

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

In the contemporary era of global digital communication, films have transformed from a mere form of entertainment into one of the most influential media for intercultural communication. Through film narratives, audiences are introduced to new linguistic structures, social values, and cultural ideologies that cross linguistic and geographical boundaries. The rise of digital streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime has made international films more accessible than ever, creating a global audience that relies heavily on translation to comprehend and appreciate cinematic works in foreign languages. As a result, subtitling has become an essential mode of audiovisual translation that serves as a linguistic and cultural bridge between source and target audiences.

Subtitling is not a simple act of converting spoken dialogue into written text. It is a complex process that requires translators to navigate between linguistic accuracy, cultural relevance, and the technical limitations of time and space on the screen. To make the translated dialogue natural and culturally acceptable to the target audience, translators often engage in a process known as *localization*. Jiménez-Crespo (2013) defines localization as the adaptation of linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural elements of a text to suit the communicative expectations, and socio-cultural context of the target audience. While this process ensures accessibility, it also raises critical issues. The adaptation of linguistic and cultural elements may lead to shifts in

meaning, reduction of source-culture elements, or reinterpretation of cultural identity. Therefore, localization should not be seen as a purely technical procedure, but as a meaning-making and ideological practice that shapes how audiences understand the source text. However, these processes are not always neutral, as translation choices may influence how meaning and cultural elements are interpreted by the audience.

In addition to localization, the concept of translator visibility is equally significant in understanding the ideological dimension of translation. Venuti's (1995/2017) theory of *the translator's invisibility* critiques the dominant norm in translation practices that privileges fluency and transparency in the target language. When translations are made to read as if they were originally written in the target language, the translators become "invisible," and the cultural identity of the source text is often suppressed. In contrast, when the translator's presence is visible, the translation tends to preserve foreign cultural elements, thereby maintaining the source text's authenticity. This dichotomy between visibility and invisibility reflects deeper cultural ideologies that shape translation practices, particularly in the field of subtitling, where decisions must balance readability with cultural fidelity. In this study, these concepts are specifically applied through the analysis of domestication and foreignization strategies, which are used to determine the extent to which the translator becomes visible or invisible in the subtitles.

In this study, localization is positioned as the main analytical focus, while translator visibility is used to interpret the ideological implications of localization strategies. Localization focuses on how language and culture are

adapted to suit the expectations of the target audience, while translator visibility emphasizes the ideological consequences of such adaptation. When these two frameworks are applied together, they provide a comprehensive perspective for examining subtitling as a creative and interpretive act that mediates between global content and local reception.

Many studies have explored subtitling from various perspectives, but most have focused on linguistic strategies rather than the ideological and cultural implications of localization and translator visibility. Putri and Wijaya (2021) compared the translation of idiomatic expressions in *Game Night* (2018) between official and unofficial versions. They concluded that both types of subtitles relied heavily on paraphrasing strategies but produced different communicative effects. Although insightful, their study was limited to idiomatic translation and did not incorporate theoretical discussions on localization or visibility. Similarly, Utomo and Basari (2023) examined the translation of slang in *Bad Boys II* and found that unofficial subtitles were generally more creative and expressive than official ones. However, their analysis was confined to linguistic forms and lacked discussion on cultural or ideological adaptation. Wang (2023) investigated the translation of *La La Land* using Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory, emphasizing the importance of emotional equivalence. Yet, his study only analyzed a single subtitle version and did not include comparative analysis or cultural interpretation. These limitations indicate that previous studies have not sufficiently examined how localization strategies influence meaning construction and reflect ideological positioning, particularly in comparative analyses between official and

unofficial subtitles. Furthermore, although several studies have compared official and unofficial subtitles, most of them focus on translation techniques, accuracy, slang, or idiomatic expressions. Limited attention has been given to how localization strategies interact with translator visibility and ideological positioning. Consequently, there remains a need for a comprehensive study that integrates cultural representation, localization, and translator visibility within a comparative subtitle framework.

Other Indonesian scholars such as Alkafi (2023) and Mukhoyyaroh and Faridi (2023) contributed to the study of subtitling by focusing on translation accuracy and dynamic equivalence. Alkafi's research on *Penyalin Cahaya* examined the translation of cultural terms using Nababan's accuracy model, while Mukhoyyaroh and Faridi's research on *Enola Holmes* highlighted how dynamic equivalence can preserve meaning in subtitle translation. Despite their valuable contributions, both studies remained centered on assessing linguistic accuracy rather than investigating localization and translator visibility. Collectively, these prior works demonstrate that research on subtitle translation in Indonesia has predominantly emphasized translation techniques and textual fidelity while paying limited attention to the interaction between language, culture, and ideology. Furthermore, previous studies have mostly examined genres such as action, musical, or local films, a musical drama film such as *The Greatest Showman* (2017) remains underexplored in comparative subtitle research.

The film *The Greatest Showman* (2017) provides an ideal case for this theoretical perspective. In addition, as a musical drama film, *The Greatest*

Showman contains numerous culture-bound expressions, performance-related terminology, figurative language, and emotionally charged dialogues. These characteristics make the film particularly suitable for investigating localization processes because translators must negotiate not only linguistic meaning but also cultural resonance and audience engagement. As a musical drama film, it contains emotionally expressive dialogues, figurative expressions, and cultural-specific references related to entertainment, performance, and social class. These elements create challenges for translators because meaning must be conveyed not only accurately but also naturally and culturally acceptable in the target language. In Indonesia, *The Greatest Showman* (2017) has circulated with both official subtitles produced by professional translators under licensed distributors and unofficial subtitles produced by volunteer translators in online communities, often referred to as *fansubs*. These two types of subtitles may differ not only in translation strategies but also in their approach to localization and translator visibility. While official subtitles tend to prioritize accuracy, professionalism, and conformity to institutional norms, unofficial subtitles often emphasize relatability and emotional resonance, sometimes employing informal or expressive language that may increase the visibility of the translator. However, this flexibility does not imply complete freedom, as fan translators are still influenced by community norms and audience expectations.

This condition creates a significant research gap that the present study seeks to fill. The lack of research exploring localization and translation visibility in comparative subtitle studies, particularly between official and unofficial versions, indicates both a theoretical and empirical need for further

investigation. Moreover, the increasing availability of unofficial content in Indonesia raises important questions about the authority, authenticity, and quality of subtitle translation distributed through unofficial channels. These issues are highly relevant in today's digital media landscape, where audience exposure to both types of subtitles can shape perceptions of linguistic and cultural representation. More importantly, different subtitle versions may construct different interpretations of the same film, indicating that translation is not only a linguistic process but also a factor that shapes audience perception.

Given these considerations, this research aims to provide a deep understanding of how localization and translation visibility manifest in Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* (2017) from both official and unofficial sources. The study focuses on analyzing the linguistic and cultural features of each version to uncover how translators negotiate between maintaining source-text fidelity and adapting to target-culture norms. By employing Newmark's cultural categories for data identification, Molina and Albir's framework for analyzing translation techniques, and Venuti's theory for interpreting translation strategies, this research seeks to demonstrate how translation decisions affect meaning construction and translator visibility. Jiménez-Crespo's localization theory serves as the primary framework for examining localization processes, while Venuti's theory is used to interpret their ideological implications in terms of translator visibility and invisibility.

The urgency of this study lies in its contribution to bridging theoretical and practical gaps in subtitles translation research. Theoretically, the study expands the discussion on how localization operates beyond mere

cultural adaptations, functioning instead as a site of negotiation between global and local values. Practically, it highlights the role of translator agency in shaping how global media content is received and understood by Indonesian audiences. As subtitling increasingly becomes a global cultural practice, understanding the dynamics between localization, visibility, and ideology becomes essential for translators, educators, and distributors who aim to produce culturally responsible translations. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the field of translation studies by offering insights into the interplay between linguistic form, cultural identity, and translator presence within the context of audiovisual translation. This study also emphasizes that localization is not a neutral practice, but one that reflects ideological choices which may influence cultural representation in translated media.

Therefore, this study views subtitle translation not merely as a process of linguistic transfer, but as a form of cultural and ideological mediation through which meaning is reconstructed for Indonesian audiences.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background that has been given regarding the issues of localization and translator visibility in subtitle translation, The researcher formulated several research problems that are expected to be answered through the findings and discussion of this study. These problems are classified as follows:

1. What localization strategies are employed in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* (2017) released through official and

unofficial platforms?

2. What forms of translator visibility are represented in both the official and unofficial subtitle versions of *The Greatest Showman* (2017)?

3. How do localization strategies influence meaning construction and reflect translator visibility or invisibility in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* (2017)?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

Based on the problems that have been formulated regarding the issues of localization and translator visibility in subtitle translation, The writer presents the objectives of this study in relation to the formulation of the problems. These objectives are intended to determine whether the aims of the research are achieved through the analysis and discussion, which are classified as follows:

1. To identify the localization strategies used in the official and unofficial Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* (2017).
2. To examine the forms of translator visibility represented in both official and unofficial subtitle versions of *The Greatest Showman* (2017).
3. To analyze how localization strategies influence meaning construction and reflect the translator's visibility or invisibility in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* (2017).

1.4 Limitation of The Study

This study is limited to the analysis of Indonesian subtitles in *The*

Greatest Showman (2017), focusing on two specific types of subtitles: official subtitles created by professional translators under licensed distributors and unofficial subtitles produced by volunteer fan communities. The research does not cover other films, genres, languages, or translation media, and therefore its findings are specific to the context of this film and these subtitles versions.

The study concentrates on the application of localization strategies and the visibility of translators based on Newmark's cultural categories, Molina and Albir's translation techniques, and Venuti's translation strategies, while Jiménez-Crespo's localization theory is used as a supporting perspective.

Furthermore, this research focuses on linguistic, cultural, and ideological aspects of subtitling, rather than technical dimensions such as timing, spatial constraints, or reading speed, even though these factors may also influence subtitling practices. Technical constraints are discussed only as contextual factors that may influence translation decisions and are not treated as the primary object of analysis in this study. The unofficial subtitles analyzed are dependent on their availability online and may not represent the entire range of fan-produced translations. In addition, audience reception and comprehension are not included in this study, as the primary focus is on the translators' strategies and the extent of their visibility in the subtitles.

These limitations indicate that while the study provides insights into the interaction between localization, translator visibility, and cultural representation, its conclusions remain context-specific and should be

interpreted within the framework of *The Greatest Showman* (2017) Indonesian subtitles.

1.5 Significance of The Study

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the development of audiovisual translation studies by integrating localization theory, cultural analysis, and translator visibility within a single analytical framework. While previous studies have largely examined subtitle translation from linguistic or technical perspectives, this study highlights how localization strategies function as cultural and ideological practices that influence meaning construction and translator presence in translated texts. The study provides insights into how translators negotiate cultural, linguistic, and ideological elements in subtitle translation. It extends previous research by addressing a gap in comparative studies between official and unofficial subtitles and by emphasizing the interaction between language, culture, and translator presence.

From a practical perspective, this study offers valuable guidance for translators, educators, and distributors involved in audiovisual translation. Understanding how localization strategies and translator visibility affect meaning, cultural representation, and audience perception can improve the quality and cultural appropriateness of subtitles. The findings also highlight the potential differences between professionally produced and fan-made subtitles, which can inform policies and practices in subtitles production, as well as encourage greater awareness of the translator's role in shaping

intercultural communication.

Moreover, this study can serve as a reference for further research on subtitle translation in Indonesia, especially in underexplored genres such as romantic fantasy films. It provides a framework for analyzing both linguistic and cultural adaptation, helping future researchers to examine subtitle translation in a way that considers both textual fidelity and ideological implications. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of balancing accuracy, cultural relevance, and translator agency, contributing to more responsible and informed practices in the field of audiovisual translation.

1.6 State of The Art

Recent research in audiovisual translation has increasingly highlighted the challenges of adapting subtitles for diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, particularly in the digital era where global media circulation is rapidly expanding. Subtitling requires translators to balance linguistic accuracy, cultural relevance, and audience readability within technical constraints. In this context, Miguel Ángel Jiménez-Crespo's theory of localization emphasizes that translation is not merely a linguistic transfer, but a user-oriented process that involves adapting linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural elements to meet the communicative expectations of target audiences. While such adaptation enhances accessibility, it may also result in semantic shifts, omissions, or changes in cultural meaning.

From an ideological perspective, Lawrence Venuti's concept of translator invisibility highlights that subtitling practices often prioritize fluency and transparency, making translations appear natural in the target

language. This tendency may suppress the cultural identity of the source text, whereas more visible translation choices tend to preserve foreign elements. These contrasting tendencies are reflected in the strategies of domestication and foreignization, which reveal how translators negotiate between readability and cultural representation.

At the micro-level, translation techniques proposed by Lucia Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir provide a systematic framework for analyzing how linguistic units are rendered in the target text. Techniques such as adaptation, literal translation, reduction, and amplification demonstrate the procedural choices made by translators in handling culture-specific expressions, constraints of subtitling, and audience expectations. These techniques are closely related to cultural elements, which can be identified using Peter Newmark's classification of cultural categories.

Several studies have investigated subtitling strategies and translation quality in both official and unofficial contexts. For example, Putri and Wijaya (2021) compared idiomatic expression translation in *Game Night* (2018) and found that both official and unofficial subtitles relied on paraphrasing strategies but produced different communicative effects. Utomo and Basari (2023) examined slang translation in *Bad Boys II* and observed that unofficial subtitles tended to be more creative and expressive than official ones. Wang (2023) analyzed *La La Land* using Functional Equivalence Theory, emphasizing emotional equivalence, but focused only on a single subtitle version. Indonesian studies such as Alkafi (2023) and Mukhoyyaroh and Faridi (2023) primarily evaluated translation accuracy

and dynamic equivalence in films like *Penyalin Cahaya* and *Enola Holmes*, yet they did not explore the ideological and cultural implications of localization or translator visibility.

Despite these contributions, a notable gap remains in the literature. Most prior studies focus on linguistic techniques or textual fidelity rather than examining the interaction between cultural elements, translation techniques, and ideological orientation. In addition, comparative studies between official and unofficial subtitles in popular films, particularly in musical drama genres such as *The Greatest Showman*, remain limited. Furthermore, the role of subtitling in shaping cultural interpretation and ideological representation in the Indonesian context has not been sufficiently explored.

This study seeks to address these gaps by integrating cultural, technical, and ideological perspectives in subtitle analysis. By applying Peter Newmark's framework to identify cultural elements, Lucia Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir's techniques to analyze translation procedures, and Lawrence Venuti's strategies to interpret ideological orientation, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of subtitle translation. Miguel Ángel Jiménez-Crespo's localization theory is used as a supporting perspective to explain how translation functions as a culturally adaptive and audience-oriented practice.

By examining both official and unofficial Indonesian subtitles of *The Greatest Showman* (2017), this research offers insights into how translators negotiate meaning, cultural adaptation, and audience

expectations. This approach contributes to the theoretical development of audiovisual translation studies and provides practical implications for improving subtitle quality, particularly in balancing fidelity, cultural relevance, and translator agency in global media consumption.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its integration of localization theory, cultural categories, translation techniques, and translator visibility within a comparative analysis of official and unofficial Indonesian subtitles. This combination provides a broader understanding of subtitle translation as a linguistic, cultural, and ideological process.

