

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

The diverse range of films with various styles of humour indicates a long-standing tradition of comedic content in North American and British cinema. Moreover, the growing prominence of humour in contemporary films and television series, particularly in the United States, is something observant viewers are likely to have noticed (Alnusairat & Jaganathan, 2022). Comedy is commonly used to describe any form of entertainment that is cheerful and amusing, usually ending on a positive note. That's why humorous TV programs are often called situational comedies or sitcoms (Triezenberg, 2008). In today's television and film, humour functions as a powerful link between audiences and the narratives, characters, and scenarios depicted. However, humour is frequently tied to the language, culture, and context of its origin, making it challenging to fully appreciate across different linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Humour, translation, and audiovisual translation (AVT) represent three distinct fields that have each experienced varying degrees of academic focus and epistemological evolution over time. Within the broader framework of translation studies, both Humour Studies and AVT Studies are thriving, presenting complex and dynamic research challenges. Handling humour in audiovisual translation (AVT) can be complicated by a range of technical, linguistic, and cultural constraints. This complexity demands an interdisciplinary approach to translating humour effectively, as humorous elements and their intended effects in the

source language (SL) and culture may not produce the same response in the target audience. In this context, viewers of a subtitled humorous film should engage with both the original dialogue and the accompanying visual cues to facilitate effective communication between the source and target versions (Díaz Cintas, 2009). Thus, Mansour & Kharraki, (2024) claimed the translator has a role to bridge the enduring cultural and linguistic gaps between the source and target texts.

As humour represents one of the most challenging tests of a translator's skill, demanding inventive solutions to achieve equivalence between the source language's humorous intent and its effect in the target language. A deep comprehension of humour necessitates a nuanced awareness, enabling the translator to readily identify situational and verbal humour elements, such as irony, allusion, ambiguity, and incongruity, among other factors (Díaz Cintas 2009).

For translators, the initial challenge lies in selecting the elements that makes the source text humorous, which involves identifying cues, incongruities, and comedic styles tied to specific genres of humour, as well as common techniques like exaggeration or understatement. Following this, they must determine how to effectively convey the identified humour in the target text, rearrange it into a form that ideally provokes a comparable reaction whether laughter, a smile, or a subtle smirk. Recognizing the humour in the source text is the first step, evaluating how the target audience will perceive and interpret each instance is the second and reformulating the humour is the final task (Díaz Cintas, 2007).

Raphaelson-West (1989) divided humour into three types: universal humour, culture humour, and linguistic humour. Universal humour is easily understood across different cultures and languages, which generally allows for straightforward translation using direct transfer as the primary approach. Culture humour, however, presents difficulties as it incorporates both cultural concepts and specific linguistic features. When these cultural elements are neutralized or generalized, the humour loses its original cultural depth, diminishing its comedic effect in translation. Meanwhile, linguistic humour, such as puns, creates a unique challenge due to the lack of exact equivalents in the target language. This often leads to a loss of humour, making the translated text feel neutral and less amusing.

Creating subtitles that effectively convey humour requires both sensitivity and creativity, along with the need to establish priorities. Humour may arise from various sources, it could be linked to interactions between visual elements and dialogue, involve wordplay, or be an integral aspect of the narrative, such as through genre experimentation and intertextual references. Thus, some instances may be easier to translate than others, and their relevance to the overall program may also vary (Diaz-Cintas, 2007). Translators may apply different strategies to deal with difficult parts of a text, especially when translating humour. In some cases, they may need to stop trying to translate the joke directly and instead use alternative methods such as replacing the joke with a different one, removing it and adding something else, or simply leaving it out without replacement. Audiovisual translation presents its own unique challenges due to the combination of visual, audio, and written elements in the content (Chiaro, 2010).

Many studies have discussed all three categories of humour. A study conducted by Al-Ezzi & Al-Qudah (2024) explores the challenges of translating verbal humour from Egyptian Arabic into English, focusing on three comedy films Karkar, Katkut, and Boooha featuring Mohammad Saad. It highlights the difficulty of preserving the comedic effect due to cultural and linguistic differences. Interlingual translation often involves a loss of meaning, especially with culture-bound terms. The article underscores the need for translators to have a deep understanding of both source and target cultures to effectively translate humour. It also highlights the importance of creative strategies to preserve the humour in translated texts.

Another study, in which they analysed the humour translation was conducted by Elbakri (2021) explores the complexities and challenges of translating humour from American TV series “Friends” and the movie “Mother’s Day” into Arabic subtitles. While Al-Ezzi & Al-Qudah highlight the importance of creative strategies, Elbakri (2021) highlights the technical, linguistic, textual, and cultural factors that make this task particularly difficult focusing on some key points, including cultural differences. It emphasizes the significant cultural differences between American and Middle Eastern audiences, particularly in terms of moral values and social norms. American humour often includes elements that are considered taboo or inappropriate in Middle Eastern cultures, such as vulgarity, immorality, and taboo language. The study also provides detailed analyses of specific scenes to illustrate how subtitlers manipulate the text to make it acceptable for Middle Eastern viewers. For example, terms like “lesbian” are translated to “psychiatric patient” to avoid cultural offense.

Compared to two previous studies, this study will expose the translation humour in the *Modern Family* series. The series that won the Emmy Awards for outstanding comedy series in each of its first five season incorporates various forms of humour, including verbal wit, irony, cultural references, and situational comedy. The series offers a substantial basis for analyzing how various types of humour are translated and identifying the most effective techniques for preserving comedic impact.

Modern Family is a comedy television series from the United States filmed in a mockumentary style, the fictional characters frequently address the audience directly. The show centers around Jay Pritchett, his second wife, her son, their infant, and his two adult children with their respective families (Humaerah, 2014). Created by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan, *Modern Family* premiered on ABC on September 23, 2009, and has received numerous prestigious awards, including 21 Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe, and five Screen Actors Guild Awards (Perucha, 2015).

The series centers on three distinct family types: nuclear, step-, and same-sex families. Jay Pritchett with his second young wife, Gloria, a Colombian immigrant with his son, Manny from her previous marriage, their first born Joe and Jay's children from his first marriage, Claire and Mitchell. Claire and her husband Phil Dunphy with their three children: Haley, the pretty and street-smart daughter; Alex, academically smart middle daughter; and Luke, their youngest son and Mitchell who is married to his same-sex partner Cameron and their adopted child, Lily.

The varied characters, each with distinct backgrounds and characteristics, contribute to the series' rich comedic nuances, solidifying its status as a hallmark in the sitcom genre (Cobeta et al., 2021). The characters' individual personalities and interactions bring a unique blend of humour and warmth, appealing to audiences across various age groups and backgrounds. This fresh portrayal of modern day family life, paired with a relatable and candid narrative style making the series as a defining example of American sitcoms in the 21st century.

Researching humour translation in *Modern Family* will reveal how different cultures perceive and react to humour, providing a unique perspective on intercultural communication. This study explores how American culture and humour are adapted for an Indonesian audience. The complexity and creativity required in this process have made humour translation an appealing field for many researchers. These need appropriate strategies to make the translation acceptable.

Concerning with subtitling strategies, Ayu et al. (2019) examines the subtitles of the American comedy TV series '9JKL' from English to Indonesian, focusing on the types of humour and translation strategies used. The study used method and technique of data analysis delivered by Raphael-West (1989) and the theory of subtitles translation techniques presented by Gottlieb (1992). This study highlights the complexities and strategies involved in translating humour in film subtitles, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding and appropriate translation techniques.

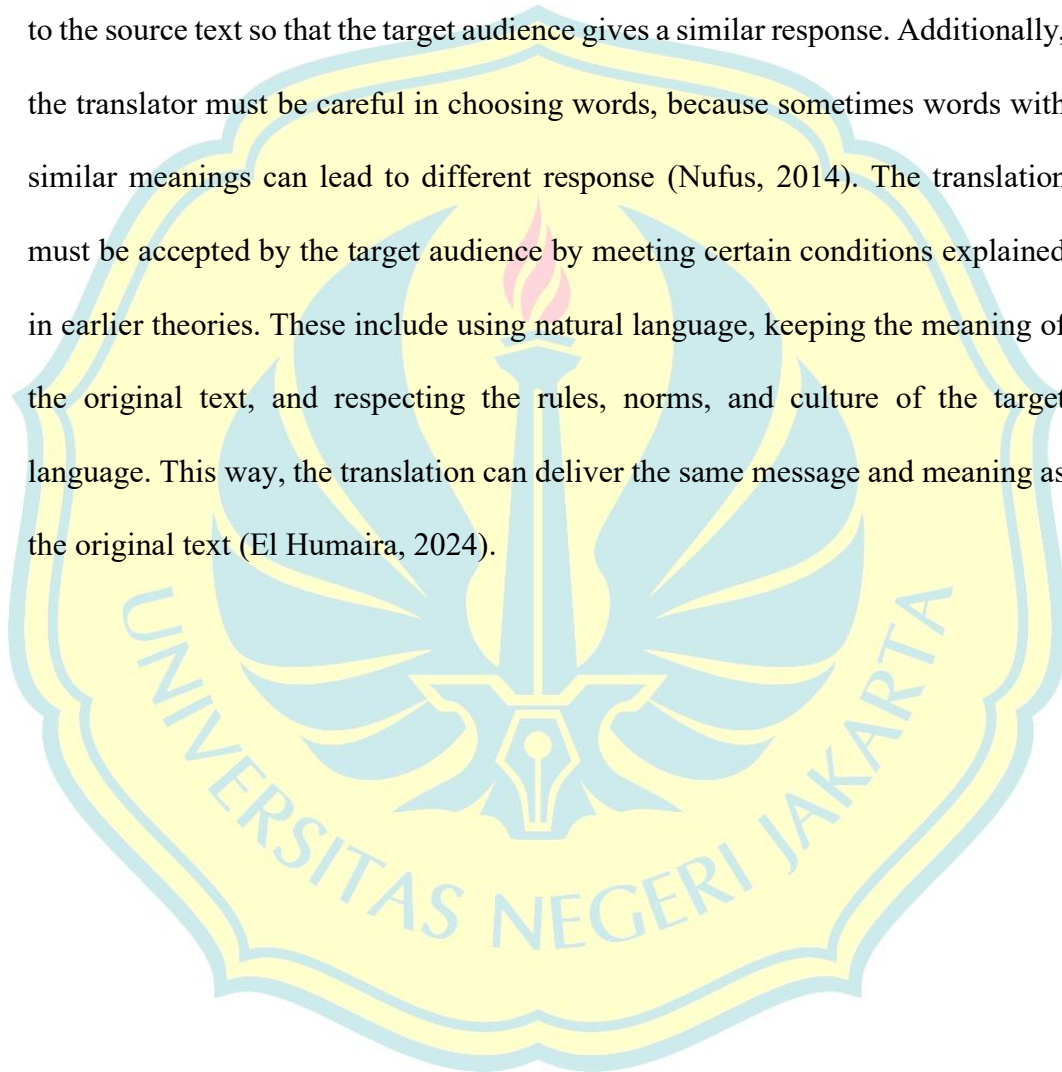
Meanwhile, in their study Alnusairat & Jaganathan (2022) used eight strategies for translating cultural jokes outlined by Tomaszekiewicz (1993) and cited in Díaz-Cintas (2009) to analyse the strategies applied in rendering humorous expressions in the Arabic subtitling of English sitcoms Friends. The study also used Debra and Raphaelson-West's (1989) humour taxonomy to categorize jokes into linguistic, cultural, and universal. Based on this study's findings, formal translation was found to be the most utilized strategy in subtitling from English into Arabic. This study also implies that to successfully translate cultural jokes, it is preferable to develop humour in accordance with the visual setting of the film and then domesticate the translation.

All of these elements assist the translator in identifying instances of humour within the target text, thereby contributing to a translation that is both accurate and acceptable. Acceptability is one of translation quality assessment. By looking at how acceptable the translation is, we can tell how well the translator has managed to make the text feel as natural and clear as the original. Many studies have discussed translation quality assessment, including "*Humour Translation Accuracy in Indonesian Subtitle of Kung-Fu School Movie*" by Joice Yulinda Luke (2022), which identify the types of humour present, the strategies used for translation, and assess the accuracy of the translated content. Using Spanakaki's humour typology, Goettlieb's translation strategies, and Nababan's (2004) accuracy rubric, the study finds that verbal irony is the most common humour type (80%), with transfer as the dominant translation strategy (52%). The results reveal that 70% of the humour translations are accurate, although some errors in diction and grammar still affect overall quality.

In contrast, the study by Nurul Hanivah, et al (2024) "*Accuracy, Acceptability and Readability in the Translation of The Hounds of Baskerville Movie Subtitle*" analyzes the Indonesian subtitles of *The Hounds of Baskerville* by focusing on three broader criteria: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Employing Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment rubric and involving three professional raters, this research finds that the subtitle translations score poorly across all dimensions, with an average rating of 2.2 out of 3. The issues identified include literal translations that fail to consider context, improper handling of cultural expressions, and awkward sentence structures that negatively impact fluency and audience comprehension. While both studies emphasize the importance of linguistic and cultural sensitivity in translation, Luke's findings suggest a relatively successful subtitle translation in terms of humour, whereas Hanivah's highlight significant shortcomings in subtitle quality overall.

This study will also assess the acceptability of translations using the quality parameters of translation as defined by Nababan (2012). According to Nababan, a high-quality translation must fulfill three aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy refers to how well the translation reflects the meaning of the original text. Acceptability is about whether the translation sounds natural and follows the language rules and cultural norms of the target audience, both at the micro and macro levels. Readability relates to how easily a text can be understood by the target audience, emphasizing the importance of reading comprehension in both the source and target languages.

In this study, the author will assess the analysis of the result of the acceptability of the translations found in the series *Modern Family*. Acceptability is one of translation quality assessment. It helps the researcher understand how well the translator has made the translation sound as natural as the original text. To achieve this, the translator needs to deliver the message as closely as possible to the source text so that the target audience gives a similar response. Additionally, the translator must be careful in choosing words, because sometimes words with similar meanings can lead to different response (Nufus, 2014). The translation must be accepted by the target audience by meeting certain conditions explained in earlier theories. These include using natural language, keeping the meaning of the original text, and respecting the rules, norms, and culture of the target language. This way, the translation can deliver the same message and meaning as the original text (El Humaira, 2024).



1.2 Research Questions

1. What types of humour are found in the series *Modern Family*?
2. What subtitling strategies are used in the series *Modern Family*?
3. What are the acceptability of the translation of humour in the series *Modern Family*?

1.3 Objective/Purpose of the study

Based on the research question, this study aims to identify the types of humour found in the series *Modern Family*, the subtitling strategies used in the series *Modern Family*, and the acceptability of the translation of humour in the series *Modern Family*.

1.4 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the complex dynamics of humour translation, particularly in a culturally diverse context like *Modern Family*. By examining how humour is adapted from English to Indonesian subtitles, this research highlights the strategies required to maintain comedic impact across linguistic and cultural boundaries and their acceptability to the new audience. This study is significant for another humour translation researcher in English Literature for references purpose.