# English in Subscene's Indonesian Subtitle of *Superhero Movie*: How does It Affect the Audience?

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*Abstract*—**Movies as one of many forms of entertainment have experienced fast development from time to time. With the globalization allowing movies from a country to be enjoyed in other countries, movie subtitles undergo development as well. Subtitles of many popular movies today are not only produced by certified companies but are also created by freelancers and made available on the virtual world. Subtitles available online are often more lenient in characteristics, including in the use of language. In relation to the phenomenon, some Indonesian subtitles of Hollywood movies contain English vocabulary. This research aims at describing the use of English vocabulary in the Indonesian subtitle of Superhero Movie available for download from Subscene.com and examining the impact of the use of foreign vocabulary on the viewers' understanding. The linguistic data take form of English expressions in the subtitle of the movie. The data were described and their effect on the audience's understanding is studied. To assess the audience's understanding, the readability rating instrument rating put forward by Nababan, Nuraeni and Sumardiono (2012) is used. The assessment involved the movie's target viewers as the informants. The presence of English vocabulary can give a distinctive nuance and on the contrary, present sense of peculiarity, affecting how the audience get the message of the expressions containing the foreign language items.**

*Keywords*—*subtitle, English terminologies Superhero Movie, readability*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Subtitling is one of most widely practiced types of audiovisual translation. Subtitles in foreign movies, as they serve as product of translation, function to aid viewers by acting as "written means to access foreign film through the reproduction and the adaptation of SL dialogues" (Perego, 64). With the vast development of technology, the practice of subtitling at present time is not only done by translators working for companies, but it is also done by freelancers, the term used in this research to refer to those who are not officially licensed professionals. The growing accessibility of the people to the Internet initiates new form of subtitling

practice, namey "amateur subtitling" (Liu, 1107) i.e. the one performed by freelancers.

The Internet does this by making movies accessible to download, enabling larger number of people to have opportunity to enjoy movies. Also, The Internet provides the environment for freelancers to make their movie subtitles available for everyone. The cyber world thus supports general people to download foreign movies and subtitles in the languages they understand. This trend generates new course in people's practice in watching movies, particularly in Indonesia.

Among movies produced around the world, Hollywood movies dominate world's cinema market as proven in a report by the Motion Picture Association of America inFebruary 2015 (Pibernik). The dominance of products of Hollywood film industries is also present in Indonesia. Many Hollywood movies play on cinemas in Indonesian and are available for download as well. Viewers of these movies who do not have access to English need subtitles in *bahasa Indonesia*.

Superhero Movie is one of the Hollywood movies available for download. In addition, the Indonesian subtitle of this movie can be retrieved from the virtual world, specifically, Subscene, a popular site from which Internet users can download wide range of popular movie subtitles in a choice of different languages.

The subtitle of the movie ideally functions to aid viewers by means of rendering message in the form of content understandable to viewers. In relation to this task of giving aid to Indonesian viewers, a subtitle downloadable from Subscene, which is labeled "nedivx-smovie", contains expressions loaned from the source language instead. The English expressions become an appealing phenomenon to study, particularly in terms of whether the loaned expressions are able to function as aid for the viewers in comprehending the foreign film.

Other areas of study related to subtitling have been explored. Translation strategies and quality have been investigated by Yasuka (2015), Hastuti (2015) and Putri (2017). Meanwhile, strategies used in translating slang expressions in movie subtitles have been studied by Nilasari (2014), Senja (2015) and Anam (2017). Directing focus on different area, this research aims at describing the English vocabulary in the Indonesian subtitle of Superhero Movie available for download from Subscene.com and examining the impact of the foreign vocabulary on the understanding of the viewers of the movie. The kind of subtitle popularly called fansub is selected because "this type of subtitling is more creative and idiosyncratic than traditional subtitling, and it is not directed toward the market but the free distribution of audiovisual programmes over the Internet" (Liu, 1107). Moreover, studies investigating fansub and fan subtitling are still limited as Diaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez have stated that "more research is needed in the area" (46).

## II. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted to present concise description and study the effect of the use of English in the Indonesian subtitle of Superhero Movie labeled "nedivx-smovie", which has been downloaded for more than 38,000 times. The data take form of English words, phrases and utterances in the movie subtitle downloaded from Subscene.com. In addition to linguistic units, the other data take form of information about respondents' understanding of the English expressions in the subtitle. The expressions were collected by applying document analysis. Meanwhile, information from the informants was gained by means of questionnaire containing the snapshots of the scenes in which the English expressions are uttered by the characters. The questionnaire also contains brief accounts to provide respondents with clues related to the scenes. As many as five respondents, whose ages range from 20 to 21 and who have limited English proficiency, were involved. The consideration regarding the age range is related to research focus and source of data. This research focuses on investigating the effect of the use of English in the subtitle of a movie targeted to Indonesian audience whose age is more than 13, who often mix the language they use with English vocabulary. They were required to provide answer over the provided options: (1) understanding the expressions by reading at once, (2) understanding the expressions after repeating and (3) not understanding the expressions after several repeats. The respondents were also directed to give a brief account in *bahasa Indonesia* about the message suggested by the foreign expressions. The understanding of the respondents was not simply assessed based on the options they decide on but it was also decided by considering the accounts they give to each expression. The underlying theory is the one proposed by Nababan, Nuraeni, & Sumardiono (2012) and the questionnaire is designed based on the instrument for assessing readability (51). Referring to the instrument which is used, the data are categorized into three: namely (1) readable, (2) less readable and (3) not readable. To obtain overall level of readability of each datum, scores ranging from 3 to 1 representing each of the categories and simple statistical procedure were used.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As many as 52 data were obtained. The English expressions in the subtitle range from everyday vocabulary, exclamation and address form, excluding proper names. Proper names are excluded because they are often preserved in Indonesian subtitles of foreign movies.

The English terminologies in the movie subtitle do not always cause problems. Terminologies commonly used in daily interaction are understood without any problem by the respondents. Expressions like "bye" (used for ending a telephone conversation) and "shit" (used for swearing) are properly understood by the respondents. These expressions are included in the category of readable expression. Based on the instrument for assessing level of readability, the category is characterized by the feature that the expression is easily-understood by the respondents. How easily the expression is understood is indicated by the respondents' statement that they get the message of the expressions in one reading. In addition, whether the respondents genuinely get the message was identified from their brief explanation about the English expressions. The following expressions are the examples of the first category, readable translation.

*Kuhubungi lagi ntar semuanya*, **bye**2.

[I'll call all of you back later, bye.]

The utterance is the one stated by one of the characters, Trey, when, at the beginning of the movie, he ends his telephone conversation. All of the informants understand the expression "bye" perfectly. Their understanding is marked by the correct account they provide. The account they gave reflects their understanding that the English expression is the one used for ending up a conversation.

*Oh*, **shit**.

[Oh, shit.]

It is uttered by someone in the scene showing Hero Con, an event in which the participants dress up like superheroes and supervillains. The swearing is uttered when an attendant gets shocked because of witnessing other two attendants collapse after their vitality is absorbed by the villain, Hourglass. All respondents understand the message of the English expression, as characterized by their ability to point out that "shit" is a swearing expression, which is exploited to express surprise.

*Sayangnya, tidak semuanya* **invisible** *(tembus pandang)*.

[Unfortunately, not everything is invisible (the Indonesian term for "invisible").]

The utterance is spoken by Professor X to his wife. Both are talking about Invisible Girl, the person whom Professor X has special relationship with.

The other terminology properly understood by the informants is the word "invisible", the term which the

translator adds supporting detail to the translation. The English term in the subtitle is followed by its equivalent translation in *bahasa Indonesia*, which is "*tembus pandang*". This additional information causes the datum to work like other expressions translated into *bahasa Indonesia*.

Some other vocabulary, for example "stop", "businessman" and "superpower" are also comprehensible to the respondents. In addition, address form "Mr." is easily understood by all respondents. None of the respondents needed rereading and they are all able to give the correct explanation about the expressions.

In contrast to the expressions having high readability, other terms are low in terms of level of readability. The category of data having low readability suggests that these expressions are to some degree beyond respondents' understanding. The exclamation "attaboy" is not understood by all of the respondents. The same case happens to the idiomatic term "douchebag". The foreign dictions are used in the following expressions:

- *Tapi jangan lupa memberi makan ikan.*

- **Attaboy**.

[- But don't forget to feed the fish.

 - **Attaboy**.]

Rick is told by his uncle not to forget to feed the fish in the aquarium. As soon as his uncle ends his words, Rick vomits into the aquarium. Uncle Albert, not seeing what just happens exclaims "Attaboy". All of the respondents were unable to provide the correct account on what "attaboy" means. This indicates that the meaning of the term is incomprehensible.

*Saya mempersembahkan* Lou Landers *sebagai pemenang* **Douchebag**.

[I present Lou Landers as the winner of Douchebag.]

The assessment made by the respondents on the English term "douchebag" shows similar result. The statement is uttered by the host of an award event held in the city. The term "douchebag" appears in the scene when Lou Landers, who turns out to be the supervillain in the movie, gets an award. The term is used for the name of the award endowed to Lou Landers for his achievements. The message behind the use of the term "douchebag" is not comprehensible. The respondents commented on the term by stating that they do not know what the word means.

Based on their frequency of use, as stated on an online dictionary, the dictions "attaboy" and "douchebag" are rarely used, particularly in Indonesia (Educalingo English Dictionary). The other terms which have low level of readability are "pumpkin" and "gala". The explanation is as follows:

*Acara* **gala** *ini diharapkan dapat menghasilkan pimpinan paling bergengsi di* Empire City.

[The gala event is expected to bear most prestigious leaders in Empire City]

A TV reporter is making a news coverage in an award event. She informs her viewers some information related to the event.

*Tapi* **Pumpkin**, *aku tidak melihat siapapun.*

[But, Pumpkin, I don't see anybody.]

The utterance is spoken by Professor X to his wife, claiming that he sees nobody. The English terminology "pumpkin" is used here as an address form.

The term "gala" is another term which gets the lowest score, which is 1, in the assessment. It is indicated by the absence of correct explanation defining the term, which is provided by the respondents. Different from the previous examples of expressions having low level of readability, the address form "pumpkin" has slightly higher score. One of the respondents provided correct description of the term, resulting the average score of 1.4. This term is still classified into not readable expression because of the fact that the other four respondents were unable to understand the message behind the use of the term.

Terminologies which do not belong the previous two categories are categorized into less readable translation. The category of less readable translation comprises expressions which are understood after several readings. Some of the English expressions which fall into this category are "C.E.O." and "live", as explained in a more detailed way as follows:

*Para murid, ini* Lou Landers, *ilmuwan pengkhayal dan* **C.E.O.** Amalgamated.

[Students,this is Lou Landers, a dreamer scientist and C.E.O. of Amalgamated]

It is the expression uttered by one of the scientists in Amalgamated (the name of a laboratory) to introduce the C.E.O in charge in the laboratory to the students coming there. The term is categorized into less readable expression based on the assessment in which two of five respondents did not understand what C.E.O. is. Unlike the other three respondents, they did not provide the correct detail about what C.E.O. refers to.

*Dilaporkan* **live** *dari* Empire City convention center.

[Reported live from Empire City convention center.]

The statement is part of the utterances of a TV reporter on a news program, which by chance informs Rick about the event in which Hourglass (the supervillain) will probably come to. The presence of the English term in the sentence does not cause problem to three of the respondents. In contrast, the term could not be understood by the other respondents.

The different understandings of the respondents result in the average score of 2.2 for the level of readability, making both terms "C.E.O." and "live" categorized into less readable

translation. The result implies that the respondents' knowledge varies from one respondent to another.

The findings indicate that among 52 data, as many as 25 data (48%) belong to readable expression and 12 (23%) data belong to less readable expression. Meanwhile, the other 15 (29%) are the expressions which are not readable. The ratio among the three categories of data based on their level of readability reveals that overall, the use of foreign (source) language expressions is still likely to cause complexity in viewers' understanding despite the fact that adolescents in Indonesia frequently use English expressions in their interaction. It can be seen that the proportion of the data which are understood easily is less than half of the studied expressions.

The findings can be used as consideration for those producing subtitles for movies, particularly freelancers whose works can reach almost any point in the society, when they create subtitles. The consideration is related to the fact that as one type of translation, subtitle has to be able to provide aid for the viewers of movies.

The use of English vocabulary is prevalent in the communication of many Indonesian adolescents as suggested in the previous researches conducted by Anggraeni (2008) and Kelana (2011). However, some English expressions in the subtitle under study are still beyond the respondents' understanding. It is provisionally expected that the low extent of respondents' understanding is caused by the limited frequency of use of the expressions. Among the expressions exemplified in the previous section, the address form "pumpkin" has the more familiar synonym "honey", which is listed as an intimate address form used by many adolescents (Luqman N., www.hipwee.com).

Using certain language forms and styles to make subtitle in sync with the characteristics of the viewers, as indicated in the use of English vocabulary in the movie subtitle, is a reasonable point but the more focal concern should still be kept on the function of subtitle in making foreign contents in movies accessible to the viewers.

Concern on the accessibility of the content in a movie is in line with a statement about the function of subtitle, which views subtitle as "written means to access foreign film through the reproduction and the adaptation of SL dialogues" (Perego, 64). This statement suggests that a subtitle maker is required to provide viewers with the access to the content of a movie, i.e. the SL dialogues. The findings of this research indicate that by preserving the English expressions, the subtitle producer has not yet been successful in creating maximum access to the movie dialogues for viewers.

Another facet related to the presence of English vocabulary in the subtitle under study is that the subtitler has the autonomy in terms of making the subtitle closer to SL culture. This feature is related to the typical "creative and idiosyncratic" nature of amateur subtitling as has been suggested by Liu (1107). The phenomenon is also in line with

a point put forward in.Diaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (46) that in an amateur environment, Japanese fansub producers tend to be closer to the original culture. One of the reasons is that those fansub producers realize that their audience are people who have great interest in the culture of the SL. The subtitle of Superhero Movie comprises SL vocabulary and thus also shows a tendency to be closer to its audience. Different from the case concerning Japanese fansub producers, the English vocabulary in the movie is likely to be closer to the audience in the way that Indonesian teenagers often include English vocabulary in their interaction. However, regardless the fact that SL dialogues can be reproduced in the style that conforms to the characteristics of the viewers, the subtitle creator of Superhero Movie should still consider their viewers' understanding of the movie content.

The findings and how they link to the ideas pointed out in other researches suggest that any attempt to adjust subtitle to the characteristics of viewers requires thoughtful concern dealing with its function to provide aid for viewers.

IV. CONCLUSION

The first point of the conclusion deals with the brief description of the English vocabulary in the subtitle of the movie entitled Superhero Movie labeled nedivx-smovie. Among the total of 52 data studied, which take form of everyday vocabulary, exclamation and address form, 25 of them do not cause problems to viewers involved as the respondents in the research. As many as 12 data have, in general, lower degree of readability. In addition, 15 data tend to be incomprehensible. The second point deals with the impact of the presence of the foreign vocabulary on the understanding of the respondents of the message behind the expressions. This study puts forward a point that foreign expressions in the subtitle under study have an impact on the viewers in the way that the expressions carry the potential to lessen its degree of readability, i.e. lowering the understanding of the viewers. This happens despite the fact that many Indonesian adolescence frequently use English expressions in their daily communication. The use of English expressions is possible but it should be done with the consideration, i.e. limited to the expressions which are commonly acquainted in the daily conversation, which have more tendency to be comprehended by viewers.

The suggestion for further researches is proposed by referring to the limitation encountered during the process of accomplishing this research: settling the more ideal method to collect data for assessing the readability of movie subtitle. Further researchers need to construct more natural method of collecting data from informants than using questionnaire. Data collection using questionnaire enables the respondents to perform re-reading while naturally, movie viewers do not have similar chance.

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