

# EVALUATION ON THE QUALITY OF SUBTITLING TRANSLATION

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## ABSTRACT

Subtitling can be defined as a translation practice that consists of displaying a written text, usually on the lower part of the screen to recount the original dialogs of the speakers and the information contained on the soundtrack. There are two types of subtitles, namely intralingual subtitles (or closed-caption) and interlingual subtitles. To achieve good subtitling translation, there are some translation strategies that can be applied. However, translation students still have difficulties in achieving such ideal quality. Therefore, this paper discusses the evaluation on the quality of subtitling translation done by students in translation class. The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. Source data in the form of English subtitles titled Simple Leftover Tips by Gordon Ramsay and the data in the form of translation of the subtitles are classified into three types of errors according to the FAR model from Pederson (2017), namely functional equivalence (do the subtitles convey speaker meaning?), acceptability (do the subtitles sound correct and natural in the target language?), and readability (can the subtitles be read in a fluent and non-intrusive way?). The data are taken from a randomly selected student. Most translation errors are in the functional equivalence parameter by 8 points, which is followed by readability at 6.75 points, and acceptability at 1.5 points. The conclusion is that students still have a lot to learn to understand the source texts, especially for culturally bound words.

Keywords: closed-caption, cooking show, translation evaluation, subtitles

## ABSTRAK

*Penerjemahan takarir adalah praktik penerjemahan yang menampilkan teks tertulis, biasanya diletakkan di bagian bawah layar untuk menceritakan dialog asli pembicara dan informasi yang terkandung di latar belakan suara film yang menyertainya. Terdapat dua jenis takarir atau sulih teks, yaitu sulih teks intralingual (atau closed caption) dan sulih teks interlingual. Untuk mencapai hasil terjemahan sulih teks yang baik, ada beberapa strategi penerjemahan yang dapat diterapkan. Namun, mahasiswa penerjemahan masih mengalami kesulitan dalam mencapai kualitas ideal tersebut. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini membahas tentang evaluasi kualitas terjemahan sulih teks yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa di kelas penerjemahan. Metode penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data berupa teks terjemahan bahasa Inggris berjudul Simple Leftover Tips oleh Gordon Ramsay dan data berupa terjemahan sulih teks diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga jenis kesalahan menurut model FAR dari Pederson (2017), yaitu Functional equivalence (melakukan sulih teks untuk menyampaikan makna dari pembicara?); Akseptabilitas (apakah sulih teks diterjemahkan dengan benar dan alami dalam bahasa target?); dan Keterbacaan (dapatkah sulih teks dibaca dengan lancar dan tidak mengganggu?). Data diambil dari terjemahan salah satu siswa yang dipilih secara acak. Kesalahan penerjemahan terbanyak terdapat pada parameter Functional Equivalence sebesar 8 poin, yang diikuti Readability sebesar 6,75 poin, dan Acceptability sebesar 1,5 poin. Kesimpulannya adalah bahwa mahasiswa masih harus banyak belajar untuk memahami teks sumber, terutama untuk kata-kata yang terikat budaya.*

*Kata kunci: closed-caption, acara masak, evaluasi terjemahan, penerjemahan takarir*

## INTRODUCTION

Learning activity is a system that shows cooperation among various components, such as lecturers, students, teaching objectives, materials, methods of teaching, teaching prompts, and evaluation. To obtain the teaching objectives, each component of the teaching must be chosen well. Nevertheless, even after imparting a certain level of English proficiency, the learners' performance falls short of the level of language mastery.

Providing competent translators is a necessary solution to the increasing need for experienced and skilled subtitlers. According to Li et al (2023, p. 1233), "It is increasingly essential for translators to possess a high level of technological proficiency to succeed in their work, as technology is becoming an integral part and common practice of the translation industry." Therefore, such training to produce qualified translator subtitlers is needed. To answer this challenge, Universitas LIA provides movie subtitling or subtitling translation courses for students attending the 6th semester.

In Subtitling class, students are equipped with knowledge of the history and basic concepts of film translation, types of film translation, code of conduct, standardization and technical problems of translation of subtitles, strategies for translation of subtitles, aspects of conformity of results and culture of the source text (ST) and target text (ST), censorship and taboo words in translation of subtitles, translation of colloquial style and slang in translation of subtitles, translation of humor and word games, translation of terminology of various genres in translation of subtitles, program/software in translating subtitles, the practice of translating subtitles by using a program/software translation subtitles. Thus, this research is trying to identify the type of subtitling errors made by the students and analyze their subtitling ability.

Subtitling can be defined as a translation practice that consists of displaying a written text, usually on the lower part of the screen to recount the original dialogs of the speakers and the information contained on the soundtrack (Cintas & Remael, 2014) There are two types of subtitling. The first form of movie translation or subtitling is called Closed-captioning which serves to help the audience with hearing loss to be able to understand the dialogue. Meanwhile, the second form of

subtitles which is called interlingual subtitling is a form of translation of films in general. The second form of subtitles is the one we are focusing on in this research.

There are some points to pay attention to in subtitling. As discussed above on the standardization of subtitles/subtitles translation in Europe, it is suggested that the translation of subtitles is limited in terms of space and time. What is meant by space is the space available to put the translated text on the screen, and time is the limited duration of the speech to be translated.

There are subtitling standards that refer to the subtitling guide as given by Karamitroglou (1998). These standards are still relevant up to now and are still being used worldwide, not only in Europe as it is originally used. Below are some general guidelines on interlingual subtitling:

1. Text placement on the screen: To prevent it from obscuring the image, the text is positioned at the bottom of the screen. At least one-twelfth of the height of the screen is taken up by the lowest row. Place the text in the bottom's center.
2. Segmentation and line length: As the reader is accustomed to reading text with a rectangular shape rather than a triangle, lines should be placed proportionately between the top and bottom lines and should aim to be the same length.
3. Maximum of two lines of text per view, taking up at least two-twelfths of the entire height of the screen. If it only has one row, it ought to be put at the bottom.
4. Each line should have no more than 35 letters, spaces, and other punctuation to prevent message loss. Characters longer than 40 will likely result in a smaller font size, which will decrease the text's legibility.
5. Duration: The typical reading speed of the audience (those between the ages of 14 and 65 who belong to middle-class, well-educated social circles) is 150 to 180 words per minute, or roughly two or three words per second. In practice, this translates to a two-line text of 14–16 words that reads in at least 5.5 seconds. In contrast, a line of text typically has 7-8 words and is aired in roughly 3.5 seconds.
6. A period is used as punctuation at the end of each statement made by a speaking character or person. Exclamation points and question marks are used to indicate requests and orders, respectively. Each character speaks before the other, using the dash (-). This is typically used in texts with multiple characters that feature

dialogue. The Slash (/) can be used for the same thing in addition to these symbols.

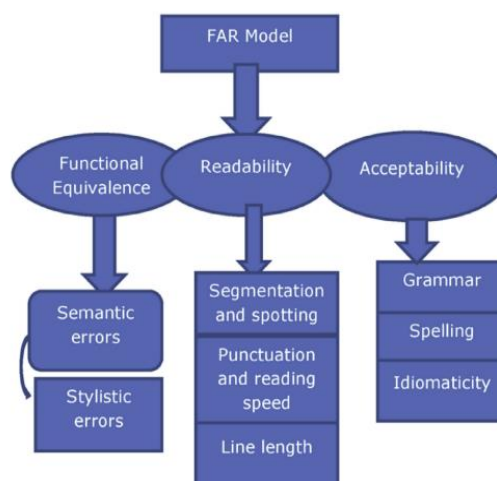
7. Speaking languages: To get the same impact, spoken languages should preferably be translated in the same style. Nevertheless, adding phrases or other utterances should be avoided because doing so could distract the viewer from reading the images.
8. Eliminating linguistic elements falls into the following categories: A padding expression is one that has essentially little semantic substance and is merely there for appearance purposes in order to keep the speech flowing naturally. These words and phrases include, "Well, you know," "As I say," and others; B) Tautological cumulative adjectives and adverbs, such as great big, super extra, teeny weeny, where the initial portion has an emphasis role and can be merged into one word that is comparable to be huge, very, and tiny. c) Replying words like "yes," "no," "ok," "please," "thank you," and "sorry" can be removed if it is assumed that most people around the world are familiar with them.

As subtitling has limited spatial dimension, it is then the subtitle is limited to two lines, which occupy no more than two twelfths of the screen (Cintas & Remael, 2014). This challenge was also solved by Gottlieb (1992) who proposed a set of technical rules. Gottlieb (1992) outlined ten film subtitling strategies based on his experience as a television show subtitle translator. These strategies represent various kinds of processes in translating the dialogue of the film related to the production of meaning and form. The strategies are addition, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and omission (Gottlieb, 1992).

Meanwhile, Cintas (2003) and Guinot (2003) as cited in Cintas and Remael (2014) also proposed nine translation strategies for culturally-bound words in subtitling. They are loan, calque or literal translation, explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation, omission, and addition. These strategies are commonly used in subtitling compared to other strategies.

In subtitling, there is a fairly rapid development in the evaluation of translation quality. This aims to improve the quality of translation of films or

subtitling. One of the models of the quality of assessment was created by Pederson. According to Pederson (2017), in translation of subtitles, there is a model that can be used to achieve the quality of the translation by which he referred to this as FAR Model, namely: functional equivalence (whether or not the subtitles convey the meaning of the speaker); Reception (whether or not the subtitles sound correct and natural in the target language); and readability (whether or not the subtitles read smoothly and unobtrusively). The following is a picture of the remote model.



**Figure 1. FAR model**

In **functional equivalence**, error types are divided into semantic errors and stylistic errors. There are penalties imposed in case of translation errors. The translation errors are divided into three categories, namely minor (0.25 points), standard (0.5 points), and serious (1 point). (Pederson, 2017, p.217). A translation is said to have minor errors if the error is not too intrusive. As stated by Pederson (2017, p. 217) that:

1. minor errors may not be noticed, and it only ruins the effect if the audience is paying close attention to the subtitles.
2. Standard errors are those that most viewers are likely to find offensive and ruin the subtitle.
3. Serious errors may make it difficult for them to understand not only that subtitle but also the one(s) that follow because of inaccurate information or because they are so obvious that it takes them some time to move on and resume automated reading of subtitles.

It thus said that translation errors are classified as standard errors if they interfere with the comfort of the reader, while translation errors are considered serious if there are errors in meaning, information, and understanding. Therefore, this analysis model will be used to analyze the quality of student translation in this study.

The second category is **Acceptability**. Here, the subtitles are analyzed to see whether or not the subtitles sound correct and natural in the target language into three types of errors, namely grammar errors, spelling errors, and idiomatic errors (Pederson, 2017, p. 220-221). Penalty points are similar to Functional equivalence, that is, they are divided into three, namely minor, standard and serious.

The third category, **Readability**, has three types, namely segmentation and spotting errors, punctuation and graphic, and reading speed and line length. In the first type, the error is considered serious if there is a spotting error characterized by poor synchronization between speech and the appearance of the text that appears, not in segmentation. For punctuation, errors are adjusted according to the style of the reading grammar envelope in the target language. Meanwhile, for reading speed and line length, Pederson (p. 223) states that if the cps (characters per second) or word speed in subtitles is above 20 cps or 240 wpm, then the translation on that segment is still considered a standard error.

There are some previous researchers which focus on subtitling quality assessment. Abdelaal (2019) has investigated the strategies adopted in subtitling culture-bound terms and assess the subtitling quality of those terms from American Pie movies. His investigations show that in general, the subtitling of the culture-bound terms were of good quality, yet some serious errors were also found. Irawan and Kurniawan (2023) have confirmed that three of the subtitling errors of the FAR model were found in the translation of the Merindu Cahaya film. However, Alaa and Al Sawi (2023) who also discuss culturally specific references have found out that in their case of subtitling with Egyptian Arabic to English language pair, the majority of the subtitles exhibited high quality, with only a few minor errors observed, primarily related to functionality. Meanwhile, Sanatifar and Ghamsarian (2023) found out that in their research, four-fifths of subtitles were erroneous of serious types. They also realized that conveying equivalently the emotion

words/expressions is a crucial aspect of maintaining the emotional burden of the genre of drama in translation, particularly subtitling. Koglin, et al (2023) have done a more thorough analysis by examining the Translation Quality Evaluation Model (FAR) to correlate the translated text with empirical data gathered from translators (quality evaluation) and viewers (reception). Their research indicates that the post-edited subtitles had good quality in terms of meaning and target language norms; nevertheless, the technical characteristics had lesser quality, which hindered the trailer appreciation as expressed by most of the audience. However, these previous researches do not discuss a certain case from a cooking show which is rich in culture specific terms.

Based on the problems and the research gap, the researcher would like to describe the errors on subtitling done by student translators. The objective of this research is that student translators can get information on the best translation on the terms in cooking shows so that they can be more meticulous and careful when dealing with similar tasks. Therefore, to achieve the objectives, the researcher uses the FAR model by Pederson (2017). Pederson stated that in assessing subtitling quality, there are functional equivalence, acceptability, and readability as explained in the previous paragraphs.

The results of this research hopefully contributes to the novelty of the development in research on subtitling quality assessment. In addition, student translators will know how to improve the accuracy of their subtitling, not only for one genre of movies, but also for many kinds of genres that have culture specific terms in their dialogs. Translation lecturers can also benefit from this research in case they find similar problems in their class.

## METHODS

The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. Nunan (quoted by Hatim, 2013, p.9) posits *“if knowledge is tentative and contingent upon context, rather than absolute, then I believe that practitioners, rather than being consumers of other people's research, should adopt a research orientation to their own classrooms.”* It can be said that action research in the classroom itself is research conducted in order to improve or change something in order to obtain a



solution. Furthermore, Hatim (2013) also said that practitioners/researchers can be viewed as someone who not only has the knowledge of teaching tips ('craft knowledge'), but also analytical skills ('analytical knowledge'). With the analytical skills possessed, the problems encountered can be identified and sought solutions that are accurate and can be described.

Source data in the form of English subtitles titled *Simple Leftover Tips* by Gordon Ramsay taken from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh2gPuYZPJK>. This video is 3-minute long and is the second subtitles translation task performed by S6T class students. Students have been given feedback on the translation of subtitles that they did on the first task, so that students already know how to produce good subtitles translations. The video comes with a transcript that they can use as a guide although they have to check again to better match the audio from the video. In translating the subtitles, students use the subtitles translation application, AEGISUB which they have installed first.

The subject of this study is a student translator who participated in a translation class. The technique of data collection in this research is done through the translation of subtitles that have been given to students and analysis of student translation. Collection techniques can be carried out in various ways. According to Rugg and Petre (2007), there are at least eight techniques in collecting data, including reports, worksheets, interviews, observations, questionnaires, individual interviews, tape recorders or video recordings. In this study, the data collection technique is done through student worksheets through translation work.

Data analysis techniques conducted in this study is qualitative data analysis that includes the description and interpretation of the results of student translation from the subtitles assigned to them. The data in the form of translation of the subtitles are classified into three types of errors according to the FAR model from Pederson (2017) and the data is taken from one randomly selected student's work.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section will discuss the results of the research and the discussion of translation quality from one of the translation class students as this serves as a pilot study. The data are taken from a YouTube video *Simple Leftover Tips* by Gordon



Ramsay and student's translation. From his/her translation, most translation errors are in the functional equivalence parameter by eight points, which is followed by readability at 6.75 points, and acceptability at 1.5 points respectively.

**Table 1.**  
**Functional Equivalence Translation Errors**

No	Source Text	Target Text	Functional equivalence	Notes
1	Delicious golden rice balls.	Bola nasi emas yang lezat.	0.5	Semantic error
3	Then take handfuls of leftover risotto	lalu ambil segenggam risotto	0.5	
5	this dish is perfect with leftover mushroom risotto	hidangan ini sangat cocok\Ndengan risotto jamur	0.25	cps: 20 missing meaning
8	dip each arentini	Celupkan setiap arentini.	0.25	spelling; semantic error
9	first into the flour	Pertama, dibaluri tepung terigu	0.25	semantic error: baluri
10	and finally the breadcrumbs	dan yang terakhir\Ndibaluri dengan tepung roti.	0.25	semantic error: baluri
11	a delicious tempting treat	makanan yang menggoda selera	0.5	semantic error: menggoda > menggugah
12	it's wise to save leftover wine for cooking	Baik menyimpan\Nsisa anggur untuk memasak	0.5	Semantic error: Baik
13	remaining wine in freezer bags	sisa anggur\Ndalam kantong pendingin	0.25	cps: 26
17	a classic bubbling squeak	ala klasik yang mengelegak	1	bubbling squeak
18	perfect on demand	yang sempurna sesuai permintaan.	1	cps: 28
19	when you're cooking potatoes always cook extra so	Dan ketika anda memasak kentang	0.25	Anda; hilang" "always cook extra so...

20	roll up in cling film and freeze	Gulung kedalam wrap\Ndan bekukan	0.5	plastik wrap
21	then when you want a herby hit cut into slices	Kemudian ketika anda meningkatkannya\Nherby dipotong menjadi irisan	1	Anda; meningkatkannya
22	it's easily transformed into grapefruit	Kue mudah diubah menjadi\Nbuah anggur	1	semantic error: buah anggur
TOTAL			8	

The example of Functional Equivalence error can be seen below:

SL1: Delicious golden rice balls.

TL1: Bola nasi emas yang lezat.

[back translate]: golden rice balls

The translator mistranslated the phrase above by translating it literally. According to Kompas.com, arancini is *nasi kepal goreng* or back-translated as *golden rice balls*. It can also be translated into *fried rice balls* because arancini is made from clenched rice, dipped in eggs and bread flour, then fried (Endes.tv). Therefore, the translation error is a semantic error at a moderate level.

The next error is categorized as Serious Functional Equivalence errors that can be found in the 17th data. Below is the sample:

SL2: ...a classic bubbling squeak.

TL2: ala klasik yang menggelegak.

[back-translate as *bubbling classic style*]

According to Rattray in The Spruce Eats.com, *bubble and squeak* is a very easy meal to prepare and is made primarily of potatoes and white cabbage. The menu has rich cultural content and is indeed difficult to translate. The safest option is to borrow it as a classic *bubble squeak* or switch to *pancake kentang*.

Meanwhile, the second category in terms of errors that mostly occurred is Readability. Readability has three sub-categories, namely segmentation and spotting errors, punctuation and graphics, and reading speed and line length. The easiest way to see it is through the reading speed and line length indicators which are marked with a CPS that is more than 20. Below is the table that shows the errors found on readability.

**Table 2.**  
**Readability Translation Errors**

No	Source Text	Target Text	Readability	Notes
2	First chop mozzarella into small cubes	Pertama, potong keju mozzarella\Nmenjadi kubus kecil	0.5	cps: 21
4	around the cheese	disekitar keju mozzarella.	0.5	cps: 20
5	this dish is perfect with leftover mushroom risotto	hidangan ini sangat cocok\Ndengan risotto jamur	0.25	cps: 20 missing meaning
6	for the coating prep three bowls	untuk lapisannya,\Nsiapkan tiga mangkuk	1	cps: 28
7	one with flour one with breadcrumbs	satu untuk tepung terigu\N satu untuk tepung roti	0.25	punctuation
11	a delicious tempting treat	makanan yang menggoda selera	0.25	semantic error: menggoda > menggugah
13	remaining wine in freezer bags	sisa anggur\Ndalam kantong pendingin	1	cps: 26
16	never throw out vanilla pods there's a	itu tidak akan\Nmengencerkan minuman anda.	0.5	cps: 24
18	perfect on demand	yang sempurna sesuai permintaan.	1	cps: 28
19	when you're cooking potatoes always cook extra so	Dan ketika anda memasak kentang	0.25	Anda; hilang" "always cook extra so...
20	roll up in cling film and freeze	Gulung kedalam wrap\Ndan bekukan	0.25	plastik wrap
21	then when you want a herby hit cut into slices	Kemudian ketika anda menyingkinkannya\Nherby dipotong menjadi irisan	0.5	Anda; menyingkinkannya
23	or sprinkle over your favorite fruit	atau taburkan di atas buah\Nkesukaan anda.	0.5	Anda; cps: 22
TOTAL			6.75	

The example analysis for readability errors can be seen in the following data:

ST3 : for the coating prep three bowls

TL3 : untuk lapisannya,\Nsiapkan tiga mangkuk

In AEGISUB, the appearance of the translation is as follows:

0:00:26.10	0:00:27.30	28	Default	untuk lapisannya, \Nsiapkan tiga mangkuk
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**Figure 1. AEGISUB dashboard on the translation**

Numbers highlighted in red color indicate that the characters per second are too high. In other words, it means that your lines are too long to read comfortably at the given time. If the CPS is  $< 20$ , then there is no marker or highlight on that line. For example:

0:02:04.00	0:02:06.36	13	Default	Selalu memanfaatkan sisa nasi semalam
0:02:06.36	0:02:08.52	15	Default	buat nasi goreng orak-arik \Ndengan telur
0:02:08.52	0:02:11.30	16	Default	atau sederhana untuk membuat \Nsalad segar yang lezat.
0:02:11.30	0:02:13.66	21	Default	Ingat juru masak yang baik tidak akan \Nmenyia-nyiakan apapun.
0:02:14.92	0:02:16.56	18	Default	Tips untuk menggunakan rempah sisa.
0:02:16.56	0:02:18.88	15	Default	Cincang halus dan campur \Nke dalam mentega.
0:02:18.88	0:02:20.84	14	Default	Gulung kedalam wrap \Ndan bekukan
0:02:22.68	0:02:25.00	25	Default	Kemudian ketika anda meningkatkannya \Nherby dipotong menjadi irisan

**Figure 2. AEGISUB dashboard feature**

If the CPS is between 15-20, then there will be a warning shown as a faded pink color, whereas if the CPS is between 20-24, then the color is dark pink, and if the CPS is  $> 25$ , then the color is red. Therefore, translators have to edit their translations to adjust the display time of the subtitles.

There are also errors in the form of punctuation, for example, capitalizing your word that occurs repeatedly. The samples can be seen in segments number 19, 21, and 23. One of the examples can be seen in the following sentence fragments:

SL4 : when **you're** cooking potatoes always cook extra so

TL4 : Dan ketika **anda** memasak kentang

According to the Enhanced Spelling of the Indonesian Language 5th Edition or EYD V, the word *Anda* has the initial capitalized. For example:

- Sudahkah Anda tahu?
- Hanya teman Anda yang mengerti masalah itu.

The last category is Acceptability. From the data, this category has the smallest error rate. There are sub categories in Acceptability, namely grammar errors, spelling errors, and idiomaticity errors. Below is the data which show the acceptability errors:

**Table 3.**  
**Acceptability Translation Errors**

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability	Notes
8	dip each arentini	Celupkan setiap arentini.	0.5	spelling; semantic error
14	ice cube trays	atau ditempat es batu	0.25	punctuation: di-
15	into small cubes then take handfuls of leftover risotto	potong menjadi iris\Nbekukkan	0.25	punctuation bekukkan >> bekukan
20	roll up in cling film and freeze	Gulung kedalam wrap\Ndan bekukan	0.25	plastik wrap
21	then when you want a herby hit cut into slices	Kemudian ketika anda meninginkannya\Nherby dipotong menjadi irisan	0.25	Anda; meninginkannya
TOTAL			1.5	

The sample on this error can be seen from segment 21 or datum number 21:

SL5 : then when you want a herby hit cut into slices

TL5 :Kemudian ketika anda *meninginkannya*\Nherby dipotong menjadi irisan.

The correct word should be *menginginkannya* instead of *meninginkannya*.

There is a spelling or typo error here. The same case is also seen in segment 15. In addition, grammatical errors occur as shown in data 14 as follows:

SL6 : ice cube trays

SL6 : atau **ditempat** es batu

According to the Enhanced Spelling of the Indonesian Language 5th Edition or EYD V, prepositions, such as *di*, *ke*, dan *dari*, must be written with one space or character extra. Misalnya:

- Mereka ada *di* mana-mana.
- Pamanku tinggal *di* Kuningan.
- Ia terlambat datang *ke* kantor karena terjebak kemacetan parah.
- Temanku memutuskan keluar *dari* kepengurusan suatu partai politik.
- Aku berasal *dari* Cirebon.
- Bajunya mahal karena terbuat *dari* sutra berkualitas tinggi.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study, which focuses on the quality of student translation in the S6T Subtitles Translation class, concludes that the most common translation errors found occur in the first category, namely Functional Equivalence followed by Readability and Acceptability. Although the data is taken from one of the students in S6T class, it is highlighted that students still have a lot to learn to understand the source texts, especially for culturally bound words.

In addition, students should not forget how to write in the correct and accurate Indonesian grammar. This is also a task for lecturers, especially lecturers who teach translation classes so that they can provide lots of practice and exposure to students. By being exposed to many kinds of texts to be translated and having discussions on the resulting translations, students are familiar with translating activity. As for the suggestions for future research is that investigation on other aspects in assessing subtitling quality by using more thorough and various models are highly recommended.

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