

# ENGLISH WORDPLAY TRANSLATION INTO INDONESIAN IN THE SUBTITLE OF AMERICAN TELEVISION SERIES

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## Abstract

*One of the humorous aspects in the field of language is wordplay. Wordplay tends to create linguistic problems of translability due to the diversity of languages and different linguistic typology. However, recently a number of movies and series from overseas which the genre is comedy must contain wordplay in the subtitles. Whilst, the subtitles in one of the scope of audiovisual translation, it requires several techniques to translate as subtitling adds space, time, and presentation. This paper is to investigate types of wordplay found in the subtitles of Hannah Montana and strategies applied to translate English wordplay into Indonesian. The data of this study was collected from an American series entitled Hannah Montana from season one to three. Hence, the most appropriate method employed is qualitative. The sampling technique applied is purposive sampling. The total four types of wordplay found in the series, namely: phonological and graphological structure (consists of homonymy, paronymy, and homophony), lexical structure (polysemy), morphological structure, and syntactic structure. Most of the translator whom sub movies or series used is wordplay to non-wordplay strategy. This strategy has a significant effect in rendering the meaning to the target text that affects the audience when they watch the film whether to laugh or not to laugh.*

**Keywords:** American television series, Audiovisual translation, subtitles, wordplay

## INTRODUCTION

The use of language in communicating whether to give any serious or comical intention, playing with words tends to create linguistic problems of translability (Delabastita, 1996). As it is pointed out by Chiaro (1992) that what is funny in the United States does not have to be funny in the United Kingdom and vice versa. Such humorous aspects appear in translation, particularly in American films and series. One of the humorous form is wordplay. Wordplay is identified as a problem to understand and translate due to the distinction of the cultures in each regions or countries. However, the idea of translating literary works have been developed and become the most crucial part of language

development nowadays. It has been shown by the popularity of television series and movies produced by Hollywood in several countries increase during the time. Thus, this phenomenon discovers numerous translation forms. Cintas & Remael (2007) proposed the three most dominant ways of translating audiovisual programs, those are dubbing (also called lip-sync), subtitling and voice over. One of the most common uses of Hollywood series and movies translation methods spread in Indonesia is dominantly subtitling. This translation process deals with written text, occasionally on the lower part of the screen that endeavors to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image

(letters, inserts, graffiti, etc.) and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voice off) (Cintas & Remael, 2007). Further, Cintas & Remael argued that it is necessary for subtitles to note three main components, namely: the spoken word, the image, and the subtitles.

Due to the various films and series during these days, subtitling exhibits cumulative complications as both of them hold their genre which results in different exclusive terms. In line to the variety of genre films and series occurs in Indonesia, the subtitlers require to pay attention to the type of films and its function (Köprülü, 2017). Comedy is the most genre films and series people mostly looking for to watch that may develop a number of problems when people in different cultures try to watch films or series contains wordplay elements (Sari, 2016). One of well-known comedy series' entitled *Hannah Montana* gave a huge contribution in subtitling development, especially in Indonesia where mostly half of the entertainment has been imported from overseas. This series was one of the most iconic situation comedy among American and Indonesian youth during the time and contains situations in everyday life create a person laugh or smile occurred in different types, for instance joke, wit, anecdote, gesture and mimic (Köprülü, 2017). Several jokes most commonly used in the series had something to do with words, sounds, pronunciation or even pictures. One humor aspect discovered in this

television series is called wordplay. As Delabastita (1996) proposed that wordplay is the general name for the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) are exploited to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings, it involved as well that the features of wordplay include pronunciation, spelling, morphology, vocabulary, or syntax (Leppihalme, 1997). Further more, Delabastita (1996) distinguished wordplay into four typologies include: (a) phonological and graphological structure which involves homonymy, paronymy, homophony, and homograph, (b) lexical structure which consists of polysemy and misuse of idiom, (c) Morphological structure, and (d) Syntactic structure.

There is a confusion between the term 'wordplay' and 'pun' among some experts. However, pun is classified as a subcategory of wordplay (Leppihalme, 1997), whilst eight strategies was employed to translate wordplay from source language into target language (Delabastita, 1996), those several lists are as follows: A number of studies discuss types of wordplay and translation strategies. Nurlaila & Purwaningsih (2015) pointed out that the translation technique used creates an impact on the low level of accuracy and loss of the wordplay humor effect on the target text which is Indonesian language. In line with that, Sari (2016) said that the translation strategy mostly applied by the subtitlers in

**Table 1. Translation Strategies for Wordplay**

Pun-Pun	Pun S.T-Pun T.T
Pun-Non Pun	Non Pun-Pun
Pun-Related Theoretical Device	Zero-Pun
Pun-Zero	Editorial techniques

translating films or series is wordplay to non-wordplay as the maintenance meaning is possible merely in wordplay to non-wordplay strategy. Thus, Köprülü (2017) added that the translation of linguistics elements which creates humor effect are quite problematic as it is happened that the vast majority of the original films or series effects disappear in the translation. However, this paper offers another source of subtitles text translated by professional subtitlers whether any distinction exists or not. The distinction forms of wordplay which arises, such as deviation from linguistic norms, bizzare syntax, incorrect grammar and pronunciation, misuse of words, and words or phrases and translation strategies applied plays creates people to laugh or not to laugh (Köprülü, 2017). In line with a number of reasons above, this paper is to investigate (1) types of wordplay found in Hannah Montana series, (2)the strategies applied to translate English wordplay into Indonesian. In the present discussion, the researcher investigates types of wordplay revealed in an American series *Hannah Montana* and the translation-strategy

employed in the series from source language into target language.

## METHODS

As the aim of this paper is to identify the typology of wordplay and strategies in translating English wordplay into Indonesia, the most suitable method applied is qualitative. For the analysis, the source of data were taken from English and Indonesian official subtitles *Hannah Montana* series from season one to season three by Disney Channel Indonesian distributed by PT Vision Interprima Pictures (2006-2011). Purposive sampling is employed in this study as well. In collecting the data, the researcher watched American series entitled *Hannah Montana* from season one to three using two subtitles (English and Indonesian). Then, the researcher tried to find several unusual or funny words identified as an English wordplay. After that, some English wordplay was noted down with the Indonesian translation. The next step was the researcher classified them based on four types of wordplay and analyzed a few strategies used

in translating English wordplay by a number of Delabastita's translation strategies for wordplay. Then, the researcher created two columns which contains two subtitles; English subtitle and Indonesian subtitle to make them easy to analyze, classify and understand.

The source of the data were collected from a popular American series among American and Indonesian youth entitled *Hannah Montana* aired by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network during ten years, from 1994—2004, while Indonesia aired this series on private

television station, RCTI. It was aired in *Republik Citra Televisi Indonesia* for one season merely. Besides, several jokes occur in *Hannah Montana* subtitles was dominated by such cases: slip of the tongue, reported slips, deliberate wordplay, and inexplicable play on language (Chiaro, 1992, p. 17).

In the present discussion, the analyzed data is in the form of utterances. In analyzing the utterances, the researcher identifies utterances in micro level, such as: words, phrases, and clauses translated into target language using translation strategies for wordplay (Delabastita, 1996).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Typology of Wordplay

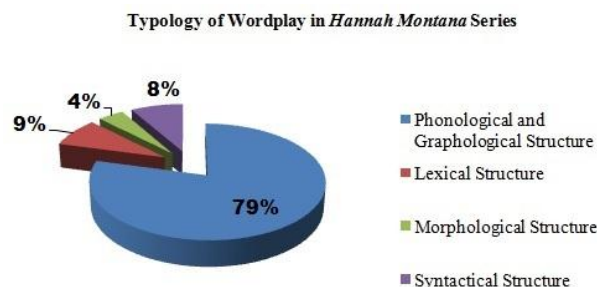


Figure 1. Typology of Wordplay in *Hannah Montana* Series

The analysis reveals that there are 19 (70.8%) data were found in **phonological and graphological structure** type, those are: (one datum was *homonymy*), (13 data were *paronymy*), and (five data were *homophony*).

Based on **Lexical structure**, there is one (4.2%) *polysemy*, one in *misuse of idiom* while in **Morphological structure** there is

one (8.3%) datum, and in **Syntactic structure** there is two (16.7%) data. Several types of wordplay can be viewed from the following instances.

### Phonological and Graphological Structure Paronymy

The word **...egg-zactly...** is a paronymy word **...exactly...** in pronunciation and phenomenon in wordplay as it looks alike the

**Table 2. Paronymy**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Indonesian</b>
A father of Hannah's brother, named Jackson found his phone on the egg tray in referigerator and tried to give him a lesson by hiding his cellphone, so that he would never forget something precious again. He chose to give him a hint where the handphone was left exactly by saying the word <b>...egg-zactly...</b> Instead of saying <b>...exactly...</b> he said <b>...egg-zactly...</b> to tease him and play a word with his son.	"You know what? If the boy didn't already know where his phone was, then I'd tell him. But since he knows <b>egg-zactly</b> where it is...	"Kau tahu? Jika dia tak tahu di mana ponselnya, aku akan mengatakannya. Tapi karena dia tahu <b>pasti</b> di mana ponselnya...

spelling but different in written. It is supported by Attardo (1994) that two words are paronyms when their phonemic representations are similar but not identical. Hence, **...egg-zactly...** is a paronymy case in wordplay, eventhough there are no more words to be compared.

The wordplay centered on the word **...egg-zactly...** which in this case are slightly similar in spelling with the word **...exactly...**

but not identical pronunciations. The word **...egg-zactly...** consists of two words **...eggz...** and **...act...** and also a suffix **...ly...** The word **...eggz...** is pronounced /egz/ **...act...** is pronounced /ækt/ **...ly...** is pronounced /li/. Besides, the word **...egg-zactly...** was a play for the word **...exactly...** Furthermore, the two words are an adverb referring to emphasize that something is correct in every way or in every detail.

### Homophony

**Table 3. Homophony**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Indonesian</b>
A schoolgirl named Miley and who was also a superstar named Hannah Montana convinced her bodyguard not to ruin her personal life about dating somebody who fitted for her. Thus, when she said the word <b>...needs...</b> her father	Okay, fine it is. I'm a girl. I have <b>needs</b> .  Please tell me you just said you're a girl who has <b>knees</b> .	Baik, benar. Aku seorang gadis. Aku punya <b>kebutuhan</b> .  Tolong katakan kau baru bilang kau gadis yang punya <b>lutut</b> .

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said the word **...knees...** when he passed them in order to calm down the situation between his daughter, Miley and her bodyguard.

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The word **...needs..** and **.....knees.....** is quite similar eventhough the spelling and the pronunciation is totally different. They share the same sound “**n**” at the beginning of the word.

Both of them are also a homophony phenomenon in wordplay as they are identical in phonemic. The word **....needs...** is pronounced /**ni:dz**/. Meanwhile, the word **.....knees.....** which in singular form is pronounced /**ni:/**.

According to Attardo (1994), “Two words are homophones when their phonemic representation is identical. (p.111) Hence,

**....needs...** and **...knees...** are a paronymy case. The wordplay centered on the word **...needs...** and the word **...knees...** which in this case are slightly identical. Both of them have similar forms but differ in meanings. The word **...needs...** is in a way that cannot be avoided, while the word **...knee...** refers to the joint between the top and bottom parts of the leg where it bends in the middle. The speaker deliberately made the word **...knee...** in plural form in order to make the word sounds similar to **...needs...** In another words, he exploited the phonological feature of the language to amuse the viewers.

### Syntactic Structure

**Table 4. Syntactic Structure**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Indonesian</b>
Jackson asked for a bottle of water but the girl who was being asked answered him in a different way that grammatically inappropriate by answering, “Yes, you are.” However, the question used English modal (such as: could, can, may, might, should, etc) should be answered by modal also. Thus, the question, “Could I get a bottle of water?” The answer must be, “Yes, you could.” Or even, “Yes, you can.” The answer, “Yes, you are.” developed some ambiguities.	Could I get a bottle of water?	Boleh minta sebotol air?
	Yes, <b>you are</b> .	Ya, <b>memang</b> .
	Can. I mean yes, <b>you can</b> .	Bisa. Maksudku, <b>ya, bisa</b> .

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Delabastita (1996) pointed out that grammars tend to produce phrases or sentences which may be parsed more than one possibility. The ambiguity occurred in syntactic structure. It appears in the phrase, “**Yes, you are**”. The phrase ‘**you are**’ gives the emphasize of the

trully of yourself. Therefore, the wordplay exists in the effet of **you are** which gives two effects in the context above, whether indicated the meaning that you are a bottle or you are able to get a bottle of water

### Translation Strategies

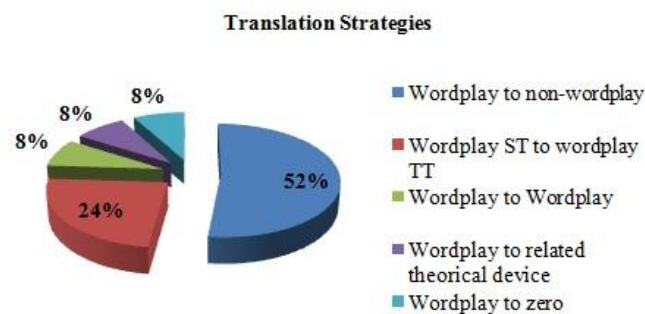


Figure 2. Translation Strategies

According to the chart above, it is presented that 13 (45.8%) wordplays are subtitled into non-wordplay, six (29.2%) wordplays ST are subtitled into Pun TT, two (25%) wordplays are subtitled into wordplay,

two wordplays are subtitled into related theoretical device and one wordplay is subtitled into zero. Strategies used can be viewed from the following instances.

### Wordplay to Non-Wordplay

Table 5. Wordplay to Non-Wordplay

Situation	English	Indonesian
A character named Jackson had an argue to his father because he was forgot where he took his handphone. On the other hand, his father found his phone on the egg tray in referigerator and tried to give him a lesson by hiding it so that he would never forget something precious again. He chose to give him a hint where the handphone was left exactly by saying the word ... <b>omletting</b> ... Instead of saying ... <b>I'm letting</b> ..., he	“Cause I sure don’t want to be hard-boiled about this and scramble up your plans, so <b>omletting</b> go.”	“Karena Ayah yakin tak mau menyulitkan dan merusak rencanamu, jadi Ayah <b>biarkan kau</b> pergi.”
	“Well great.”	“Bagus.”

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emphasized the word ...**omelette**... in order to tease him and play a word with his son that his phone is in the egg tray.

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The word **omletting** is a playing word form from the phrase **I am letting**. The word ...**omletting**... consists of two words ...**omelette**... and suffix ...**-ing**... The word ...**omelette**... is pronounced /'ɒmlət/. Meanwhile, the word ...**I'm**... is pronounced /aɪm/. The word ...**letting**... is pronounced /'letɪŋ/. If the sentence ...**I'm letting**... is pronounced, it will be /aɪm/ /'letɪŋ/ which is almost as similar as pronouncing /'ɒmlətɪŋ/.

However the word ...**omletting**... refers to a hot dish of eggs mixed together and fried, often with cheese, meet, vegetables, etc, while ...**I'm letting**... is a sentence meaning somebody who is in a period of time when you let a house or other property to somebody else. In the target text, **omletting** is translated with literal technique into ...**biarkan kau**.... In other words, there is no significant wordplay in the target text.

### Wordplay ST to Wordplay TT

Table 6. Wordplay ST to Wordplay TT

Situation	English	Indonesian
Jackson tried to attract all of his school friends attention on his appearance by wearing a cowboy clothes with bling belt. However, by the time he wanted to say and showed his bling belt, he was slipping his tongue. Instead of saying ... <b>bling</b> ... he said ... <b>blang</b> ... to his friends.	<p>“Back home in Tennessee, that’s what we call <b>blang</b>!”</p> <p>“It’s <b>bling</b>.”</p> <p>“That’s what I said. <b>Blang</b>.”</p> <p>“What a loser.”</p>	<p>“Di Tennessee, ini yang kami sebut <b>mengkilap</b>.”</p> <p>“Itu <b>mengilap</b>”</p> <p>“Itu yang ku katakan. <b>Mengkilap</b>.”</p> <p>“Pecundang.”</p>

As it is stated that when the wordplay replaced by some rhetorical devices, such as rhyme, repetition, alliteration, etc, which aims to recapture the effect of the source-text wordplay, this strategy named related rhetorical device (Delabastita, 1996). The translator translated the word **blang** became **mengkilap** into Indonesian. Meanwhile, the word **bling**

became **mengilap**. The translator played with the Indonesian mixed prefix *-me*, that is *me+kilap* in Indonesia should be *mengilap*, but it was played into *meng- kilap*. It can be said that the translator translates it from pun to rhetorical device in the target language. In the source text, the sound **diarrhea** and **diaria** almost look alike both in spelling and pronunciation. The word ...**diarrhea**... is



pronounced /,daɪə'riə/, while the word the same first consonant /D/ but different ...**diaria**... is pronounced /diaria/. They share meaning. The word ...**diarrhea**... means an

**\*Wordplay to Wordplay**

**Table 7. Wordplay to Wordplay**

Situation	English	Indonesian
A high school girl named Miley was being stopped suddenly by the officer on the street because she drove quite fast and no control. After being stopped, the officer ask him a license which in truth, Miley had not own her yet. Undercircumstances she was being nice with the officer by calling his name. However, once she tried to call his name, she slipped her tongue by calling his name into a kind of disease. Instead of saying ... <b>diaria</b> ... she called him ... <b>diarrhea</b> ... It failed her to look and act nice in front of the officer through her word ... <b>diarrhea</b> ... which means a kind of disease.	“License, Please!”	“Tolong beri SIM-nya”
	“Yes,Sir. Is there a problem, officer..... <b>Diarrhea</b> ?”	“Ya, Pak. Apa ada masalah, Pak.... <b>Diare</b> ?”
	“It’s <b>DiAria</b> .”	“Ini <b>DiAria</b> ”
	“Of course it is. My bad.”	“Tentu! Salahku.”

illness in which waste matter is emptied from the bowels much more frequently than normal, and in liquid form, while ...**diaria**... refers to a name of people, an officer. Meanwhile, in the scene, the speaker slips her tongue to pronounce /diaria/ become /,daɪə'riə/.

As Delabastita (1996) stated that the source-text pun is translated by a target-language pun, which may possibly be significantly different from the original wordplay in terms of their linguistic basis, formal construction, semantic structure, textual effect and/or contextual setting, the

translator translated the word ...**diarrhea**... became **diare** into Indonesian. The translator capitalized the ‘A’ letter in the middle of the word **diAria** to differentiate between **diare** and **diAria**.

**CONCLUSION**

This study reveals four types of wordplay employed to create laughter in Hannah Montana from season one to three, those are phonological and graphological structure, lexical structure, morphological structure and syntactic structure. It is obvious that most of the wordplay found in the source

text was subtitled into non-wordplay, which is based on meaning or literally. The second most frequently translation strategy used is subtitled into wordplay target text. In another words, the wordplays in source text experience different sound, rhyme, or even letters. Only a few of them was subtitled into wordplay as well and subtitled into zero. Therefore, the translation strategy applied by the subtitler influences the meaning and effect of the wordplay in the target text.

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