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Subtitle Strategic Of The Sims FreePlay Translated Into Bahasa Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and analyze the translation strategies used in the subtitles of The Sims FreePlay video game from English into Indonesian. The main focus of this research is on the subtitle translation strategies proposed by Gottlieb (1992), namely transfer, paraphrase, imitation, and condensation. Video games as a form of digital media require effective subtitle translation so that players can understand the storyline, instructions, and dialogues presented in the game. Therefore, analyzing the strategies used in subtitle translation is important to determine how the original message is conveyed in the target language. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through documentation by recording and compiling the subtitle texts that appear in the game. The collected data were then analyzed to identify the types of translation strategies applied and to determine which strategy was used most frequently. The findings revealed that the transfer strategy was the most dominant, accounting for 44.44% of the total data, followed by paraphrase (22.22%), imitation (22.22%), and condensation (11.11%). In addition, this study also evaluated the translation quality based on three aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The analysis showed that the average score for each aspect was 3, indicating that the translations were generally accurate, acceptable, and easy for Indonesian players to understand. Overall, this study contributes to translation studies, especially in the context of digital media such as video games, and can serve as a reference for translators, students, and researchers.

Keywords: Subtitles, Translation Strategy, Video Games, Gottlieb, The Sims FreePlay

1. Introduction

Video games are one of today's technological developments that have become a popular form of entertainment not only for children, but also for teenagers and adults. According to Douglas A. Gentile and Craig A. Anderson (2003), video games are a medium that provides entertainment, but can also influence the behaviour and way of thinking of its players through storylines, visuals, and other audio elements. Along with the rapid development of digital media, video games today are not only played locally but are also distributed globally, which requires translation so that players from different linguistic backgrounds can understand the content of the game.

One of the popular games consisting of both kids and adults is The Sims FreePlay. The Sims FreePlay is a video game application developed by Maxis and published by Electronic Arts. This game is a simulation of everyday life where players can build houses, grow vegetables, create characters, cook, work and form families. In this game, subtitles or in-game text play an important role as hints and instructions during gameplay. Without clear subtitles, players may experience difficulties in understanding the missions or dialogues presented in the game.

According to the theory stated by Henrik Gottlieb (1992), translation is the process of transferring linguistic and semiotic messages from one language to another, especially in digital media such as subtitles and video games. Translation is not just about transferring words or sentences, but it should also consider the cultural context, language structure, and user experience. Therefore, translation in video games such as The Sims FreePlay is interesting to study, especially in looking at the strategies and approaches used to convey meaning from the source language to the target language effectively and naturally.

Several previous studies have discussed subtitle translation strategies in audiovisual media. Research by Fithri and Suyudi (2019) analysed English wordplay translation into Indonesian in the subtitle of the television series Friends and found that translators often adapt language expressions to maintain humour and meaning in the target language. Destaria and Rini (2019) examined the translation of English idioms in the movie Pitch Perfect 3 and showed that different strategies are required to transfer idiomatic meaning accurately into Indonesian. Similarly, Saputra and Fatmawati (2022) analysed subtitle translation techniques in movies and found that techniques such as paraphrasing and condensation are frequently used to maintain meaning while adjusting subtitle limitations.

Other studies also highlight the importance of translation strategies in audiovisual contexts. Utami and Satyaningrum (2022) investigated subtitle translation techniques in the documentary series *Our Planet*, while Irwan et al. (2021) analysed strategies used in translating taboo words in the movie *Get Hard*. Their findings indicate that subtitling requires careful consideration of linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors to maintain both meaning and appropriateness in the target language.

More recent studies also explore subtitling strategies from different perspectives. Mulyadi et al. (2023) analysed translation techniques used in the Indonesian subtitle text of *Avengers: Endgame*, emphasizing how translators adjust dialogue to fit subtitle constraints. Asterina and Ali (2022) focused on paraphrase strategies in audiovisual translation using a multimodal approach, highlighting the interaction between visual elements and linguistic translation. Yamjirin, Nababan, and Yustanto (2025) also examined translation techniques and accuracy in rendering mock politeness in fan-subtitled movies, while Hayon et al. (2025) studied translation strategies used in Indonesian-English subtitles in audiovisual media. In addition, Tsani, Junining, and Hariyanto (2026) analysed subtitling strategies in translating cultural-specific items in the movie *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*, showing that cultural elements often require adaptive translation strategies.

Gottlieb (1992) states that translation in audiovisual media is not only about language transfer, but also requires an understanding of context, culture and other semiotic forms of communication such as sound and visuals. These strategies are used to effectively convey messages to users in the target language.

In this research, the researcher uses subtitling strategies from Gottlieb (1992:166). There are ten (10) subtitling strategies; they are expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation. These strategies are used to help translators convey messages while maintaining meaning and cultural appropriateness.

The purpose of this study is to identify the translation strategies used in the English and Indonesian translated texts of *The Sims FreePlay* game, as well as to analyse the accuracy, acceptability and readability of the translated texts. Accuracy instrument-rating concerns on how accurate the translation product is. Acceptability instrument-rating is used to see the naturalness of the translation product. Readability instrument-rating concerns on the clarity of the translation product. The translation quality assessment in this study refers to the model proposed by Mangatur Nababan (2012).

This research is expected to contribute to the field of translation studies, especially in the translation of digital media such as video games. In addition, the results of this study can be used as an additional reference for translators, students, and researchers in understanding subtitle translation strategies more deeply.

A comparison between *The Sims FreePlay* and *Real Steel* movie articles shows that both discuss subtitling strategies using the same theory from Gottlieb (1992), but the focus and approach are slightly different. The *Sims FreePlay* article focuses more on how the strategies are used in the game text while assessing the quality of the translation in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Meanwhile, the *Real Steel* article emphasizes how often each strategy appears in the subtitles without assessing the quality of the translation. In terms of data, *Real Steel* has a much larger number of data (62 data), while *The Sims FreePlay* only has 9, so the analysis in *Real Steel* feels broader. However, *The Sims FreePlay* has the advantage of deeper quality analysis, especially since the context is a game, which has a unique way of conveying messages. Therefore, even though both studies discuss similar topics, they provide complementary perspectives in understanding subtitling strategies in audiovisual translation.

2. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. This method was chosen because this study aims to describe and analyse the subtitle translation strategies used in the English and Indonesian versions of the video game *The Sims FreePlay*. A qualitative descriptive approach allows the researcher to explore language phenomena in a natural context and to provide detailed explanations regarding the translation process found in the subtitle texts of the game.

Qualitative research focuses on interpreting meaning, context, and linguistic patterns rather than measuring numerical data. Therefore, this method is considered appropriate for analysing subtitle translation strategies because the researcher needs to understand how the source language text is transferred into the target language while maintaining meaning, clarity, and naturalness. In this study, the translation strategies are analysed based on the subtitling strategy theory proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992), which includes several strategies used in audiovisual translation.

By applying this approach, the researcher is able to observe the translation phenomena in depth and systematically. The analysis does not only focus on identifying the strategies used by the translator, but also examines how those strategies influence the meaning, acceptability, and readability of the translated subtitles in the game.

2.1. Time and Place of Research

This research was conducted from May to June 2025. The research process was carried out online because the data source used in this study comes from a digital platform, namely the video game *The Sims FreePlay*. The game was accessed and played through mobile devices using Android and iOS operating systems.

During the research period, the researcher collected subtitle data that appeared in the gameplay, including instructions, dialogues, and in-game messages. In addition, the researcher also accessed supporting literature through online academic databases such as journals, articles, and books related to translation studies and audiovisual translation. These references were used to strengthen the theoretical foundation and support the analysis of translation strategies used in the game.

2.2. Object/Source of Research Data

The object of this research is the subtitle text found in the video game *The Sims FreePlay*. The subtitles analysed in this study consist of text displayed during gameplay, including mission instructions, character interactions, notifications, and other informational texts that guide the player during the game.

The research focuses on comparing the subtitle text in two languages: English as the source language (SL) and Bahasa Indonesia as the target language (TL). The main data sources were obtained from subtitle transcripts that appear in the game interface. The researcher collected the data through screenshots and documentation taken directly during gameplay sessions.

These subtitle texts serve as the primary data for analysing how translation strategies are applied in transferring meaning from English into Bahasa Indonesia. The selected data were those that clearly demonstrate the translation process and can be analysed using the subtitling strategies proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992).

2.3. Data Collection Techniques

The data in this research were collected through documentation and direct observation techniques. The researcher observed the subtitle text that appeared during the gameplay of *The Sims FreePlay*. Each subtitle that appeared in the English version and its Indonesian translation was carefully recorded and documented.

The researcher conducted several gameplay sessions to ensure that sufficient data were collected. During this process, the researcher captured screenshots of subtitle texts and compiled them into a data table consisting of the source language (English) and the target language (Bahasa Indonesia). The researcher then compared the two versions to identify differences in structure, wording, and translation strategies.

In addition to primary data collection, the researcher also gathered supporting information from academic journals, books, and previous studies related to translation strategies, subtitle translation, and audiovisual translation. These supporting sources were used to provide theoretical explanations and strengthen the analysis of the data.

2.4. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analysed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is a research technique used to interpret textual data systematically by identifying patterns, meanings, and categories within the data. In this study, the analysis focuses on identifying the translation strategies used in the subtitle texts of *The Sims FreePlay*.

The analysis process was carried out through several steps. First, the researcher identified the subtitle texts that contain translation from English into Bahasa Indonesia. Second, the researcher classified each translation according to the subtitling strategies proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992). These strategies include expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation.

After identifying and classifying the strategies, the researcher analysed how these strategies were applied in the translation process. The analysis also considered whether the strategies used were effective in conveying the intended meaning and maintaining the clarity of the subtitle text within the game context.

2.5. Research Instruments

The main instrument used in this research is the researcher herself as the key instrument. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role in observing, collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data. The researcher

carefully examined the subtitle texts, identified translation strategies, and interpreted the findings based on relevant translation theories.

In addition to the researcher as the main instrument, several supporting tools were used to facilitate the research process. These tools include documentation of subtitle screenshots taken during gameplay, Google Documents for organising and recording data, and PowerPoint presentations used to summarise and analyse the findings.

Furthermore, the subtitling strategy framework proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992) was used as an analytical instrument to categorise the translation strategies found in the data. This framework helped the researcher conduct the analysis in a systematic and structured manner.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research Result

The research findings show that several subtitling strategies proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992) were applied in translating the subtitle texts of *The Sims FreePlay* from English into Bahasa Indonesia. From the analysis of the collected data, four translation strategies were identified in the subtitle texts, namely transfer, paraphrase, imitation, and condensation. Among these strategies, the transfer strategy appears to be the most dominant.

Based on the data analysis, the most frequently used subtitling strategy in *The Sims FreePlay* is the transfer strategy, which appears in 44.44% of the total data. This is followed by the paraphrase strategy and the imitation strategy, each appearing in 22.22% of the data. Meanwhile, the condensation strategy appears only once, representing 11.11% of the total data analysed. Other strategies proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992), such as expansion, deletion, transcription, decimation, dislocation, and resignation, were not found in the subtitle texts of the analysed gameplay data.

The high frequency of the transfer strategy indicates that translators tend to maintain the original meaning of the source language as closely as possible when translating subtitle texts. This strategy involves translating the source text directly into the target language without significant structural or semantic changes. In the context of *The Sims FreePlay*, this approach is often used because many of the subtitle texts consist of simple instructions, commands, or informational messages that guide players during gameplay. Maintaining the original structure and meaning helps ensure that players clearly understand the tasks and objectives presented in the game.

The paraphrase strategy, which appears in 22.22% of the data, is used when the original expression in the source language cannot be translated directly into the target language without affecting clarity or naturalness. In these cases, the translator reformulates the sentence structure or wording in Bahasa Indonesia while maintaining the same meaning as the original text. This strategy helps the subtitle text sound more natural and understandable for Indonesian players, especially when the source language contains expressions that do not have direct equivalents in the target language.

The imitation strategy, which also appears in 22.22% of the data, occurs when specific terms or expressions in the source language are retained in the target language without translation. This strategy is commonly used for proper names, character names, or specific in-game terminology that should remain unchanged in order to maintain consistency within the game environment. By preserving these terms, the translator ensures that the original identity and context of the game elements remain recognizable to the players.

Meanwhile, the condensation strategy, which appears only once (11.11%), is used when the translator shortens the source text while maintaining its essential meaning. This strategy is often applied in subtitle translation to accommodate space limitations or to improve readability. In the context of *The Sims FreePlay*, condensation may occur when longer English instructions are simplified into shorter Indonesian phrases so that players can quickly read and understand the message during gameplay.

On the other hand, several strategies proposed by Henrik Gottlieb (1992), such as expansion, deletion, transcription, decimation, dislocation, and resignation, were not identified in the analysed data. This may be due to the nature of the subtitle texts in the game, which generally consist of short and straightforward instructions rather than complex dialogues or culturally specific expressions. As a result, the translation process tends to rely on simpler strategies that maintain clarity and direct meaning.

Overall, the findings indicate that subtitle translation in *The Sims FreePlay* prioritizes clarity, directness, and ease of understanding for players. The dominance of the transfer strategy suggests that translators aim to preserve the original message of the source language while ensuring that the translated subtitles remain clear and functional within the gameplay context.

3.2. Discussion

This discussion aims to explain more deeply the meaning of the findings of The Sims FreePlay subtitle translation strategy based on Gottlieb's theory as follows :

Transfer Strategy

SL : Tap on the Sim with the floating '!' above their head, and from the 'Friendly' category, have them Be Funny.

TL : Ketuk Sim dengan tanda '!' di atas kepala mereka, dan dari kategori 'Ramah', minta mereka Menjadi Lucu.

As the translator translates word-for-word and not sentence-by-sentence, the translation is literal. However, although the sentence structure follows the original pattern directly, the meaning is unchanged. Then the SL sentence is retained in the TL, such as the example : "Friendly" and "Be Funny" are translated into "Ramah" and "Lucu"

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Parafrase Strategy

SL : How exciting! Imagine your Sim relaxing on the deck of a luxury houseboat, soaking up the sun, not a care in the world.

TL : Uhh asiknya! Bayangkan Sim Anda bersantai di geladak rumah perahu mewah, berjemur di bawah sinar matahari, tanpa peduli apa pun di dunia.

The strategy used in the sims game mission above is the paraphrasing strategy. This strategy is used when the translator changes the structure or words in the source language, but retains the original meaning in the target language. In this example, the phrase "How exciting!" is translated into "Uhh asiknya!".

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Imitation Strategy

SL : Great! Only one thing left to do. Celebrate! The gateway to the OCEAN VIEW ESTATE is almost open! Have one of your Sims dance to a Stereo!.

TL : Bagus! Tinggal satu hal yang harus dilakukan. Rayakan! Pintu gerbang menuju OCEAN VIEW ESTATE hampir terbuka! Ajak salah satu Sim Anda menari diiringi Stereo!.

In the sentence, the place name OCEAN VIEW ESTATE does not change its form in the Indonesian subtitles. This is done because OCEAN VIEW ESTATE is a place name or property name, which generally does not need to be translated, to keep it in line with the game and not lose its original identity.

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Transfer Strategy

SL : Your Sim had a sudden moment of mental clarity! They know the secret to growing a plant that sprouts MONEY! From the 'Trees, Plants & Flowers' section in the Home Store, place a 'Garden Patch' in your Sim's house, then tap on it to grow a 'Simoleon Sprout'.

TL : Sim Anda tiba-tiba mendapatkan kejernihan mental! Mereka tahu rahasia untuk menumbuhkan tanaman yang menghasilkan UANG! Dari bagian 'Pohon, Tanaman & Bunga' di 'Home Store', letakkan tambalan taman di rumah Sim Anda, lalu ketuk di atasnya untuk 'menumbuhkan tunas uang'.

The strategy used is Transfer Strategy because the translator maintains the form and structure from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) almost directly, word by word.

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Paraphrase Strategy

SL : We found Grandma's cookbook! The first recipe is a fine dining classic, Cheese and Tomato on Toast. But where do we find this mysterious 'toast'?

TL : Kami menemukan buku resep Nenek! Resep pertama adalah hidangan klasik yang mewah, Roti Bakar Keju dan Tomat. Tapi di mana kita bisa menemukan 'roti bakar' yang misterius ini?

Cheese and Tomato on Toast can in the literally be translated to Keju dan Tomat diatas Roti Bakar. However, it is translated as Roti Bakar, Keju dan Tomat, which is not exactly the same in structure, but still conveys the meaning of the original text.

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Transfer Strategy

SL : Your Sim should rebuild it! Simply find all of the missing pieces and put them back together! First you might need to learn a little about archaeology though. Read the Big Book of Stuff.

TL : Sim Anda harus membangunnya kembali! Cukup temukan semua bagian yang hilang dan susun kembali! Pertama-tama, Anda mungkin perlu belajar sedikit tentang arkeologi. Bacalah Buku Besar Barang.

As the translator translates word-for-word and not sentence-by-sentence, the translation is literal. However, although the sentence structure follows the original pattern directly, the meaning is unchanged. Then the SL sentence is retained in the TL, such as the example : "the missing pieces and put them back together!" are translated into "Cukup temukan semua bagian yang hilang dan susun kembali!".

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Condensation Strategy

SL : Hey, did you see that? You found an artifact in the Encyclopedia! Wow, you didn't even need to dig! Maybe there are more located around the place. Try looking in other random places... such as the fridge. While you're there, enjoy some Leftovers!

TL : Hei, kau lihat itu? Anda menemukan sebuah artefak di dalam Ensiklopedia! Wow, Anda bahkan tidak perlu menggali! Mungkin masih ada lagi di sekitar tempat ini. Coba cari di tempat lain secara acak... seperti kulkas. Selagi kalian di sana, nikmati beberapa makanan sisa!

The simplification of "Hey, did you see that?" to "Hei, kau lihat itu?" makes the sentence concise without changing the meaning, although it could be better translated as "Hei, kamu lihat barusan?!" or "hei apa kamu lihat itu?".

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Transfer Strategy

SL : Hmm, nothing in the fridge. Maybe some of the artifacts were thrown out in the garbage. Search for Artifacts in the garbage!

TL : Hmm, tidak ada apa-apa di dalam kulkas.

This translation uses the Transfer method because it maintains the structure and word order from the source language to the target language directly. The sentence "Hmm, nothing in the fridge" is translated into "Hmm, tidak ada apa-apa di dalam kulkas" without any change in words or meaning, only replacing the words directly with their equivalents. This shows that the translation is done word-for-word, not based on the overall meaning of the sentence. Similarly, the other sentences still follow the original language. The overall meaning has not changed, but the structure and way of delivery are still the same as the source language.

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Imitation Strategy

SL : Bingo! You've found all three artifacts now! That's enough to upgrade the first monument, 'The Riches of Terra', to level one! Go and do it now!.

TL : Bingo! Anda telah menemukan ketiga artefak sekarang! Itu sudah cukup untuk meningkatkan monumen pertama, 'The Riches of Terra', ke level satu! Pergi dan lakukan sekarang!.

In the sentence, the place name THE RICHES OF TERRA does not change its form in the Indonesian subtitles. This is done because THE RICHES OF TERRA is a place name or property name, which generally does not need to be translated, to keep it in line with the game and not lose its original identity.

Translation Quality :

- Accuracy : 3
- Acceptability : 3
- Readability : 3

Findings

The findings in this article show that the translator used several subtitling strategies based on Gottlieb's theory to adapt the English text into Indonesian in The Sims FreePlay game as follows :

Transfer strategies were used the most, indicating that translators prefer word-for-word translation, especially in game missions.

Paraphrasing is used to adapt sentences or words to make them more natural in the target language, without changing the meaning, as in the translation of "It's so exciting!" to "Uhh asiknyaa!".

Imitation retains terms, names of people, place names such as Ocean View Estate and The Riches of Terra in the Game Sims Freeplay.

Condensation, although only one data, illustrates to summarise a long sentence to make it more concise but still meaningful.

4. Conclusions

This section presents three main points based on the results of the data analysis. First, it discusses the conclusions drawn from the research findings. Second, it explains the implications of these findings for translation, particularly in the context of video game texts. Third, it provides some recommendations that can help future translators and researchers to improve the quality of translation in interactive media. According to the data analysis, it is concluded that the most frequently used translation strategy in The Sims FreePlay subtitles is transfer strategy. This strategy is chosen because it can maintain the meaning directly from the source language to the target language, especially in instructive sentences. In addition, paraphrasing and imitation strategies are also used to make the text more natural and remain in context. Condensation strategies are used in small amounts to summarize information without losing meaning. Overall, the translation quality is classified as good with an average score of 3 for the

aspects of accuracy, acceptability and readability. The results of this study have implications for the development of translation studies, especially in digital media such as video games. Subtitle translation requires an understanding of not only the language, but also the cultural context, communication style, and user experience. This study shows the importance of using appropriate strategies to maintain communication effectiveness in the gaming context. In addition, these strategies can be used as a reference in training translators to be more adaptive to various forms of interactive texts. This study recommends that translators of video game subtitles consider a combination of literal (transfer) and adaptive (paraphrase/condensation) strategies to make the translation more natural yet accurate. For future researchers, it is recommended to analyze other types of games or expand the amount of data studied in order to get more diverse and representative results. In addition, further studies could relate translation strategies to players' responses to the quality of subtitles in the game.

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