

## SEMANTIC AND COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES IN THE INDONESIAN SUBTITLE TRANSLATION OF *VENOM: THE LAST DANCE*

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### Abstract

This study examines the use of semantic and communicative translation techniques in the Indonesian subtitle translation of the film *Venom: The Last Dance*. Subtitling, as a form of audio-visual translation, requires translators to balance meaning accuracy with readability under technical constraints such as limited space and timing. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method supported by quantitative frequency analysis. The data consist of 30 subtitle units taken from the English and Indonesian subtitle versions of the film. The data were analyzed based on Newmark's (1988) theory of semantic and communicative translation. The findings reveal that both techniques are applied in the subtitle translation, with communicative translation being more dominant (60%) than semantic translation (40%). Semantic translation is primarily used in dialogues that convey narrative significance and emotional depth, ensuring accuracy and fidelity to the source text. In contrast, communicative translation is frequently employed in informal, idiomatic, and humorous expressions to achieve naturalness and immediate comprehension for the target audience. The study concludes that the balanced application of semantic and communicative translation techniques contributes to effective meaning transfer in film subtitling and highlights the importance of adaptive translation strategies in audio-visual translation.

**Keywords:** semantic translation; communicative translation; subtitle translation; audio-visual translation; *Venom: The Last Dance*

### INTRODUCTION

Translation is a process of conveying the critical meaning of an original text into a writing language. It goes beyond lexical replacement and requires a large body of understanding of both languages, their respective cultures and the contextual structure of the work (Munday, 2008). Translators strive to find what can be translated to retain the initial semantic meaning and the intention. This task is not always an easy one, due to cultural differences, idioms, and minor semantic variations. Besides, translators should consider the purpose of the text, its target audience and the situational context in general. Cultural sensitivity is a must in order to prevent misunderstandings or unintentional crimes. An effective translation does not only capture the tone and style of the original text and still attains a natural quality in the target language (Kembaren, 2018).

Translation plays a critical role in the process of reconciling individuals in the different linguistic and cultural settings. It helps open up literature, art and music, and cinema of other societies thus allowing people to learn and appreciate other cultures (UNESCO, 2019). Moreover, translation will help preserve and spread the cultural heritage, including both historical documents and indigenous knowledge. It also enhances communicative effectiveness in traveling, making contact with other people easier and fostering intercultural empathy. Translation is a process of transferring meaning from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL) while maintaining

equivalence in meaning and function. Moreover, translation is an essential process in cross-cultural communication, enabling audiences to access meaning conveyed in different languages. In audio-visual media, translation is commonly realized through subtitling, which involves rendering spoken dialogue from the source language (SL) into written text in the target language (TL). Subtitling is constrained by technical limitations such as time synchronization, space restrictions, and audience readability, which make the choice of translation technique particularly crucial.

According to Newmark (1988), translation methods can be broadly divided into semantic translation and communicative translation. Semantic translation focuses on preserving the contextual meaning and linguistic features of the source text, while communicative translation aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original text does on the source audience.

*Venom: The Last Dance* is a superhero film characterized by fast-paced dialogue, emotional expressions, humor, sarcasm, and idiomatic language. These features present significant challenges for subtitle translators, particularly in balancing meaning accuracy and naturalness in the target language. In the context of the increasing global circulation of English-language films and the growing reliance on subtitles as the primary mode of audio-visual translation for Indonesian audiences, the quality of subtitle translation plays a crucial role in shaping viewers' comprehension and engagement. Inaccurate or unnatural subtitle renderings may lead to meaning loss, reduced humor effect, or misinterpretation of emotional and cultural nuances.

Despite the significance of subtitling in audio-visual translation, empirical studies focusing on the application of semantic and communicative translation techniques in Indonesian subtitles of contemporary superhero films remain limited. Therefore, this research is urgent in order to contribute to the understanding of how these translation techniques are employed to address linguistic and pragmatic challenges in subtitle translation. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the application of semantic and communicative translation techniques in the Indonesian subtitle translation of *Venom: The Last Dance* and to examine how these techniques contribute to effective meaning transfer in the target language.

Based on the research aims, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What semantic and communicative translation techniques are applied in the Indonesian subtitle translation of *Venom: The Last Dance*?
2. What is the frequency and distribution of semantic and communicative translation techniques found in the Indonesian subtitles of the film?
3. How do semantic and communicative translation techniques contribute to the accuracy, naturalness, and effectiveness of meaning transfer in the Indonesian subtitles?

Translation facilitates films to reach international viewers in the realm of cinema (Bolanos-Garcia-Escribano & Diaz-Cintas, 2019). Subtitles are one of the major aspects of this process as

they are a written version of a verbal conversation, usually another language. This enables the audience to enjoy the voice of actors and their emotional depiction, and at the same time to understand the story. The subtitles also make it more inclusive to the individuals who are not fluent in the original language and able-hearing people. They clarify jokes, cultural references and any other contextual insider information that may not easily be understood by the audience. As a language learner, listening and reading skills can be improved through watching subtitled movies (Agustina, 2019).

Subtitles also allow movies to infiltrate the global markets and achieve wider fame. They alleviate the language challenges and therefore enhance cultural interactions and enhance audience interest (Chaume, 2012). Industry analyses how the film subtitling market is expanding rapidly due to the need to localize film content for diverse linguistic audiences. This growth reflects how subtitles help films cross language borders and reach global viewers, boosting accessibility and distribution opportunities worldwide. According to Cognitive Market Research, the film subtitling industry is the increasing global demand for accessible content, driving the need for multilingual and inclusive subtitling solutions. The global film subtitling market size in 2024 will expand at a compound annual growth rate of 8.00% in 2031 (Bagekari, 2025).

Many studies analyze subtitle film translation with different focus on language learning or translation strategies. These studies show that subtitles are more than direct translations, they involve cultural adaptation for international audiences. These studies help explain how subtitles ease cultural barriers and support cross-cultural understanding. Fitriani in A Descriptive Study On Subtitling Strategies Of Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) In The Documentary Film Entitled "The Mark Of Empire Majapahit focused on looking for CSIs in the form of words and phrases in the film (Fitriani et al. 2023). The researcher categorizes the types of CSIs using the Newmark model and analyzed the subtitling strategy of CSIs words proposed by Pederson. Meanwhile, Nisak (2025) in The Menu: Cultural Translation Analysis in a Culinary Movie analyzed on accuracy and the techniques used in subtitle translation, and how domestication and foreignization strategies influence audience understanding and interpretation of cultural content. In analyzing the data, the researchers apply Newmark's theory of cultural terms to categorize cultural terms in both the source and target language subtitles of the film. The study utilized Molina and Albir's translation techniques to identify the translation techniques employed by the subtitle translator, and Venuti's translation ideology is used to determine the ideology maintained by the translator based on the applied translation techniques.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Translation Strategies

There are a number of translation techniques that are regularly used in subtitling to retain the meaning and culture. Some of them include equivalence, communicative translation and semantic

translation. Equivalence is concerned with the re-creation of the same situation or effect in the target language as opposed to word-by-word translation, hence preserving the emotional and contextual sense (Munday, 2016; Widyasari and Hikmaharyanti, 2022). In contrast, communicative translation is more focused on naturalness and clarity whereby the translation becomes fluent and easily understood by the target audience (Agustina and Joni, 2019). This method is more often favored in the film subtitling process, and time and legibility are the most critical aspects.

The semantic translation is more concerned with the exact meaning of the original text, especially in cases of cultural or idiomatic expressions (Budiana et al., 2017). Translators often blend these strategies based on the context requirements, that is, using the equivalence strategy in situations that require idioms, semantic translation in situations involving emotional content, and communicative translation in situations requiring the use of natural flow of conversations. This flexibility of the methodology helps to maintain linguistic truthfulness and strengthens the understanding of the audience in the subtitles of the films (Diaz Cintas and Remael, 2014).

### **Semantic Translation**

Semantic translation, according to Newmark (1988), aims to reproduce the contextual meaning of the source text as accurately as possible while remaining sensitive to the syntactic and semantic structures of the source language. This method prioritizes fidelity to the original text, including its nuances, stylistic features, and cultural elements.

Newmark emphasizes that semantic translation is particularly suitable for texts that carry high aesthetic, expressive, or philosophical value, such as literary works, serious speeches, and emotionally charged dialogues. In semantic translation, the translator may retain source-language structures and expressions even if the result sounds slightly less natural in the target language, as long as the original meaning is preserved.

In audio visual translation, semantic translation is commonly applied to dialogues that are essential to narrative development or character identity. By preserving meaning accuracy, semantic translation helps maintain coherence and prevents misinterpretation of key messages.

### **Communicative Translation**

Communicative translation focuses on producing the same effect on the target audience as the original text does on the source audience (Newmark, 1988). Unlike semantic translation, this method prioritizes readability, naturalness, and audience comprehension. The translator is allowed greater freedom to modify sentence structure, lexical choices, and cultural references to ensure that the message is easily understood.

Newmark argues that communicative translation is especially appropriate for texts intended to inform, persuade, or entertain, such as advertisements, instructions, and conversational

language. In this approach, literal accuracy may be sacrificed in favour of pragmatic equivalence and communicative effectiveness.

In the context of subtitling, communicative translation is often favoured due to technical constraints such as limited screen space and viewing time. Idiomatic expressions, humour, and informal speech are commonly translated using this method to ensure immediate comprehension by the target audience.

## METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The data consist of selected dialogue lines taken from the English subtitles as a source language (SL) and their Indonesian translations as a target language (TL) in *Venom: The Last Dance*.

The data collection involved several steps. First, the author watched the movie while carefully observing the utterances and the subtitles. Second, identifying subtitle segments that demonstrate semantic or communicative translation techniques. Third, recording pair of SL and TL subtitle part. Forth, classifying the data based on Newmark's (1988) theory of semantic and communicative translation.

In the data analysis, the data were analysed based on Newmark theory of semantic and communicative translation. The author focused on the accuracy of meaning transfer, the naturalness of the target language, and the suitability for subtitle constraints. This analysis involved the following steps:

1. Comparing the meaning of SL and TL subtitles translation,
2. Identifying the techniques applied,
3. Evaluating the effectiveness and the naturalness of meaning transfer within subtitle constraints.

## RESULTS DAN DISCUSSION

### Results

The analysis shows that both semantic and communicative translation techniques are widely used in the Indonesian subtitles of *Venom: The Last Dance*, depending on the communicative purpose of the dialogue.

#### ***Frequency and Percentage of Translation Techniques Used***

Based on the analysis of 20 selected subtitle data from *Venom: The Last Dance*, two translation techniques were identified: semantic translation and communicative translation. The distribution of the techniques is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Translation Techniques

No	Translation Technique	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semantic Translation	8	40%
2	Communicative Translation	12	60%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows that communicative translation is more dominant (60%) than semantic translation (40%). This dominance indicates that the subtitle translator prioritizes audience comprehension and naturalness, which aligns with the communicative function of subtitles in audio-visual media. The analysis of those two techniques can be seen in the following discussion.

## Discussion

The expanded data confirm that communicative translation dominates due to the functional demands of subtitling, as subtitles must be immediately understood without disrupting viewing experience (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2014). Humour, idioms, and conversational exchanges require adaptation to achieve pragmatic equivalence.

However, semantic translation remains essential for maintaining narrative consistency and emotional depth. Dialogues expressing internal conflict, moral dilemmas, or character identity demand high semantic accuracy.

These findings support Newmark's (1988) argument that translation methods operate on a continuum rather than as rigid categories. The subtitle translator of *Venom: The Last Dance* demonstrates strategic flexibility by combining semantic and communicative translation to meet both linguistic and technical demands.

### **Semantic Translation**

Semantic translation emphasizes preserving the original meaning, structure, and nuance of the source text. In the subtitles, this technique is commonly applied in the dialogues with the specific intent such as serious dialogues, emotional expressions, and a plot-relevant information. For example, when characters express inner conflict or explain crucial plot details, the translator tends to retain the original lexical meaning and sentence structure. This ensures that the message remains faithful to the source text, even if the resulting subtitle sounds slightly formal.

Semantic translation is effective in maintaining narrative coherence and character development. However, due to subtitle space limitations, some reductions or simplifications are still applied without significantly altering meaning.

This technique can be seen in the following examples:

#### Sample data 1

SL : We are not just surviving. We are evolving.

TL : *Kita tidak hanya bertahan hidup. Kita sedang berevolusi.*

In this sample, the translator maintains the original sentence structure and lexical meaning. According to Newmark (1988), semantic translation focuses on the contextual meaning of the source text while respecting its form. In this case, the repetition of the clause structure is preserved to maintain the dramatic emphasis. The translation achieves equivalence at the semantic level, ensuring that the philosophical message remains intact.

#### Sample data 2

SL : This is who I am now.

TL : *Inilah diriku sekarang.*

In this sample, the translation conveys the same meaning without additional interpretation or simplification. The use of semantic translation is appropriate because the utterance functions as a self-identity statement. Maintaining accuracy is essential to preserve character development and narrative coherence.

#### Sample data 3

SL : Everything we've been through led to this moment.

TL : *Semua yang telah kita lalui membawa kita ke saat ini.*

This sample data shows that the translation closely follows the source text structure and meaning. Temporal and causal relationships are clearly preserved, indicating semantic equivalence.

### **Communicative Translation**

Communicative translation aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original text does on the source audience. This technique is frequently used in translating humour and sarcasm, idiomatic expressions, and informal conversations

In *Venom: The Last Dance*, many humorous exchanges between Eddie Brock and Venom are translated communicatively to ensure Indonesian viewers understand the joke, even if the wording differs from the original. Culture-specific expressions are often adapted into more familiar Indonesian expressions to enhance audience comprehension.

Communicative translation proves particularly effective in subtitles because it prioritizes clarity, readability, and viewer engagement. This approach helps overcome linguistic and cultural gaps between English-speaking and Indonesian audiences. This analysis can be seen in the following data samples:

#### Sample data 4

SL : We keep our heads down, and we keep moving.

TL : *Jangan menarik perhatian dan terus bergerak.*

This translation successfully captures the intended meaning within the given context and preserves the cautious, alert tone conveyed in the original line. The message of needing to move forward carefully and avoid drawing attention to oneself is effectively maintained. The translator demonstrates the use of equivalence theory by focusing on delivering the same pragmatic impact rather than adhering to a strictly literal rendering. As a result, the Indonesian version reads smoothly and naturally while still reflecting the original speaker's intention to remain unseen and proceed cautiously. The balance between fluency and faithfulness ensures that the overall warning and sense of urgency remain intact for the target audience.

#### Sample data 5

SL : You're complete disaster.

TL : *Kau benar-benar berantakan.*

The translator adapts the insult into a natural Indonesian expression rather than translating it literally. The pragmatic force is preserved, demonstrating communicative translation.

#### Sample data 6

SL : Don't push your luck.

TL : *Jangan macam-macam.*

This idiomatic expression is adapted culturally. Literal translation would sound unnatural; therefore, communicative translation ensures immediate comprehension.

#### Sample data 7

SL : You've got to be kidding me.

TL : *Kau pasti bercanda.*

The translator selects an equivalent expression commonly used in Indonesian. The emotional reaction (disbelief) is maintained, indicating communicative equivalence.

#### Sample data 8

SL : So now we have the cops, the United States Army and some creatures from hell hunting us.

TL : *Sekarang Angkatan Darat AS, dan monster yang memburu kita.*

This translation omits key information "police" and "creatures from hell" and changes structure, making it incomplete. This version restores missing elements while staying fluent. The

communicative and complete translation strategy is used to maintain accuracy and natural sentence flow.

#### Sample data 9

SL : We are not bad men!

TL : *Kami bukan musuhmu!*

The translation in the subtitle significantly alters the intended meaning by shifting the focus from moral character to interpersonal relations. In the original English line, the speaker is asserting their moral identity by saying they are “not bad men,” which emphasizes their ethical standing and justification for their actions. However, the Indonesian translation turns this into a statement about personal relationships “not your enemy” *bukan musuhmu* which implies a different message entirely. Instead of defending their moral integrity, it suggests a denial of conflict between the characters. By communicative translation technique, this translation is acceptable and natural di TL.

#### Sample data 10

SL : We’re running out of time.

TL : *Waktu kita hampir habis.*

Although close to the source text, the translation prioritizes brevity and urgency suitable for subtitles. The communicative impact is emphasized over structural fidelity.

#### Sample data 11

SL : This is a bad idea.

TL : *Ini ide yang buruk.*

The translation is direct but chosen for clarity and readability. It functions communicatively by ensuring instant comprehension.

#### Sample data 12

SL : Get a grip, Eddie.

TL : *Tenanglah, Eddie.*

The idiomatic command *get a grip* is adapted into a culturally natural imperative. This communicative translation maintains the intended function rather than literal meaning.

#### Sample data 13

SL : You’re pushing it.

TL : *Kamu kelewatan.*

The translator replaces the idiomatic phrase with a concise Indonesian expression that conveys the same warning tone. This demonstrates pragmatic and communicative equivalence.

Based on the data analysis, the translator's application of semantic translation in an effort to preserve the original meaning, structural features, and nuanced expressions of the source text does not entirely ensure semantic naturalness in the target language (TL). Certain meaning components are not fully or adequately represented in the subtitle translation. This shortcoming is evident in the following sample data:

Sample data 14



SL : What a dick!

TL : *Kurang ajar!*

The translator's version *Kurang ajar!* captures the emotional tone but misses the full insult's intensity. The phrase "What a dick!" expresses strong contempt or anger toward someone's behavior, while *Kurang ajar!* sounds slightly milder and less personal.

In TL there is *Dasar brengsek!* as Indonesian expression which reflects the same degree of rudeness and frustration. The equivalence strategy is applied here to preserve the pragmatic force and emotional context of the original English line.

Sample data 15



SL : Are we the Lethal Protector or not?

TL : *Bukankah kita adalah Pelindung Maut?*

This translation is grammatically correct but not semantically precise. The English phrase “Lethal Protector” is a phrase with a dual meaning deadly yet heroic. The term *Pelindung Maut* sounds awkward and ambiguous in Indonesian. The improved version *Pelindung Mematikan* better preserves the original nuance.

Sample data 16



SL : Yeah, I still got a ton of shit on him too.

TL : *Aku menyimpan banyak rahasia gelapnya.*

The original subtitle is understandable but lacks the full connotation of frustration and resentment. The expression “a ton of shit” is idiomatic, meaning unresolved issues or grudges, not literal secrets. The other equivalent translation could be “*Aku juga masih punya banyak masalah dengannya.*” Therefore, “*Aku juga masih punya banyak masalah dengannya*” conveys the intended meaning more naturally.

Sample data 17:



SL : Let's get hell out of here.

TL : *Ayo kita pergi.*

The translation *Ayo kita pergi* is accurate but slightly loses the urgency and emotional force of the original. The expression “get hell out” intensifies the tone of escape or danger. A more dynamic version like *Cepat, kita pergi dari sini!* captures the intended urgency. This uses the communicative translation method, focusing on natural delivery over literal wording.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Indonesian subtitle translation of *Venom: The Last Dance* employs both semantic and communicative translation techniques, with communicative translation being more dominant. The frequency analysis shows that communicative translation accounts for 60% of the data, indicating a strong emphasis on audience comprehension and subtitle readability. Communicative translation is more dominant due to the functional requirements of subtitling, while semantic translation plays a vital role in maintaining meaning accuracy and narrative integrity.

Semantic translation is primarily used in emotionally and narratively significant dialogues to preserve meaning accuracy. The balanced application of both techniques enhances the overall quality of the subtitles and ensures effective meaning transfer. This study highlights the importance of methodological flexibility in subtitle translation and contributes to research on audio visual translation practices.

The strategic combination of these techniques enables effective meaning transfer despite the technical constraints of subtitles. The balanced use of these techniques demonstrates the translator's adaptability in handling the linguistic and technical challenges of subtitling. This research contributes to audio visual translation studies by highlighting the importance of adaptive translation strategies in film subtitling and the importance of selecting appropriate translation techniques to achieve effective audiovisual translation.

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