



Speaking in Subtitles: A Linguistic Perspective on English–Indonesian Translation in Short Movies

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Abstract

This study evaluates the quality of Indonesian subtitle translations in four English-language short movies—*Alternative Math*, *Gift*, *Ripple*, and *Snake Bite*—based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Using the translation quality model by Nababan, a total of 227 sentence pairs were assessed by five qualified evaluators. The research adopted a qualitative descriptive design and employed the Miles and Huberman model for data analysis, including data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that human-translated subtitles (e.g., in *Ripple* and *Gift*) achieved significantly higher scores across all three dimensions than those generated by automated tools (e.g., *Snake Bite*). Linguistic and cultural appropriateness, idiomatic fluency, and emotional clarity were key indicators of high-quality translations. The study also highlights how short movies, due to their narrative density and brevity, demand a high degree of precision in subtitle rendering. Errors in short film subtitling tend to be more disruptive due to the limited space for dialogue and the high narrative weight of each line. The findings confirm that short movies are valuable for translation practice and constitute a distinct genre requiring targeted strategies.

Keywords: *comparative analysis, subtitle translation, short movies, translation quality*



1. Introduction

Language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a vehicle for culture, identity, and cognition. It facilitates the construction of meaning, the exchange of experiences, and the transmission of knowledge across temporal and spatial boundaries. In today's increasingly globalized and digitally connected world, multilingual communication skills have become essential. English, in particular, has emerged as a global lingua franca, playing a vital role in international domains such as education, business, science, and culture (Nugraha, 2023; Oktaviela, 2023). In Indonesia, English is treated as a foreign language and is integrated into the national education system, reflecting broader socio-political priorities in language policy (Latifah, Baharuddin, & Udin, 2022). However, language learning is not confined to formal instruction; it also involves engaging with authentic linguistic materials, including audiovisual media such as movies and short movies.

Translation is pivotal in facilitating this cross-cultural and multilingual exchange. It goes beyond mere word-for-word conversion, encompassing the interpretation of meaning, the preservation of intent, and the safeguarding of cultural integrity (Barambones, 2021; Díaz Cintas & Massidda, 2022). In audiovisual media, these tasks become particularly complex, as translators must convey spoken dialogue, tone, cultural nuances, and contextual meaning in a way that is both accurate and accessible (Rosita, 2018; Yuwono, Nababan, Tarjana, & Wiratno, 2017). Subtitle translation, in this context, serves as a strategic mode of communication that mediates between the visual narrative (Pahlavani & Ghanbari, 2024) and audience interpretation (Barambones, 2021; Fong, 2020). Among various audiovisual genres, short movies represent a unique form of linguistic and cultural expression (Chen & Zhou, 2024). Although typically limited to 5–30 minutes, short movies can deliver dense narratives with rich emotional, symbolic, and sociopolitical content. Every subtitle becomes crucial, given the limited screen time and fast-paced dialogue, requiring precise and context-sensitive translation (Jääskeläinen & Nikko, 2023; Khoshsaligheh, Ameri, & Mehdizadkhani, 2022). Despite this, short movies remain underexplored in translation studies (Yang & Wang, 2023), with most research focusing on full-length features or literary texts

(Aminudin & Hidayati, 2022). This study aims to address that gap by evaluating the translation quality of subtitles in selected short movies. Subtitling short movies involves particular constraints (Szarkowska & Dutka, 2021), such as spatial limitations, rapid dialogue transitions (Blanco-Peña & Pérez-González, 2020), and intensified emotional flow, which demand deliberate and nuanced translation strategies (Noegraha, Handoyo, & Dhiyaningrum, 2023). Translation errors may lead to misinterpretation or narrative dissonance (Madkour, 2016; Nugraha, 2023), while effective subtitling can preserve cultural meaning, enhance comprehension, and support language learning (Latifah et al., 2022; Martínez-Sierra, 2019). Subtitle quality, therefore, depends on three critical dimensions: accuracy, acceptability, and readability (Mukhoyyaroh & Faridi, 2023; Rosita, 2018; Sholihah, Nababan, & Djatmika, 2018). Although Nababan's translation quality assessment model is widely acknowledged in evaluating written and audiovisual texts, there is still a lack of empirical research applying this framework to multiple short movies. Moreover, translation techniques such as paraphrasing, omission, and adaptation are frequently employed to resolve linguistic challenges (Chuang, 2021), yet their impact on subtitle quality—especially within the context of Indonesian language practices—has not been thoroughly investigated (Latifah et al., 2022; Nugraha, 2023). Given the growing consumption of subtitled media by youth and language learners, this oversight is increasingly relevant (Omidian & Golchin Nia, 2018).

To fill this gap, the present study analyzes a corpus of 227 English-Indonesian sentence pairs from four selected short movies. Using the translation quality dimensions of accuracy, acceptability, and readability, the research aims to compare subtitle performance across the film and identify translation strategies that contribute to effective or problematic outcomes. In doing so, the study offers both theoretical insights and practical implications for the field of translation studies.

2. Research Objectives and Contributions

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the quality of subtitle translations in four selected short movies using established evaluation criteria. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Assess the degree of accuracy, acceptability, and readability in the subtitle translations.
2. Identify common translation strategies and their effects on subtitle quality.
3. Determine which of the short movies offers the best translation performance in terms of linguistic and cultural fidelity.

The contributions of this study are twofold. Theoretically, it expands the scope of audiovisual translation research by foregrounding short movies as valuable linguistic artifacts. Practically, it offers insights and recommendations for subtitle creators, language educators, and translation practitioners aiming to enhance communication quality in multilingual media environments.

3. Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design with a case study approach to evaluate the quality of subtitle translations in selected English-language short movies. The analysis focused on three well-established dimensions in translation quality assessment—accuracy, acceptability, and readability—as formulated by Nababan (Nababan, 2010). A case study design was deemed appropriate as it allowed an in-depth examination of translation phenomena within specific, bounded contexts, offering rich insights into linguistic strategies used in audiovisual subtitling.

The data comprised 227 sentence pair of sources (English) and target (Indonesian) language subtitles taken from four short movies. These included *Alternative Math* (81 sentences), produced by Ideaman Studios and hosted on YouTube; *Gift* (50 sentences) and *Ripple* (37 sentences), both distributed by Viddsee; and *Snake Bite* (59 sentences), produced by Omeleto. The movies were selected purposively based on three criteria: availability of both English and Indonesian subtitles, thematic and stylistic diversity, and different subtitling sources to ensure varied translation strategies. This selection aimed to facilitate a comparative exploration of translation quality across distinct audiovisual narratives.

To assess the quality of subtitle translations, five evaluators (Evaluator; then called “E”) were selected using purposive sampling. These evaluators were either lecturers or senior students in English language and literature programs who had taken or taught translation courses (Translation I and II) and had basic theoretical knowledge of translation. Their qualifications ensured informed, consistent evaluations across the three quality dimensions. Each evaluator was provided with structured rating sheets and asked to evaluate each subtitle sentence pair on a 1-to-3 Likert scale (Nia, 2018) where 3 indicates the highest quality for accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

Data collection involved two main instruments: document analysis and a rating scale assessment. First, each short film was manually transcribed to extract its English dialogue and the corresponding Indonesian subtitles. These sentence pairs were tabulated according to the film title and scene. Evaluators were then given one week to complete their evaluations using a rating scale adapted from Nababan (Nababan, 2010). The rating scale included qualitative parameters for each dimension: accuracy (faithfulness to the original meaning), acceptability (grammaticality and naturalness in the target language), and readability (clarity and ease of understanding for the viewer).

The data analysis followed the three-stage model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Engle, 1999). Comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction phase, raw rating data were organized by film and evaluator, and then the scores were averaged for each sentence across all three quality dimensions. This stage cleaned up inconsistencies and made it easier to spot recurring patterns in each movie’s subtitle translation. The results were then organized into tables and charts to compare the overall quality across the four movies. This made the differences in accuracy, acceptability, and readability easier to track, based on the combined scores from all evaluators.

In the final stage, the researcher carried out the process of conclusion drawing and verification by reviewing patterns in the aggregated data. This involved comparing average scores across the three quality dimensions for each film, identifying segments with consistent scoring trends, and outlining the translation

strategies linked to those patterns. Evaluator scores were cross-checked to observe alignment and ensure consistency across the assessments. The process also included checking whether any new patterns or significant variations continued to appear as the analysis progressed.

Data saturation was identified during the later stages of analysis when repeated reviews of the subtitle evaluations yielded no new translation categories, issues, or interpretive differences (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The evaluators played a central role in this process, as their assessments consistently highlighted the same patterns across subtitle segments. Their agreement across different movies and criteria indicated that the data had reached a point of stability. Once no additional variation or insight emerged from further comparison, the dataset was considered sufficiently rich and complete for conclusion.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the translation quality assessment for subtitles in four selected short movies: *Alternative Math* (SM1), *Gift* (SM2), *Ripple* (SM3), and *Snake Bite* (SM4). The subtitle quality was evaluated using the framework proposed by Nababan (M. Nababan, 2010) which includes three criteria: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The study employed five trained evaluators who rated 227 sentence pairs using a 3-point Likert scale for each dimension. Each sentence was time-stamped, labelled according to its movie source (SM1–SM4), and formatted for analysis as referenced in several sentence-level examples within this study. Each sentence pair was entered into an evaluation table alongside blank columns for three quality criteria; accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Evaluators assigned a score of 1, 2, or 3 to each sentence for each of the three criteria, where:

- 3 indicates high quality (e.g., fully accurate, natural, and easy to understand),
- 2 reflects moderate quality (e.g., minor errors, slight awkwardness),
- 1 denotes low quality (e.g., incorrect meaning, unnatural or confusing phrasing).

To ensure a nuanced evaluation, evaluators were encouraged to document examples of errors, awkward phrasing, or clarity concerns. For instance:

SM1 (Alternative Math)

Time: 00:09

SL: “Oh, hi Danny. Come on in.”

TL: “*Oh, hai Danny. Silakan masuk.*”

SM2 (Gift)

SL: “I didn’t like my father.”

TL: “*Aku tidak menyukai ayahku.*”

Most evaluators scored this translation as 3 across all criteria, noting that it retained emotional tone and clarity.

SM4 (Snake Bite)

SL: “Looks poisonous to me.”

TL: “*Terlihat beracun bagi saya.*”

E1 and E2 scored this sentence low on readability and acceptability, citing stiffness in word order and use of “*bagi saya*,” which feels unnatural in casual Indonesian.

SM3 (Ripple)

SL: “May I have this?”

TL: “*Bolehkah saya beli ini?*”

Evaluators debated between “*beli*” (buy) and “*ambil*” (take). Some considered “*beli*” more accurate due to the scene context, while others preferred “*ambil*” as more natural in spoken Indonesian.

Following the individual evaluations, the scores for each sentence were averaged and categorized. The aggregated data was then used to create summary tables by movies and evaluator (see Tables 1). These results provided the foundation for cross-movies comparisons and discussions of translation quality.

Table 1. Representative Subtitle Lines with Evaluator Ratings

Short Movie	Time Code	Source Line (SL)	Target Line (TL)	Accuracy	Acceptability	Readability
SM1 – <i>Alternative Math</i>	00:09	Oh, hi Danny. Come on in.	<i>Oh, hai Danny. Silakan masuk.</i>	2.6	2.7	2.8
SM2 – <i>Gift</i>	00:09	I didn't like my father.	<i>Aku tidak menyukai ayahku.</i>	2.7	2.7	2.7
SM3 – <i>Ripple</i>	00:01	May I have this?	<i>Bolehkah saya beli ini?</i>	2.9	2.9	2.9
SM4 – <i>Snake Bite</i>	00:16	Looks poisonous to me	<i>Terlihat beracun bagi saya</i>	1.8	2.2	2.2

These tables illustrate how the evaluators applied the rating model to real subtitle lines. For instance:

- In SM1, the line “*Oh, hai Danny. Silakan masuk*” was generally well-received due to its faithful transfer of meaning and cultural naturalness in Indonesian. However, minor differences in formality caused one evaluator to score the acceptability slightly lower.
- In SM2, “*Aku tidak menyukai ayahku*” retained the emotional tone and lexical clarity of the original English, making it highly acceptable across all dimensions.
- The translation in SM3, “*Bolehkah saya beli ini?*”, was praised for its natural fit in the scene where a child makes a request, with all five evaluators scoring it near-perfect.
- In contrast, SM4’s line “*Terlihat beracun bagi saya*” received lower scores. Although grammatically correct, evaluators noted that the phrase “*bagi saya*” sounded overly formal or unnatural for casual spoken Indonesian, leading to readability and acceptability penalties.

After scoring was completed, data were reduced by averaging each evaluator’s score for each subtitle, then by film. The researcher then grouped the results into a master dataset to detect patterns and calculate film-level averages (see Table 2). This systematic process formed the basis for further qualitative analysis, comparison across movies, and verification of findings.

Table 2. Average Subtitle Quality Scores per Short Movie

Short Movie	Accuracy	Acceptability	Readability
Alternative Math (SM1)	2.5	2.5	2.5
Gift (SM2)	2.7	2.6	2.5
Ripple (SM3)	2.7	2.6	2.5
Snake Bite (SM4)	2.3	2.3	2.1

As shown in Table 2, *Ripple* and *Gift* received the highest average scores across all criteria, while *Snake Bite* consistently scored the lowest. The following subsections discuss these results in detail, broken down by translation quality dimension.

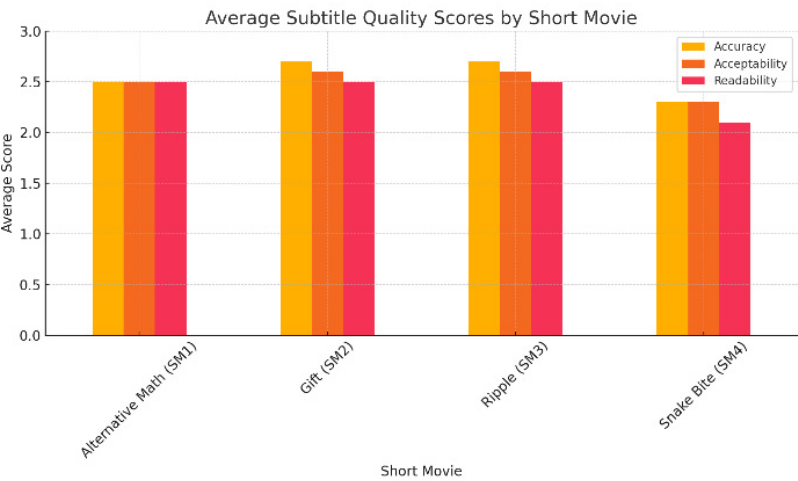


Figure 1. Average Subtitle Quality Scores by Short Movie

Figure 1 illustrates the same data in visual form, showing clear gaps between the highest and lowest scoring short movies, particularly in terms of readability.

4.1 Accuracy of Subtitle Translation

Accuracy refers to how precisely the meaning of the source language is conveyed in the target language. The average accuracy scores revealed a clear distinction between subtitles generated through human translation and those produced using automated tools. The evaluation of accuracy revealed that most subtitle lines conveyed the original message correctly, particularly in *Ripple* (SM3) and *Gift* (SM2). Table 3 presents examples of the highest and lowest scoring sentences based on average evaluator ratings.

Table 3. Sentence-Level Examples of High and Low Subtitle Accuracy

Short Movie	Source Line (SL)	Target Line (TL)	Average Accuracy Score
SM3 – <i>Ripple</i> (High)	Thank you for helping me.	<i>Terima kasih sudah membantu saya.</i>	3.0
SM2 – <i>Gift</i> (High)	I didn’t like my father.	<i>Aku tidak menyukai ayahku.</i>	2.9
SM4 – <i>Snake Bite</i> (Low)	Looks poisonous to me	<i>Terlihat beracun bagi saya</i>	1.8
SM4 – <i>Snake Bite</i> (Low)	You okay?	<i>Kamu baik?</i>	1.6

Table 3 highlights accurate versus problematic translations, revealing how semantic loss and literal phrasing affect subtitle fidelity. For instance, the line “Thank you for helping me” translated as “*Terima kasih sudah membantu saya*” in *Ripple* (SM3) received a perfect accuracy score of 3.0, as all evaluators agreed it faithfully captured the meaning with no loss of nuance. Similarly, “I didn’t like my father” from *Gift* (SM2) was accurately rendered as “*Aku tidak menyukai ayahku*”, preserving both emotional tone and structure. In contrast, *Snake Bite* (SM4) displayed noticeable weaknesses. The translation of “Looks poisonous to me” as “*Terlihat beracun bagi saya*” received an average accuracy score of only 1.8.

Evaluators noted that while literal, the phrase “*bagi saya*” felt awkward in natural Indonesian. Another problematic line was “You okay?” translated as “*Kamu baik?*”, which scored just 1.6 for failing to capture the concern implied in the original expression. A more appropriate rendering would have been “*Kamu tidak apa-apa?*” or “*Kamu oke?*” in everyday speech. The accuracy analysis revealed that *Gift* and *Ripple* both achieved average scores of 2.7, followed closely by *Alternative Math* (2.5). *Snake Bite* ranked lowest with an average score of 2.3, signaling recurrent issues in meaning preservation. Many inaccuracies in SM4 resulted from overly literal translations. For example:

SL: “You okay?”

TL: “*Kamu baik?*”

Evaluators downgraded this to 1 or 2, recommending “*Kamu tidak apa-apa?*” as a more accurate expression in Indonesian. In contrast, SM3 demonstrated near-perfect fidelity across its concise emotional dialogue, such as:

SL: “Thank you for helping me.”

TL: “Terima kasih sudah membantu saya.”

All evaluators marked this as a model of accurate, natural translation (score: 3).

As shown in Table 2, the short movies *Gift* (2.7), *Ripple* (2.7), and *Alternative Math* (2.5) were categorized as accurate, indicating that most of their subtitle translations retained the original message with minimal distortion. Evaluators noted that these movies demonstrated careful selection of equivalent lexical choices, grammatical alignment, and coherent phrase construction that mirrored the intent of the source dialogue. In contrast, *Snake Bite* scored 2.3 in accuracy—the lowest among the four. Evaluators attributed this to literal or inconsistent renderings, leading to unclear or altered meanings. A common issue was the preservation of source language structure in a way that did not reflect natural usage in Indonesian. Several instances were flagged where metaphorical or idiomatic English expressions were translated word-for-word, causing semantic shifts that detracted from narrative coherence. Interestingly, *Ripple*—despite being the shortest in duration—showed the highest consistency across evaluators. Its brevity may have contributed

to a tighter narrative and more manageable translation workload, leading to better attention to linguistic detail. Moreover, the movies emotionally charged yet straightforward language lent itself well to faithful translation.

4.2 Acceptability of Subtitle Translation

Acceptability refers to how natural and culturally appropriate the subtitle reads in the target language. As shown in Table 4, *Ripple* (SM3) and *Gift* (SM2) again delivered the most fluent and idiomatic translations.

Table 4. Sentence-Level Examples of High and Low Subtitle Acceptability

Short Movie	Source Line (SL)	Target Line (TL)	Average Acceptability Score
SM3 – <i>Ripple</i> (High)	I miss you.	<i>Aku rindu kamu.</i>	3.0
SM2 – <i>Gift</i> (High)	I didn’t like my father.	<i>Aku tidak menyukai ayahku.</i>	2.9
SM4 – <i>Snake Bite</i> (Low)	Don’t let it bite you.	<i>Jangan biarkan itu menggigitmu.</i>	1.9
SM1 – <i>Alt. Math</i> (Low)	He’s pushing the boundaries.	<i>Dia mendorong batas-batasnya.</i>	2.0

Table 4 presents subtitle lines rated for their naturalness and grammatical flow in Indonesian, reflecting evaluator sensitivity to local linguistic norms. Lines such as “I miss you” rendered as “*Aku rindu kamu*” in *Ripple* received unanimous scores of 3.0. Evaluators praised its simplicity, emotional tone, and naturalness in spoken Indonesian. Similarly, “*Aku tidak menyukai ayahku*” in *Gift* preserved both formality and meaning, reflecting appropriate target-language structure. However, low-scoring examples include “Don’t let it bite you” from *Snake Bite*, translated as “*Jangan biarkan itu menggigitmu.*” Although technically accurate, it lacked idiomatic fluidity and was flagged by several evaluators as unnatural. Likewise, “He’s pushing the boundaries” in *Alternative Math* was translated literally as “*Dia mendorong batas-batasnya*”, which sounded mechanical and misaligned with typical Indonesian expressions like “*Dia kelewatan*” or “*Dia melampaui batas.*”

Acceptability focuses on how natural and culturally appropriate the subtitles sound to native speakers of the target language. The results again show a strong correlation between the translation method and the resulting subtitle quality. Acceptability focuses on the naturalness of the subtitle in the target language. *Ripple* and *Gift* again led the scores (2.6), while *Snake Bite* averaged only 2.3. Acceptability issues stemmed from poor syntax or unnatural expressions that may have resulted from machine translation. For example:

SL: “Don’t let it bite you.”

TL: “*Jangan biarkan itu menggigitmu.*”

E2 and E4 noted that while technically accurate, this form is rarely used in conversational Indonesian. They recommended: “*Jangan sampai kamu digigit.*” Some inconsistencies also appeared in *Alternative Math*, especially when translating humor or sarcasm, which often required creative reformulation beyond literal equivalents. The short movies *Gift* and *Ripple* both achieved an average score of 2.6, indicating that most translations were fluent, idiomatic, and aligned with target language norms. Evaluators observed that these movies consistently featured syntax and diction commonly used in Indonesian daily speech, with little or no interference from English structure. For example, contractions, informal tone, and culturally adapted terms were used effectively, contributing to subtitles that felt authentic and intelligible. *Alternative Math* scored slightly lower (2.5), primarily due to occasional mismatches in register or formality. Some evaluators noted that while the message was conveyed, the expression occasionally sounded awkward or overly literal, especially in sequences involving sarcasm or fast-paced academic dialogue. *Snake Bite*, again, scored the lowest (2.3) in acceptability. Evaluators frequently commented on unnatural phrasing and grammatical inconsistencies, often indicating that the subtitles appeared machine-generated. Notably, several sentences preserved English syntax and punctuation, making them jarring and disruptive to Indonesian viewers. This supports the claim that *Snake Bite*’s Indonesian subtitles were likely the result of automatic YouTube-generated translation, as confirmed in the methods section.

4.3 Readability of Subtitle Translation

Readability emerged as the most variable dimension, often affected by sentence structure and length. As shown in Table 5, *Ripple* (SM3) consistently achieved high readability scores.

Table 5. Sentence-Level Examples of High and Low Subtitle Readability

Short Movie	Source Line (SL)	Target Line (TL)	Average Readability Score
SM3 – <i>Ripple</i> (High)	I miss you.	<i>Aku rindu kamu.</i>	3.0
SM1 – <i>Alt. Math</i> (High)	Come on in.	<i>Silakan masuk.</i>	2.9
SM4 – <i>Snake Bite</i> (Low)	You okay?	<i>Kamu baik?</i>	1.8
SM4 – <i>Snake Bite</i> (Low)	What did you just say?	<i>Apa yang baru saja kamu katakan?</i>	1.7

Table 5 showcases lines evaluated for clarity and processing ease, where brevity and conversational tone led to higher scores. For instance, “I miss you” was translated as “*Aku rindu kamu*,” which scored a perfect 3.0 for being direct, emotionally resonant, and effortlessly comprehensible. Likewise, “*Silakan masuk*” (Come on in) from *Alternative Math* also received high marks for being brief and functionally clear (2.9). By contrast, the translation “*Apa yang baru saja kamu katakan?*” (What did you just say?) was flagged in *Snake Bite* for being too long and syntactically dense, which could hinder viewer comprehension during fast-paced scenes. Additionally, “You okay?” translated as “*Kamu baik?*” not only scored poorly in accuracy but also in readability, with a score of 1.8, due to its awkward and unnatural phrasing. Readability assesses the extent to which subtitles can be easily understood by the viewer without re-reading or confusion. It reflects both sentence clarity and processing fluency. Readability was the most variable dimension, with *Snake Bite* scoring only 2.1, and the remaining movies averaging 2.5. Evaluators noted that readability was often compromised when the sentence structure mirrored English too closely. For instance:

SL: “It’s not your fault.”

TL: “Ini bukan kesalahanmu.”

While accurate, some evaluators found this phrasing slightly stiff for casual speech and suggested “Bukan salahmu” instead, scoring it a 2. In *Ripple*, short and emotionally direct lines such as:

SL: “I miss you.”

TL: “Aku rindu kamu.”

were universally rated as highly readable (score: 3), reflecting clarity and cultural resonance.

Among the four movies, *Ripple* again performed well (2.5), tied with *Gift* and *Alternative Math*, which also scored 2.5. Subtitles in these movies tended to use concise, audience-friendly language. Evaluators pointed out that sentence segmentation and timing aligned well with scene progression, allowing viewers to process information efficiently. In addition, the use of punctuation and capitalization enhanced visual readability, especially during fast-paced scenes. Conversely, *Snake Bite* scored a 2.1 in readability—the lowest rating overall. This confirmed evaluator feedback that the subtitles were not only syntactically awkward but also cognitively demanding. In some cases, evaluators reported needing to re-watch or re-read lines to understand their meaning, which violates one of the core principles of subtitle design. Readability issues in *Snake Bite* were closely linked to its over-reliance on literal translations and lack of adaptation to the viewer’s processing speed. It is important to note that readability was the dimension with the greatest variance among evaluators, particularly in *Snake Bite*. One evaluator (E5) rated readability for SM4 as high as 3, while others rated it as low as 1.4. This divergence suggests that readability can be influenced by personal processing fluency, viewer expectations, or even screen size and subtitle timing—factors not fully controlled in this study.

4.4 Cross-Comparison and Evaluator Trends

A closer examination of evaluator responses revealed both convergence and divergence. Evaluators E1, E2, E3, and E4 generally showed aligned judgments,

especially for *Ripple*, which all rated highly across dimensions. However, E5 provided consistently higher scores for all movies, particularly *Snake Bite*, which was rated significantly better than by other evaluators. While inter-rater reliability remained strong overall, this outlier highlighted the inherent subjectivity in translation evaluation, especially when criteria such as “naturalness” or “readability” are involved. The divergence may also reflect varied translation expectations or experiences. For example, E1, a lecturer, tended to score more critically on acceptability and readability, likely due to professional awareness of translation standards. E2–E4, all student evaluators, showed moderate alignment. E5’s generous ratings may have resulted from a less critical or more tolerant viewing stance, particularly toward automated translations.

4.5 Interpretation of Overall Results

The aggregated results reinforce the notion that human-translated subtitles consistently outperform automated subtitles in both linguistic fidelity and user experience. Movies like *Ripple* and *Gift*, translated by experienced human subtitlers, demonstrated high accuracy, natural phrasing, and viewer-friendly presentation. In contrast, *Snake Bite*, relying on automated translation, revealed clear shortcomings in nuance, tone, and clarity. Here are detailed, **sentence-level tables** showing both the **highest** and **lowest scoring subtitles** for each translation quality dimension—**accuracy**, **acceptability**, and **readability**.

Dimension	Rank	Short Movie	SL	TL	Score
Accuracy	High	SM3 - Ripple	Thank you for helping me.	Terima kasih sudah membant	3.0
Accuracy	High	SM2 - Gift	I didn't like my father.	Aku tidak menyukai ayahku.	2.9
Accuracy	Low	SM4 - Snake Bite	Looks poisonous to me	Terlihat beracun bagi saya	1.8
Accuracy	Low	SM4 - Snake Bite	You okay?	Kamu baik?	1.6
Acceptability	High	SM3 - Ripple	I miss you.	Aku rindu kamu.	3.0
Acceptability	High	SM2 - Gift	I didn't like my father.	Aku tidak menyukai ayahku.	2.9
Acceptability	Low	SM4 - Snake Bite	Don't let it bite you.	Jangan biarkan itu menggigit	1.9
Acceptability	Low	SM1 - Alt. Math	He's pushing the boundaries.	Dia mendorong batas-batasny	2.0
Readability	High	SM3 - Ripple	I miss you.	Aku rindu kamu.	3.0
Readability	High	SM1 - Alt. Math	Come on in.	Silakan masuk.	2.9
Readability	Low	SM4 - Snake Bite	You okay?	Kamu baik?	1.8
Readability	Low	SM4 - Snake Bite	What did you just say?	Apa yang baru saja kamu kata	1.7

Figure 2. Sentence-Level Tables

Importantly, the findings also point to the role of genre and dialogue density in translation quality. Movies with simpler storylines and emotionally direct dialogue—such as *Ripple*—were translated more effectively. Conversely, movies involving humor, irony, or domain-specific language—like *Alternative Math*—posed more challenges to translators, even human ones.

Lastly, the high viewership or popularity of a short film (as in *Snake Bite*) does not guarantee the quality of its subtitles. Despite its 7.9 million views and professional presentation, *Snake Bite* delivered the weakest subtitle performance. This underscores the importance of professional translation practices, especially when addressing multilingual audiences.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Conclusion

This study evaluated the quality of Indonesian subtitle translations in four English-language short movies—*Alternative Math*, *Gift*, *Ripple*, and *Snake Bite*—by applying the translation quality model of Nababan (M. R. Nababan, 2015) which includes three dimensions: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Using a corpus of 227 sentence pairs and assessments by five evaluators, the research employed the qualitative framework of Miles and Huberman (Engle, 1999) to reduce, display, and interpret data. The findings address the research questions and shed light on how subtitle translation operates within the unique constraints and opportunities of the short movie format.

First, the analysis showed that subtitle quality varied substantially among the movies. *Ripple* (SM3) and *Gift* (SM2) received the highest overall scores (mean ≥ 2.6), indicating translations that were accurate, natural, and easy to understand. *Alternative Math* (SM1) scored slightly lower but remained within the “good” category. *Snake Bite* (SM4), however, consistently underperformed (mean ≈ 2.3), particularly in readability and acceptability, due to the use of automated translation tools.

Second, the study identified linguistic and cultural factors that influenced subtitle quality. In *Gift* and *Ripple*, both movies presented emotionally direct

and universal themes—parental love, personal loss, and connection—that were effectively conveyed through concise and well-adapted subtitles. The simplicity of the dialogue allowed for idiomatic translation that preserved emotional resonance. *Alternative Math*, a satire with academic and political undertones, posed greater challenges, as humor and irony required cultural contextualization. Some evaluators noted a degree of stiffness in its subtitle phrasing. *Snake Bite*, a dark comedy that hinges on fast-paced dialogue and sarcasm, suffered from mechanical literalism in its subtitles, leading to semantic loss and unnatural expression.

Third, *Ripple* emerged as the short film with the most effective subtitle translation. Its minimalistic dialogue, emotional clarity, and narrative pacing aligned well with translation strategies that emphasized naturalness and simplicity. This allowed human translators to produce subtitles that were both linguistically precise and accessible to viewers. Conversely, *Snake Bite* was hindered by automated subtitles that failed to capture tone, context, or idiomatic speech, especially during critical comedic exchanges. Based on the analysis, the study provides clear answers to the three research questions. First, in terms of how the subtitles reflect translation quality, *Alternative Math*, *Gift*, and *Ripple* showed consistently high performance across accuracy, acceptability, and readability, with mean scores between 2.5 and 2.9. These results reflect successful translation outcomes when subtitles are produced by human translators. In contrast, *Snake Bite*, which relied on automated translation, performed noticeably lower (≈ 2.3), particularly in readability and acceptability. Second, the analysis of linguistic and cultural factors showed that high-quality subtitles were those that applied adaptive strategies—using idiomatic expressions, culturally appropriate phrasing, and natural syntax aligned with target-language norms. Literal translations and rigid, machine-like structures were strongly associated with lower ratings, especially in the case of *Snake Bite*. Third, among the four films, *Ripple* was identified as the strongest overall example of subtitle quality. Its short, emotionally resonant dialogue, paired with fluent and natural translation, consistently achieved the highest scores from all evaluators. Taken together, these findings affirm that subtitle quality in short films is shaped not only by linguistic accuracy, but also by cultural sensitivity and

translator awareness—elements that were best achieved through human translation rather than automated tools.

5.2 Suggestion

The results of this study suggest that short movies represent a unique and demanding form of audiovisual translation. Their compressed narrative structure requires translators to condense meaning without sacrificing clarity or emotional depth. Each subtitle line carries heightened narrative weight, making errors or awkward phrasing more noticeable and disruptive. In this study, short movies with human-produced subtitles (*Ripple*, *Gift*) succeeded in delivering coherent, culturally appropriate, and emotionally resonant translations. By contrast, the shortcomings of *Snake Bite* demonstrate how automated subtitling can undermine a film's narrative intent, especially in genres like satire or dark comedy where tone and timing are critical.

Furthermore, short movies often rely on visual storytelling paired with minimal dialogue. This places additional pressure on subtitles to perform both linguistic and interpretive functions. For example, in *Gift*, the absence of explanatory narration meant that each subtitle carried an essential narrative role, requiring precision in meaning and tone. In *Alternative Math*, the political satire embedded in the script called for nuanced understanding that automated tools could not capture. These findings highlight the translator's role not just as a linguistic mediator, but as a co-narrator who ensures that meaning, tone, and context are preserved across languages.

This study reinforces the need for human involvement in subtitle translation, particularly in short movies where brevity amplifies the importance of each line. Translators must balance fidelity to the source text with natural expression in the target language, especially when handling emotionally charged or culturally specific material. The use of established evaluation frameworks, such as Nababan's model, is recommended for training translators and reviewing subtitle quality in media production.

Educators, translators, and content creators should be aware that subtitle quality directly impacts audience comprehension and engagement, especially in educational, social, or cross-cultural contexts. Short movies, due to their concise form and thematic depth, are particularly suitable as translation objects in teaching, research, and professional practice.

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