

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In the past decade, online multiplayer games have surged into a global phenomenon, rivaling and even surpassing music and film in popularity (Haydar & Widya, 2024). MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) games are played by large numbers of players worldwide, creating extensive communities that connect people across different languages. This scale is reflected in player statistics reported by the Active Player (2002) website, which indicate that Honor of Kings and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang maintain substantial audiences, including in Southeast Asia: for the period 4 August 2024 to 4 August 2025, the top regions for Honor of Kings include Myanmar, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, and Cambodia (with Indonesia ranked tenth), while Mobile Legends: Bang Bang shows Myanmar, Cambodia, Mongolia, Bhutan, and the Philippines as its leading regions (with Indonesia ranked fifteenth). When Google Play Store and App Store figures are summed, Honor of Kings records approximately 4.81–8.03 million monthly active users and 829,100–1,327,500 daily active users, whereas Mobile Legends: Bang Bang reaches approximately 60.5–101.6 million monthly active users and 11.5–18.9 million daily active users. In Indonesia, the enthusiasm for these games is particularly strong, with Mobile Legends: Bang Bang and similar games becoming household names.

The global expansion of MOBA games raises concerns regarding various aspects, especially language use. Developers increasingly recognize that video games are not evaluated by players solely on the basis of mechanics or graphics; rather, how effectively a game is localized for diverse audiences plays a crucial role in shaping player immersion, acceptance, and overall experience across different cultural contexts (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013; Jiménez-Crespo, 2024). Therefore, high-quality translations and voice-overs are crucial in fostering player immersion, comprehension, and inclusivity, making games accessible and engaging for a global player base.

Localization—the process of adapting a product, in this case a game, to a specific locale (Pym, 2004)—enables players to engage with in-game dialogues, character personalities, and humor in their own language, thereby maintaining the original game's intended experience and enjoyment. As O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) observe, game localization is a dynamic, creative process. Translators often leverage popular culture, humor, or local context to make the game dialogue relevant and interesting to the target audience. In other words, successful localization goes beyond literal translation. It strives to capture the tone, informality, and cultural nuances of the source material so that players in the target culture feel the same impact and enjoyment as players of the original version.

Achieving this level of adaptation, however, is not without challenges. Language differences can easily lead to mistranslations or awkward phrasing if not handled carefully (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013). Even minor mistakes in translation—for instance, a joke that does not land or a catchphrase translated too stiffly—can diminish the overall appeal of the product. A witty one-liner that

delights players in English might confuse or fall flat with Indonesian gamers if translated word-for-word without regard for local idiom or tone. If the translation fails to convey a hero's sarcastic remark or playful banter in a natural-sounding Indonesian expression, the character may come across as dull or oddly out-of-character (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013). These issues directly affect player experience. Therefore, the growing popularity of online multiplayer games highlights the importance of language and cultural adaptation, as preserving humor, tone, and informal style in game dialogue is essential to ensure that players in Indonesia experience the game as intended (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013).

Recent developments in Indonesian localization have also been accompanied by a growing body of Translation Studies research that examines how English game content is rendered into Indonesian and what translation techniques are used to maintain player immersion. Several studies have approached this topic by applying Molina and Albir's technique framework to English–Indonesian translations, particularly in internationally circulated titles that offer localized versions for wide audiences. Overall, this line of research has suggested that Indonesian localization rarely relies on a strictly literal approach; instead, translators tend to select techniques flexibly to balance meaning transfer, naturalness, and audience engagement in the target language.

Within the MOBA genre, Ratulangi (2018) investigated the localization of hero backstories in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and reported that translators used multiple techniques—often in combination—such as established equivalence, borrowing, modulation, amplification, transposition, and reduction. Her findings indicated that the Indonesian localization of hero lore aimed to preserve meaning

and cultural nuance while still producing a fluent and readable target text for local players. This study was particularly relevant as it demonstrated that even when the translated text is narrative and relatively long, Indonesian localization tends to involve strategic shifts to improve readability and maintain engagement, rather than prioritizing close formal correspondence to the source. In other words, the study reinforced the idea that localization may require deliberate adjustments to ensure the text feels natural and appealing to Indonesian gamers, even when the content carries lore-related details.

Other MOBA-focused research examined different in-game text types and showed that the communicative function of a line may shape technique selection. Putriaji (2023) analyzed the translation of “Quick Chat” messages in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang—short preset lines used during gameplay such as commands and social reactions—and identified recurring techniques including literal translation, transposition, amplification, modulation, and reduction. She highlighted that technique choice tended to reflect the functional demands of quick messages: direct rendering could be sufficient for simple commands, while modulation or other adjustments could be required to align with Indonesian phrasing norms, politeness tendencies, or clarity under real-time game conditions. Significantly, her discussion also suggested that technique selection sometimes altered the illocutionary force of a message, meaning that a quick chat line could become slightly more direct or more suggestive in Indonesian while remaining practical and natural for gameplay communication. Complementing this focus on functional in-game lines, Putra (2023) studied Indonesian dubbing in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang and reported that translators used various techniques to

produce natural-sounding dialogue, with established equivalence emerging as the most frequent. His study emphasized acceptability, implying that localization success is closely tied to how culturally fitting and idiomatic the translated line sounds for the target audience, and that overly literal renderings may weaken the intended effect of character dialogue and reduce player engagement. Taken together, these MOBA studies demonstrated two important points: first, that Indonesian localization typically combines multiple techniques in practice; and second, that different text types within the same game genre (extended hero lore, utilitarian quick chats, and spoken dubbed dialogue) may encourage different patterns of technique use because they serve different purposes for players.

Beyond MOBA games, Haydar and Widya (2023) examined the Indonesian localization of Genshin Impact's prologue chapter, focusing on story dialogue and the translation techniques used to convey narrative content. They reported that translators employed a wide range of techniques and that amplification was the most frequent, functioning as an explanatory strategy to make implied context and culturally specific references more accessible for Indonesian players. They also found that literal translation remained common when direct rendering still resulted in natural Indonesian, while borrowing was used for fantasy terms or names. Importantly, their results indicated very high translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability, suggesting that technique choices contributed to both clarity and the preservation of tone. Their discussion also implied that technique preferences may vary by genre and text type: a narrative-rich RPG may require more explanatory procedures—such as amplification—to support world-building and comprehension, while faster-paced games may rely

more heavily on concise and immediately actionable phrasing. This comparison is useful for the present context because it shows that technique dominance cannot be assumed to be uniform across game genres or across types of in-game text.

A synthesized reading of these prior studies points to a shared pattern, that English–Indonesian localization generally moves away from rigid literal translation, instead selecting techniques that support meaning transfer while maintaining immersion, clarity, and naturalness in the target language. Techniques such as amplification (to clarify context), modulation (to adjust phrasing), and established equivalence (to use familiar target-language expressions) appear repeatedly across different datasets, while strictly literal procedures tend to be used selectively when they still produce fluent Indonesian. At the same time, the scope of existing scholarship also reveals several limitations. Much of the available research has focused on a relatively narrow set of titles—most prominently *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Genshin Impact*—and it has tended to examine written narratives, subtitles, dubbing, or functional in-game messages rather than treating short spoken hero voice lines as a distinct localization object. These limitations matter because hero voice lines operate differently from other text types. They are brief, performative, personality-driven, and designed to deliver tone, humor, and character identity quickly during gameplay. As a result, voice lines may display different technique patterns and different localization priorities than longer narrative texts or utilitarian system messages.

This gap becomes particularly relevant as *Honor of Kings* expands globally and provides an English source version for international markets, including Indonesia. Existing research has not sufficiently addressed how English–Indonesian

localization strategies operate within this specific text type in Honor of Kings. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by focusing on localization in the English–Indonesian translation of Yao’s hero lines in Honor of Kings (Global Version).

In this context, localization is not simply a matter of direct translation: Jiménez-Crespo (2024) defines it as “the process by which interactive digital texts are processed to be used in linguistic and socio-cultural contexts different from those of production”. Thus, the study does not treat every translated voice line as a localized adaptation. A voice line is categorized as localized only when its Indonesian translation shows clear linguistic, stylistic, cultural, pragmatic, or gaming-contextual adjustments to suit Indonesian players. This distinction is important because it ensures that the analysis focuses on true instances of localization rather than on literal translations. Accordingly, the 173 voice lines are filtered based on these criteria, and only those identified as localized are analyzed further using Molina and Albir’s (2002) framework. By applying this framework to the filtered corpus of Yao’s voice lines, the study contributes a more focused account of how micro-level translation choices support (or potentially weaken) the localization of tone, humor, informality, and character identity in short spoken game dialogue. In doing so, it extends prior findings from *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Genshin Impact* into a new game title and a comparatively underexamined text type, thereby offering a novel contribution to English–Indonesian localization research.

1.2 Research Question

1. What translation techniques are used to achieve localization in the English-Indonesian translation of Yao's hero lines in Honor of Kings game?
2. How are the translation techniques implemented to realize localization in the English-Indonesian translation of Yao's hero lines in Honor of Kings game?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In line with the research questions above, the purpose of this research are:

1. To identify the translation techniques to achieve localization in the English–Indonesian translation of Yao’s hero lines in Honor of Kings (Global Version); and
2. To analyze how the translation techniques are implemented to preserve humor, tone, and informality in the Indonesian version of Yao’s hero lines.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study was subject to several specific limitations that defined its scope and constrain the generalizability of its findings. First, the investigation was strictly limited to a textual comparison of Yao’s hero voice lines in the English and Indonesian versions of the game, focusing exclusively on these spoken assets while ignoring other game's textual components. Interactive digital environments contain

a multitude of distinct text types, and game assets typically include user interface text, narrative scripts, system messages, documentation, and promotional materials. Because each of these text types is governed by varying spatial constraints, usability requirements, and technical restrictions, the findings of this study could not be applied to other non-spoken or purely functional game assets.

Second, the analysis focused solely on a single playable character, namely Yao (The Starblade), and excluded the entire voice line corpus of all other heroes within the game. Concentration on a single character allows for a deep, cohesive, and fine-grained analysis of how a specific persona is constructed and maintained across linguistic boundaries, but it also limits the generalizability of the conclusions. Different characters in the game embody distinct archetypes, genders, and social identities, which may demand entirely different translation techniques, varying levels of register, and different strategies of cultural adaptation in Indonesian.

Finally, the datasets available for comparison were not fully parallel due to regional differences in content distribution. The English version of the game includes four distinct Yao voice line packs, whereas the Indonesian version contains only three. To preserve structural equivalence and prevent skewed data interpretation, the analysis was confined strictly to the overlapping audio packs, which required the complete exclusion of the Shanghai Thunder pack. This exclusion means that any unique localization strategies or translation techniques employed specifically within that particular pack are not accounted for in this research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study was expected to contribute to Translation Studies and to academic research on localization by analyzing how specific translation techniques function in the English and Indonesian rendering of multiplayer online battle arena game dialogue. By applying Jiménez-Crespo's (2024) concept of localization to identify culturally marked translations, the study reinforced the academic consensus that localization involves adapting game content to fit the target players' linguistic and cultural context optimally. The dataset revealed how colloquial substitutions were utilized to construct a highly specific sociocultural persona, anchoring the game within the target culture. This included the strategic integration of contemporary internet expressions and slang, reflecting a sophisticated understanding of how real players communicate during gameplay.

Such cultural anchoring was further evidenced by the unique communicative demands that video games imposed on the localization process. The communicative context of video games required localizers to prioritize functional equivalence and emotional impact over rigid semantic accuracy. Video game characters rely heavily on spoken interactions such as taunts or idle chat to establish a distinct personality within the game environment. The Indonesian translation must therefore capture the exact pragmatic intent using appropriate local phrasing, and the findings of this study highlighted the sophisticated mechanisms localizers used to achieve this goal.

To systematically account for these mechanisms, the research applied the taxonomy developed by Molina and Albir (2002) to Yao's voice lines, extending this robust theoretical framework to the global version of Honor of Kings. The

application of this framework provided deep analytical insight into the specific choices made when humor, tone, and informality are preserved or adapted in the Indonesian language. Emphasizing local flavor through the deliberate integration of contemporary slang and idiomatic expressions illustrated how micro-level choices actively shape character identity and enhance player immersion.

Practically, the findings generated by this research may guide professional translators and localization practitioners working on English and Indonesian game content. The study identified common practices and showed precisely how they affect the naturalness and relatability of the dialogue. Highlighting the choices that made voice lines feel engaging versus those that may sound rigid underscored the importance of culturally and stylistically appropriate strategies in maintaining player engagement. This is particularly essential in competitive games where spoken lines convey character personality and provide critical auditory feedback during fast-paced encounters, such as team fights or coordinated attacks.

The study's focused analysis of brief and character-driven voice lines also offered a methodological model for future academic research. Analyzing digital interactive texts requires a clear framework to navigate the multimodal and fragmented nature of game assets. Since academic research focusing specifically on Honor of Kings (Global version) voice lines remains scarce, the insights derived from this study can serve as a foundational reference for students and scholars interested in localization. The detailed examination of how micro-level techniques support macro-level characterization provides a reproducible pathway for investigating other characters, games, and language pairs in the future.

1.6 State of the Art

Research focusing on English and Indonesian localization has increasingly viewed game translation as a complex form of localization in which linguistic transfer is closely connected to cultural, stylistic, and player-oriented adaptation (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013; Bernal-Merino, 2015). The integration of advanced translation management systems and continuous localization workflows has transformed how digital products are prepared for international distribution (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024). Within this expanding academic field, previous studies tend to examine broader and more generalized datasets. These foundational studies frequently investigate extensive narrative dialogue trees, large subtitle corpora, user interface text, or a wide array of multiple characters across a single game. These studies indicate the relevance of micro-textual analysis in explaining how translation choices support naturalness and cultural suitability in localized content (Molina & Albir, 2002). They establish that successful localization depends on fulfilling the expectations of the target audience rather than adhering strictly to source text structures (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006; O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013).

However, considerably less academic attention has been given to hero voice lines as a distinct and independent localization unit. This gap persists although these voice lines are brief, highly repetitive, and character-defining utterances that serve a crucial function in the overall user experience (Bernal-Merino, 2015). Voice lines help construct a hero's persona through the delivery of tone, humor, and informal speech during active gameplay (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013). In multiplayer online battle arena games, character development relies almost entirely on these brief audio cues triggered by combat events. Voice lines communicate critical game

states such as an enemy missing from a lane, the initiation of a team fight, or the need to pull back and retreat to a safer position. The psychological impact of these repeated audio cues requires localizers to prioritize functional equivalence over literal translation (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006). The localizer must utilize techniques such as variation and adaptation to maintain the appropriate level of informality and urgency (Molina & Albir, 2002).

This study is positioned uniquely to address this notable gap in the literature by focusing specifically on Yao's hero voice lines in the global version of *Honor of Kings* and their English and Indonesian translation. By narrowing the object of analysis to one character's voice-line corpus, this research offers a much more focused and detailed view of how localized lines can be identified. This identification process relies heavily on Jiménez-Crespo's concept of localization (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013; 2024) to separate genuine cultural mediation from basic linguistic substitution. Interactive digital texts demand that localizers act as intercultural communicators who anticipate the reception of the text by the target audience (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024). By filtering the dataset through this theoretical lens, the study ensures that the subsequent analysis investigates actual localization phenomena.

Furthermore, the research explores how the specific translation techniques categorized by Molina and Albir (2002) are implemented practically in compact and highly contextual game dialogue. The dynamic and functionalist approach advocated by Molina and Albir (2002) provides the necessary theoretical tools to categorize these micro-level shifts accurately. Their taxonomy moves beyond the limitations of earlier comparative stylistics by acknowledging that translation

techniques are functional and discursive rather than static prescriptive rules (Molina & Albir, 2002). This flexibility is essential when analyzing video game dialogue where a single English phrase might require drastic amplification or discursive creation (Molina & Albir, 2002) to achieve the correct emotional resonance in Indonesian.

In this way, the study contributes a targeted and highly specialized perspective to English and Indonesian localization studies. The research demonstrates how localizers leverage specific cultural references, contemporary internet slang, and structural adaptations to bridge the gap between the original developers' intent and the Indonesian players' expectations (Bernal-Merino, 2015; O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013). This contribution is particularly relevant in relation to understanding how micro-level translation choices actively shape local flavor and construct the authentic Indonesian representation of a hero's persona. Ultimately, the careful synthesis of Jiménez-Crespo's localization theory (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024) with Molina and Albir's analytical instruments (Molina & Albir, 2002) establishes a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate linguistic mechanics that drive successful interactive digital entertainment across global borders.