account. Translators need to do adequate research when they come across slang in their work. When translating slang, translators may choose a certain translation strategy which fits in the condition. Thus, it is very interesting to know what strategies are used by the subtitler in translating slang.

The data source of this study is a 1994 American movie written and directed by Frank Darabont, titled 'The Shawshank Redemption'. Adapted from the Stephen King novella titled 'Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption', the movie tells the story of Andy Dufresne, a brilliant banker who is sentenced to life in Shawshank State Penitentiary for murdering his wife and her lover in spite of his claim of innocence. At the prison, he befriends a fellow inmate, Ellis Redding (known as Red). The film received many award nominations including seven Oscar nominations and outstanding reviews from critics for its acting, story and realism. Though it has been more than two decades since its release, this movie remains one of the favorites among many people. It is listed as number one on the list of 250 best movies of all times in IMDB. This must-see movie contains strong moral values that inspire people to stay hopeful even in very difficult situations. It tells us that hope is very important in our lives. This is the reason why this movie was chosen as the data source.

As most of the scenes in the movie are set in the prison, it is interesting to identify the prison slang words used in this movie, and to analyze the translation strategies used by the subtitler in translating the prison slang words using the theory of translation strategies proposed by Gottlieb (1992). The English and Indonesian subtitles were copied and pasted into an MS-Word document, and presented in a table making them easy to compare (the English subtitle on the left and the Indonesian subtitle on the right). The prison slang words found in this movie were collected, selected and used as the data analyzed in this study. This study concerns the following two formulated problems:



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1. What are the strategies used in the translation of prison slang words in the 'The Shawshank Redemption' movie subtitling from English into Indonesian?
2. What is the most frequent strategy and type of translation (very literal to idiomatic types of translation) used in translating the prison slang words?

## **THEORITICAL BACKGROUND**

Slang means very informal words and expressions that are common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people, for example children, criminals, soldiers, etc (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2016). Meanwhile, prison slang words are slang words commonly used in prison contexts among prisoners.

Gottlieb (2004) in Sharif and Sohrabi (2015) defines subtitling as the rendering of the verbal message in filmic media in a different language, in the shape of one or more lines of written text, presented on the screen in synch with the original verbal message.

Gottlieb (1992) explains that there are two types of technical constraint in subtitling. They are formal (quantitative) and textual (qualitative) constraints. The formal constraints refer to the limitation that only a maximum of two lines of subtitles are allowed on screen, which contain about 30 characters per line. Another formal constraint is the time factor, which is the time that the viewer has to read the current subtitles before they are replaced by the following subtitles. Gottlieb suggests that in general, five to six seconds are considered sufficient for the viewers to read the subtitles.

Meanwhile, textual constraints refer to any constraints imposed by the visual context on screen which essentially means that the subtitles must render synchronously the exact context that is conveyed on screen. With a limit to the number of characters that can be used in subtitles, the subtitler may not always be able to render all the words used in the ST dialogue. This means that the subtitler must find alternate ways to render the ST meaning in the TT without losing the effect of the ST in TT.



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When faced by this challenge, the subtitler needs to use their cultural and linguistic knowledge to find a way to work on the technical limitations. In certain situation when an actor in a movie speaks a lot in a relatively short time and followed by another actor with the same manner, such condition may force the subtitler to present the translation in a concise manner.

Another important consideration is that subtitles must be in-sync with the onscreen context because the viewer might be confused if the subtitles suddenly disrupt the context, and/ or in the event that the TT audience has a solid knowledge of the source language and is able to see that the subtitles do not correspond to that which is being said on-screen. This is one of the technical factors to be considered in subtitling.

Gottlieb (1992) proposed ten strategies of translation, as follows:

1. Expansion is used when the original requires an explanation because of some cultural nuance not retrievable in the target language.
2. Paraphrase is resorted to in cases where the phraseology of the original cannot be reconstructed in the same syntactic way in the target language.
3. Transfer refers to the strategy of translating the source text completely and correctly.
4. Imitation maintains the same forms, typically with names of people and places.
5. Transcription is used in those cases where a term is unusual even in the source text, for example, the use of a third language or nonsense language.
6. Dislocation is adopted when the original employs some sort of special effect, for example, a silly song in a cartoon film, where the translation of the effect is more important than the content.
7. Condensation is the shortening of the text in the least obtrusive way possible.
8. Decimation is an extreme form of condensation where, perhaps, for reasons of discourse speed, even potentially important elements are omitted.
9. Deletion is the total elimination of parts of a text.



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10. Resignation is adopted when no translation solution can be found and meaning is inevitably lost.

Larson (1984: 15) proposes two types of translation: a form-based translation that is usually referred to as a literal translation, in which translators try to follow the form of the source language, and the other one is meaning-based translation known as the idiomatic translation where the meaning of the source text is expressed in the natural form of the target language.

Larson also mentions that translations fall on a continuum from very literal to literal, to modified literal, to near idiomatic, to idiomatic, and may even move on to unduly free.

Apart from analyzing the strategies used in translating prison slang words, this study also tries to find the most frequent type of translation used that is whether the translation is literal or idiomatic.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is a qualitative descriptive research. The data in the forms of sentences and phrases containing prison slang words were collected using the documentation method from the movie titled 'The Shawshank Redemption'. This movie is chosen as the data source because this is one of the most favorite movies of all times. It is even listed as the number one on the list of 250 best movies of all times in IMDB. This inspiring movie also received seven Oscar nominations, which proves that it is worth watching. The acting is incredible and many parts of the dialogue contain inspirational messages for the viewers.

The English and Indonesian subtitles of the movie 'The Shawshank Redemption' were collected then presented in a pictures. English subtitle pictures are on the left and Indonesian subtitle pictures are on the right. After a thorough reading to identify prison slang words used in the movie, some selected sentences and phrases containing prison slang words. The data were analyzed using the theory proposed by Gottlieb (1992) and the theory



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on the typology of translation by Larson (1984). The analysis is presented in the form of descriptive sentences.

## RESULTS

There are 12 prison slang words found in the movie and used in this study. They are 'fish', 'con', 'cage', 'joint', 'hole', 'stretch', 'in stir', 'crook', 'screw', 'punk', 'deck' and 'reefer'. Some prison slang words appear more than one time.

Overall, the most frequent strategy applied in the translation of prison slang words found in the movie 'The Shawshank Redemption' subtitling is 'transfer' strategy. Some of the prison slang words are transferred literally such as 'hole' that refers to 'solitary confinement' into '*lubang*' which literally means 'hole' (this can actually be translated idiomatically into '*sel pengasingan*'), and 'cage' which actually refers to 'a prison cell' or 'prison' into '*sangkar*' and '*kandang*' which literally mean 'cage'. However, most of the prison slang words are translated idiomatically using 'transfer' strategy. In addition to those findings, there are two deletions and three 'condensation strategy' found among the 24 data on translation of prison slang words in the movie from English into Indonesian.



Picture 1. 'Hole'



Picture 2. 'Lubang'



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English Subtitle



Picture 3. 'Cage'

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 4. 'Sangkar'

English Subtitle



Picture 5. 'Cage'

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 6. 'Kandang'

'Fish' in prison contexts is a slang meaning 'a new inmate at prison' which can be idiomatically translated into "*tahanan baru*". There are some occurrences of this prison slang word but only four were selected to represent the variations in translation strategies used. When the prison slang word 'fish' in the sentence "Hey, fish!" is translated into '*Hei, anak baru*' which means 'a new kid', the subtitler used 'transfer strategy' which refers to the strategy of translating the source text completely and correctly. The informal register of the





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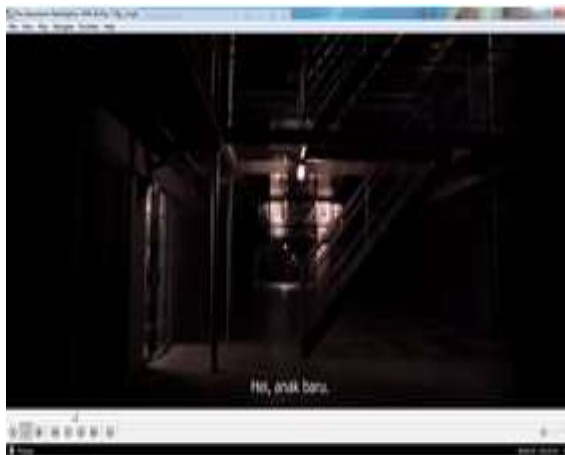
SL is retained in the TL text. In another occurrence, ‘new fish’ is translated into ‘*penghuni baru*’ which literally means ‘new resident’. Here, the translator uses an equivalent which sounds more formal. The sentence which contains this prison slang expression (“Most new fish come close to madness the first night.”) is a type of descriptive sentence. Red (Ellis Redding played by Morgan Freeman) narrated the sentence to the audience. Although, there is a difference in meaning between ‘*anak baru*’ (a new kid) and ‘*penghuni baru*’ (a new resident), the pragmatic context helps the audience understand that they refer to the same idea (new inmates in the prison).

English Subtitle



Picture 7. ‘Fish’

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 8. ‘Anak baru’

English Subtitle



Picture 9. ‘Fish’

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 10. ‘Penghuni baru’



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There is one interesting translation of this prison slang, where the translator chose to translate ‘fresh fish’ in the sentence “Fresh fish today! We’re reeling them in!” into ‘ikan segar’ which literally means ‘fresh fish’. This prison slang phrase was uttered by some prisoners when they saw two new inmates brought to Shawshank. One person among the crowd of prisoners demonstrated a gesture of reeling the fish. In this sense, such gesture helps the audience grab the sense that the new inmates are considered as fresh fish to reel. Many old prisoners tend to bully the new inmates and put a bet on them. Thus, what is meant by ‘to reel a new fish’ is actually to bully a new inmate at prison.

English Subtitle



Picture 11. ‘Fish’

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 12. ‘Penghuni baru’

English Subtitle



Picture 13. ‘Reeling’

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 14. ‘Memancing’



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Some occurrences of condensation strategy (the shortening of the text in the least obtrusive way possible) are found when the subtitler translates the prison slang word ‘joint’ which means ‘a prison cell’ in the sentence ‘Folks around this joint love surprise inspections’ into ‘*di sini*’ meaning ‘here’; and when the subtitler translates ‘stretch’ meaning ‘a sentence period or a period of time spent in prison’ into ‘*hukuman*’ which literally means ‘sentence’. Although the meaning is condensed, the overall idea is not much affected.

English Subtitle



Picture 15. ‘Joint’

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 16. ‘Di sini’

English Subtitle



Picture 17. ‘The longest damn stretch’

Indonesian Subtitle



Picture 18. ‘Itu hukuman yang paling lama’



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## CONCLUSION

Translating prison slang words is not an easy job. Background knowledge is very important in understanding the meaning of the prison slang words in order to create idiomatic translation. Adequate research is necessary to ensure accuracy in translation. Metaphorical meaning contained in the prison slang words may serve as one of the factors which cause difficulties in translation of prison slang words. In addition to that, one slang word may have several different meanings. In that case, the pragmatic context plays an important role to help the subtitler decide which strategy to apply and whether their translation is literal or idiomatic.

The study reveals that the prison slang words in the movie 'The Shawshank Redemption' were either translated idiomatically, literally, condensed and left untranslated when the context is obvious, and the deletions made did not result in a significant loss of information. The most frequent strategy used is 'transfer strategy' and the most frequent type of translation used is idiomatic translations. These condensation and deletions may be caused by the limitation on the number of words that are allowed to be presented on screen. It may look strange if the translator uses a long explanation to translate a word or put an explanation in brackets. The time available does not support such strategy. In certain contexts, translation should be concise, and this is a real challenge for subtitlers.

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