

Translation Issues and Strategies Applied in the Comic *Adulthood is a Myth*

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Abstract

*This research aims to find out the translation issues in the comic book *Adulthood is a Myth*. The study focuses on the analysis of translation issues that might affect the translation process. In addition, it also aims to find out the strategies applied to translate the verbal message in the comic book. This study is conducted with a descriptive qualitative approach. The translation issues in the comic book were classified based on the theory proposed by Nurlaila et al. (2018). The translation strategies were analyzed by using the theory proposed by Celotti (2014). The result shows that there are eight translation issues found in this study. They are onomatopoeia, interjection, measurement unit terms, swearing expressions, speaking fluency disorder, slang words, abbreviation, and dialect. The translation strategies applied were cultural adaptation, deletion, and leaving the source language untranslated. Overall, the translator did an excellent job by choosing the proper translation strategies and using a suitable language style for the target readers. This research may serve as a reference for future studies in comic translation. Furthermore, it could also help translators in overcoming challenges in translating comic books.*

Keywords: comic translation, translation issues, translation strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation as an academic field has produced a large body of research. Various translation products, practices, and processes have been discussed and analyzed. However, despite the large volume of comic books being translated in many countries, research on comics translation is still underexplored (Borodo, 2018). This is not because the discussion of comics is absent from the public sphere. Rather, there is a perception that comic book is

not a serious genre of literature. As a result, it does not attract much attention from academics (Delespaul, 2015).

The assumed status of comic books as a lowbrow product is an overgeneralization. Throughout the years, comics have developed various genres in different parts of the world. They are mainly read for entertainment or educational purposes. The form and the content of comic books may vary according to the age groups and readerships. In fact, some comic books have the same level of complexity as highbrow literary works (Zanettin, 2014). Many issues can be explored in comics translation. It is a translation field worth to be investigated.

Comics translation is a type of translation in which the visual dimension is crucial. The relation between the visual and the textual element is an essential feature that should be considered in the process of translation (Kaindl, 2004). The interplay between the text and the picture in comic books affects the translation process in many ways. It is impossible to translate one element without taking into account the relationship between the two. Therefore, comics translation presents more challenges than the translation of solely text-based material.

One important aspect which should be considered by the comic translator is the visual dimension. The visual element of a comic book is a work of art. It is created by the comic artist and cannot be modified easily by the translator or the publisher. There are exceptions to the rule, but there should be no significant modification in the visual element that may interfere with the readers' interpretation. Another important aspect of comics translation is the format. Constraints in comics translation may be caused by the size of the speech balloons, the font type, and the font size. In such cases, the translator has to find a creative solution (Zolczer, 2019).

Several researchers have conducted an analysis on comics translation. Santika (2020) investigated the types of slang expressions and the slang translation strategies in *The Punisher* comic book. The theories applied in the study are types of slang proposed by Mattiello (2007) and slang translation strategies proposed by Butkuvienė and Petrušionė (2010). The results show that there are four types of slang expressions found in the data. They are categorized based on their functions: group identification and creativity, privacy and secrecy, informality and intimacy, vulgarity and offensiveness. These slang expressions were translated by using translation strategies, namely literal softening, literal translation, and stylistic compensation.

Haninisa et al. (2020) also conducted research related to comics translation. The study focuses on the analysis of types of onomatopoeia, translation techniques, and translation acceptability in the comic book *The Adventure of Tintin*. The research applied the theory of onomatopoeia by Thomas and Clara (2004), the theory of translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002), and translation quality assessment by Nababan (2012). The findings show that there are four types of onomatopoeia in the data. They are sounds made by humans, calls of animals, the sound of nature, and miscellaneous sounds. The translation techniques applied are adaptation, borrowing, discursive creation, established equivalent, and reduction. The researcher concluded that the translations of onomatopoeia in the comic are mainly acceptable.

Research on the translation of onomatopoeias in the comic book *Finance Smurfs* was

conducted by Santoso & Setyaningsih (2020). The researchers analyzed whether the translation of onomatopoeic words maintains the iconicity. The findings show that most of the onomatopoeias in the comic book are iconic. However, not all onomatopoeic words in the Indonesian version maintain the iconicity of the source language. Even though there are differences in the form, their meanings and effects are conveyed well into the target language.

Tacazely et al. (2019) conducted a study on cultural filters in the translation of the children's comic *The Wizards of Mickey: The Dark Ages*. It also analyzes the functional equivalence in the comic translation. The researchers concluded that cultural filters could help translators solve the translation problems related to cultural differences. In addition, it could also help the translation to achieve functional equivalence.

Another research concerned with the translation of comics was conducted by Barezzi et al. (2018). The study aimed at investigating the translation techniques and the translation quality in *Civil War: Whose Side Are You On?* comic. The researchers applied the theory of translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002) and translation quality assessment by Nababan (2012). The research found that there were twelve types of translation techniques applied. The application of those techniques impacted the translation quality. The scores given by the raters indicated that the translation quality was good in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

There are three main differences between the current study and the previous studies described above. First, this study focuses on translation issues and translation strategies for translating comic books. This study covers a broader scope of translation issues than previous studies that focus on more specific areas, such as onomatopoeias, slang expressions, and cultural differences. Therefore, this study could serve as a more detailed reference regarding translation issues in comic books. The second difference is in the theories applied. The current research applied the theory of translation issues by Nurlaila et al. (2018) and the theory of translation strategies by Celotti (2014). Finally, the previous researches analyzed comic books which fall under the genre of fantasy or adventure. Meanwhile, the current study analyzes a comic book entitled *Adulthood is a Myth* which is categorized as humor related to daily life.

The comic book *Adulthood is a Myth* was created by Sarah Andersen, an American cartoonist and illustrator. This collection of comic strips has been translated into several languages, including Indonesian. The comic depicts the life of a young female in her 20s. The creator of this comic book has successfully presented the experience of becoming an adult in a humorous way. Many millennials experience the problems illustrated in the comic. The comic gained popularity due to this reason. It has won Goodreads Choice Award in the category of "Graphic Novel & Comics" from 2016 to 2018.

Based on the background above, this research aims at investigating the translation issues in the comic book *Adulthood is a Myth* and the translation strategies applied. The study focuses on the analysis of translation issues that might affect the translation process. In addition, it also aims to find out the strategies used to translate the linguistic element in the comic book. This research is expected to contribute a new perspective to the field of comics translation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Translation Issues

This research analyzes the translation issues in a comic book by applying the theory proposed by Nurlaila et al. (2018). Translation issues refer to words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that may become obstacles in the translation process. The challenges in translating comic books may arise from linguistic or technical issues. The linguistic element may create problems for the translators if the source text is unknown in the target language or the equivalence cannot be found (Larson, 1998). Technical matters such as the size of the speech balloons may become barriers as the translation in the target language may require more space (Zolczer, 2019).

The verbal message and the visual dimension are essential in the analysis of comics translation. However, the theory of translation issues proposed by Nurlaila et al. (2018) focuses on the verbal aspect only. There are nineteen translation issues, including (1) pronouns, (2) proper names, (3) cultural terms, (4) onomatopoeia, (5) interjection, (6) dialect, (7) informal expressions, (8) idiomatic expressions, (9) ellipsis, (10) measurement unit terms, (11) swearing expressions, (12) non-standard grammatical structure, (13) kinship terms, (14) speaking fluency disorder, (15) sarcastic expressions, (16) slang words, (17) wordplay, (18) humor, and (19) abbreviation.

2.2 Translation Strategies for the Linguistic Paratext

Celotti (2014) states that linguistic paratext in comics refers to the verbal signs inside the drawing. Dialogues, onomatopoeia, inscriptions, and other elements may be included. The paratext can have both verbal and visual roles, and the translator has to decide which one should be prioritized. Paratexts can inform us about the social, cultural, or geographic setting. It may also contain jokes or puns. In these circumstances, the translator should choose from a range of translation strategies. The linguistic element can be: (1) translated, (2) translated with a footnote in the gutter, (3) culturally adapted, (4) left untranslated, (5) deleted, (6) a mix of strategies. The translation strategies proposed by Celotti (2014) are further explained below.

1. The first strategy is often applied when the linguistic element plays an important role in the narrative. In this case, the verbal message has to be translated.
2. When the linguistic element is deeply embedded in the drawing, a footnote may be used by the translator. This strategy may be chosen to avoid interfering with the visual aspect.
3. The strategy of cultural adaptation is commonly found when the translator applies an overall domestication strategy.
4. Messages in the paratexts are sometimes left untranslated. Some of them have visual roles, such as advertisements or graffiti. This strategy can be adopted when their non-translation does not create a linguistic gap.
5. Deleting the linguistic paratext can be used as a translation strategy when the translator decided that it would not have the same connotation for the target readers.
6. Finally, mixed strategies can also be applied in the translation. This approach includes partially translating or adapting the linguistic paratext and partially maintaining the source text or deleting it.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This is descriptive qualitative research applying a case study method. According to Creswell (2014: 4), “qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the significance of a social or human issue.” The research process involves collecting data, analyzing the data, and making interpretations of the data. This study aims to find out the issues and strategies applied in comic book translation.



The data source is the comic book *Adulthood is a Myth* and its Indonesian translation *Jadi Dewasa Itu Cuma Mitos*. The English version was created by Sarah Andersen and published in 2016 by Andrews McMeel Publishing. The Indonesian version was translated by Katrine Gabby Kusuma and published by the POP publisher in 2017. The data were collected by reading the comic books in English and Indonesian version. After that, the data were classified based on the translation issues using the theory proposed by Nurlaila et al. (2018). Finally, the translation strategies were analyzed by using the framework proposed by Celotti (2014).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that there are eight translation issues found in the translation of the comic book *Adulthood is a Myth*. The translation issues consist of (1) onomatopoeia, (2) interjection, (3) measurement unit terms, (4) swearing expressions, (5) speaking fluency disorder, (6) slang words, (7) abbreviation, and (8) dialect. Onomatopoeia is the most common issue found in this research. The translator applied different translation strategies, namely cultural adaptation, deletion, and maintaining the source language by not translating it. Cultural adaptation strategy is dominantly applied in the translation.



4.1 Onomatopoeia

According to Guynes (2014: 59), “Onomatopoeia is the representation or imitation of sounds from the natural world.” Comic creators and readers typically use the term sound effects to refer to onomatopoeia. Translating onomatopoeia is challenging due to cultural differences. One sound is usually lexicalized differently in other languages (Nurlaila et al., 2018). The translations of onomatopoeia are shown in the data below.



Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
1	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 28)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 28)</p>

Datum 1 shows the translation of onomatopoeia in the form of an animal sound. The translator applied the strategy of cultural adaptation since the sound of the cat *mrow* is

translated into *meong*, which is how Indonesians lexicalized the sound of a cat. The translation of the onomatopoeia in datum 1 does not pose a significant issue since there is an equivalent in the target language.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
2	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 73)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 73)</p>

Another example of onomatopoeia translation is illustrated in datum 2. However, the translator applied a different strategy in this case. The sound of the desk clock *beep beep beep* is left untranslated. The translator maintained the sound effect in the same form in the target language. The sound effect can be translated into *bip bip bip* which is more suitable with the Indonesian spelling and pronunciation.



Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
3	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 78)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 78)</p>

Datum 3 shows another example of onomatopoeia to represent a body movement. The translator deleted the sound effect *shrug* in the target text. This strategy may be chosen since the word *shrug* translates into the Indonesian language *mengangkat bahu*, which consists of more characters. Considering the limited space available, the decision to delete the onomatopoeia is appropriate in this context. Furthermore, the deletion of the sound effect does not affect the overall meaning of the comic strip.

4.2. Interjection

Interjections are natural exclamations to release the tension or express the feeling of the speaker (Feist, 2013). They may pose a real challenge for translators since their equivalent cannot be found easily. According to Nurlaila et al. (2018), the difficulty in



translating interjections may also result from a lack of linguistic competencies to differentiate the form.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
4	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 22)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 22)</p>

The interjection *pheW* as shown in datum 4 is an expression of relief. It is used to show the feeling of the character in the comic strip after cleaning the house. The translator decided to maintain the form of the source language by not translating the interjection. The interjection can be translated into *fih* which is more suitable with the Indonesian spelling and pronunciation.

4.3. Measurement Unit Terms

Measurement unit terms can become obstacles for translators if the target culture does not use the same system. The translator may face the dilemma of using the same measurement unit or adjusting it according to the target culture (Nurlaila et al., 2018). The measurement unit terms found in this study consist of clothing size and temperature.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
5	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 12)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 12)</p>

The comic book *Adulthood is a Myth* was published in the USA, where numbers are used for clothing size. In contrast, Indonesia uses the S-M-L measurement unit for clothing. Datum 5 shows the translation of *size zero* into *ukuran XS* in Indonesian. The translator translated the clothing size into a system that is more familiar in the target culture. The meaning is well-conveyed since *size zero* and *ukuran XS* both mean “the smallest clothing size.” The strategy of cultural adaptation is applied in this case.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
6	<p>(Andersen, 2016: 86)</p>	<p>(Andersen, 2017: 86)</p>

The measurement of temperature is shown in datum 6. In the source text, the temperature is shown in Fahrenheit, a measurement system commonly used in the USA. It is different from the temperature system used in the target culture. In Indonesia, people use Celsius as the unit of measurement for temperature. The translator converted the temperature of 65° Fahrenheit into 18° Celsius to make it more familiar for the target readers. The translator’s decision to apply the cultural adaptation strategy is appropriate in this context.

4.4. Swearing Expressions

Swearing expressions may become obstacles in the translation process since the translator must be able to translate them into swearing words that convey the same meaning in the target language. They must not be translated literally since it will result in inaccurate and unnatural translations. Moreover, the translator may face difficulty translating swearing expressions that are not acceptable in the target culture. For example, using the name of God or holy people as swearing words is considered unacceptable in Indonesia (Nurlaila et al., 2018).



Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
7	<p>(Andersen, 2016: 43)</p>	<p>(Andersen, 2017: 43)</p>

Datum 7 shows the use of the swearing expression *son of a* – which is translated into *beg* – in Indonesian. Even though the swearing terms are not written in their complete forms, the readers may easily understand the swearing expression that is intended to be expressed. In translating the swearing words, the strategy of cultural adaptation is applied. The

translator did not translate the swearing expression literally. Instead, she translated it into a word that sounds a little softer without losing the intended effect in the target language.

4.5. Speaking Fluency Disorder



Another potential issue in comic book translation is speaking fluency disorder. According to Nurlaila et al. (2018), the source language forms may not always be maintained, which results in a characteristic shift in the target language. The example of speaking fluency disorder found in this study is a stammering utterance caused by nervousness.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
8	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 3)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 3)</p>

Datum 8 illustrates a case of speaking fluency disorder. The character is stammering due to nervousness caused by an obligation to speak in front of an audience. The translator did an excellent job by translating the utterance into a language style commonly used by young people in Indonesia. Since the comic book is targeted at the millennial generation, adjusting the language style according to their age is necessary. In this case, cultural adaptation is once again applied.

4.6. Slang Words

According to Nurlaila et al. (2018), slang words are typically used by certain groups of people so that people outside their circle do not understand the expressions. They are created exclusively for the people in a particular community. It can be challenging for translators to find the equivalent of slang words in the target language. The translations of slang words are discussed as follows.



Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
9	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 19)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 19)</p>

The slang word *preps* is translated into *anak gedongan* in the target text. The term *preps* refers to people who follow the trend and hang out with popular people. While *anak*

gedongan refers to the children of wealthy people who live in a nice building. Even though the translation in the target language does not have the same meaning, the term *anak gedongan* has the same connotation as *preps*. Rich kids in Indonesia usually follow the latest trend and hang out with people who belong to the same social class. The strategy of cultural adaptation is used to translate the slang word.

4.7. Abbreviation

Translating abbreviations in comic books might become a challenge for translators. Translating abbreviations into the same form is not an easy task since there might be no equivalent in the target language. It may also affect the meaning and the target readers might not understand it. However, translating abbreviations in comic books into complete forms may create problems as well since comics have limited space, and putting more characters of words might not be the best option.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
10	 <p>(Andersen, 2016: 39)</p>	 <p>(Andersen, 2017: 39)</p>

An abbreviation is found in datum 10, which illustrates a mobile phone showing a picture and a caption from Instagram. The caption *luv u bby* is translated into an abbreviation *ku syg km*. Young people typically use shortened forms of words or phrases to text their peers. Therefore, the translation can be easily understood by millennial readers. The translator applied the cultural adaptation strategy by using the language style familiar to the target readers.

4.8. Dialect

A dialect might become an issue in comic translation since the target language might not have the dialect which conveys the same meaning or connotation. The example is shown in the datum below.

Datum No.	Source Language	Target Language
11	<p>(Andersen, 2016: 41)</p>	<p>(Andersen, 2017: 41)</p>

In datum 11, we can see the female character realizes how to pronounce the word *colonel*. Since the comic book was produced in the USA, it shows the American English pronunciation of the word *colonel*, which is /'kɜrnəl/. However, the British English pronunciation of the word is slightly different. In British English, the word *colonel* is pronounced as /'kɜ:nəl/. It can be difficult for the translator to find the equivalent which conveys the same meaning or effect in the target language. However, the translator found a creative solution by translating it into *Hanacaraka*, which is pronounced as *Honocoroko* by the Javanese people in Indonesia. Even though there is an alteration in the meaning, the strategy to translate the word and the pronunciation by using the cultural adaptation strategy is a good decision since the translation in the target text has a similar effect as intended by the source text.

5. CONCLUSION

Translating comic books can be challenging due to verbal or visual elements. There were eight translation issues found in this study, namely onomatopoeia, interjection, measurement unit terms, swearing expressions, speaking fluency disorder, slang words, abbreviation, and dialect. To produce a good translation, the translator needs to adopt the right strategy. In the translation, the verbal message was culturally adapted, left untranslated, or deleted. Overall, the translator did excellent work by choosing the appropriate translation strategies. In addition, the translation is using a language style that is suitable for millennial readers, the target market of the comic book. For further research, an analysis of specific translation issues in comic books can be conducted. Since this translation focuses on the translation of the linguistic element, research on the visual dimension of comics can also be conducted.

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