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Techniques and Equivalence of Translating Taboo Words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* Movie

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ABSTRACT
This study aims at analyzing the translation techniques and equivalence of taboo words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* movie. This analysis is crucial for understanding how taboo words can be effectively translated without losing their cultural and emotional context. The method used in this research involves descriptive qualitative analysis of 584 occurrences of taboo expressions from the movie. These occurrences are categorized based on types of taboo words and translation techniques used, such as pure borrowing, literal translation, established equivalent, and reduction. This approach allows the researchers to evaluate how each technique and type of equivalence contributes to adapting taboo words in different cultural and linguistic contexts. The results indicate that epithets, the reduction technique, and the use of dynamic equivalence are the most dominant features. Reduction was found 369 times, established equivalent 190 times, literal translation 23 times, and pure borrowing 2 times. Dynamic equivalence was predominantly applied (558 instances) compared to formal equivalence (26 instances), indicating a tendency toward translations that are more natural and culturally appropriate. This study highlights the importance of balancing fidelity to the original text with cultural adaptation in translating taboo words.

Keywords: taboo words, movie translation, translation techniques, translation equivalence

1. Introduction

Language is a tool to build a bridge of communication and show personal identity of a person. An individual could know the character and identity of another individual by the language that they use. Some individuals use soft, accommodating language, while others may use strong, emotionally charged language—including taboo words—depending on their emotional state (Crystal, 2003). Taboo words are often employed to express strong emotions such as anger, shock, or dissatisfaction (Azzaro & others, 2018). A person uses taboo words to show their feeling. It could be a feeling of sadness, anger or a feeling of awe, but the biggest reason is to express the feeling of dissatisfaction.

According to Battistella (2005), there are four types of taboo words: epithets, profanity, obscenity, and vulgarity. Epithets are taboo words in the form of adjectives or descriptive phrases that highlight a salient characteristic of the target. They often function as slurs related to race, gender, sexuality, disability, or ethnicity. Allan and Burridge (2006) describe epithets as "forceful bursts of emotional language," exemplified by terms such as *bitch, fag, nigger,* and *motherfucker*. Profanity, by contrast, is rooted in irreverence toward the sacred. Montagu (2001) notes that the term *profane* denotes "the abuse of everything sacred," and it is mostly based on ignorance of or indifference to religious matters. An example of profanity is the exclamatory use of *"Jesus Christ!"*—in the phrase *"Jesus Christ, this is*

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tiring!" the words *Jesus Christ* constitute the profane element, while *this is tiring* is merely a neutral complaint.

The next type is obscenity. Battistella (2005) defines obscenity as an expression that references sexual organs or excretory functions in a coarse manner, for instance *fucking, fuck,* or *shit*. Finally, vulgarity overlaps with obscenity but is generally less graphic; it denotes crude or coarse language that may still reference sex or bodily functions yet is more commonplace in informal speech.

In short, it is the language typically used by unsophisticated, unsocialized, and under-educated individuals. For example: *"Suck my ass!"*—a crude expression that reflects a lack of concern for social norms and politeness.

For a translator, taboo words can pose a significant challenge, especially considering how each country and region has its own perception of such expressions. Most Western countries are generally more accepting of taboo words, as many regions are already exposed to them in everyday life. However, this is not the case in many Islamic countries or in countries that enforce specific norms regarding the use of slurs or profane expressions. Cultural differences also influence how translators interpret and render taboo words. Therefore, to respect the cultural and religious values of the target audience, a translator must find equivalents that are more appropriate or less offensive than those in the source language. In achieving this, the application of suitable translation techniques and the choice of translation equivalence play crucial roles.

Translation techniques, as defined by Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002), are procedures applied to textual micro-units that result in equivalence. They differentiate techniques from strategies and methods—techniques deal with the product (the translated text), not the process. This approach focuses on analyzing how translation equivalence is achieved through concrete procedures visible in the target text. It ensures that the translation maintains its intended meaning, function, and communicative impact while adapting to cultural and linguistic differences. Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) classify eighteen techniques, but this study focuses on four that appear most dominantly in the subtitles of *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

First, borrowing involves directly transferring a word or expression from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) without modification, such as rendering *"sunroof"* as *"sunroof"*. Second, the literal translation technique translates each word directly and structurally from SL to TL, for instance, *"dilarang masuk tanpa memakai sarung"* becomes *"forbidden to enter without wearing a sarong"*. Third, established equivalent uses a term that is commonly recognized in the TL (based on dictionaries or native speaker usage), such as translating *"uang logam"* as *"coin"* rather than *"iron money"*. Fourth, reduction refers to the deletion or omission of certain elements from the SL to TL due to cultural or contextual irrelevance—for example, translating *"wantilan"* simply as *"place"*, which may indicate the translator's unfamiliarity with the specific cultural term.

These four techniques are selected because they are the most frequent and relevant in capturing how taboo words are translated and adapted across languages. The classification and terminology used in this study are in accordance with Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) seminal article *Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach*, published in *Meta*, volume 47, number 4, pages 498–512.

The role of translation techniques becomes even more significant when dealing with complex texts—that is, source materials that contain layered cultural references, idiomatic expressions, distinctive authorial style, or highly charged language such as taboo words. In such cases, translators must navigate the intricacies of the source language, meaning they need to identify not only the literal meanings of words but also their pragmatic force, sociocultural connotations, and emotional tone. An effective technique, therefore, is one that conveys these multiple layers of meaning in a manner that

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remains faithful to the original while still sounding natural and acceptable in the target culture.

Although recent advances in machine translation (MT) and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools add valuable efficiencies—such as terminology management and draft generation—the present study focuses on human-made subtitle decisions, where cultural sensitivity and contextual judgment are paramount. Ultimately, the human element remains irreplaceable: only a skilled translator can choose and implement techniques like borrowing, literal translation, established equivalent, or reduction in ways that preserve the author's intent and the text's communicative impact.

Translation techniques emerge as an approach to guide translators in their quest for equivalence across languages. It reflects a conscious effort to address linguistic, cultural, and communicative challenges, ensuring that the translated text resonates authentically in the target language.

The concept of translation equivalence has continued to evolve in recent scholarship. Akramovna (2024) argues that translation equivalence plays a central role in bridging meaning between source and target languages, ensuring that key semantic and cultural elements are effectively conveyed. This relationship is pivotal in the translation process as it aims to ensure that the translated text faithfully captures the meaning, tone, and nuances of the original content. Nida, in her influential work "Towards a Science of Translating," introduces a nuanced understanding of translation equivalence by categorizing it into two distinct types: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence, just as explained by Nida and Taber (1974), involves a more literal approach to translation, prioritizing a word-for-word rendering of the source text into the target language. This type of equivalence aims to preserve the linguistic structures and forms of the original text, often resulting in a translation that closely mirrors the syntax and vocabulary of the source language.

Dynamic equivalence, as proposed by Nida and Taber (1974), shifts the focus towards capturing the dynamic meaning and intent of the source text rather than adhering strictly to its linguistic forms. This approach acknowledges that languages differ not only in structure but also in how they express meaning and cultural subtleties. Dynamic equivalence seeks to produce a similar response or effect in the target audience as the original text does in its original audience. As a result, the translation may depart from the literal wording of the source in order to preserve the intended message, tone, or emotional impact. The choice between formal and dynamic equivalence often depends on the nature of the text, the cultural context, and the desired impact on the target audience. Formal equivalence is particularly valuable in translating technical or legal documents where precision and accuracy are paramount. In contrast, dynamic equivalence is more appropriate in creative works, literature, and contexts where conveying the intended meaning and emotional resonance is as crucial as linguistic fidelity.

As translation studies progress, the concept of equivalence continues to be refined and debated. In essence, translation equivalence is a fundamental consideration in the translator's decision-making process. It needs to balance between linguistic precision and capturing the intended meaning, taking into account both the structural aspects of language and the dynamic interplay of cultural and contextual factors. The exploration of translation equivalence underscores its significance in achieving authentic and effective cross-cultural communication through translation.

Despite extensive research on taboo words across various contexts—including media narratives, social media platforms, and cognitive processing—there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific translation techniques and types of equivalence employed in subtitling taboo words in movies. Existing studies, such as those by Bednarek (2019) and Raras et al. (2021), explore how taboo words are negotiated and used in mass media and digital communication, but they do not examine the nuanced strategies required to translate these expressions for audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. Likewise, neural and cognitive investigations by Sendek et al. (2022) and Sulpizio et al. (2019) offer

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important insights into how taboo words are processed psychologically, yet they fall short of addressing the practical difficulties encountered by translators in audiovisual contexts. This results in a limited understanding of how translators handle cultural sensitivities and respond to the need for dynamic equivalence when subtitling.

Furthermore, while previous research highlights the importance of cultural context in the use and perception of taboo words, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis on how these factors influence translation techniques in subtitling for audiences from different linguistic, cultural, and socio-religious backgrounds. The movie industry, particularly in global markets, requires translators to balance fidelity to the source language with the cultural and societal norms of the target audience. *The Wolf of Wall Street*, known for its explicit language and culturally specific expressions, presents a unique case study to explore these translation challenges. By focusing on this movie, the researchers aim to fill the gap by providing detailed insights into categorizing the types of translation techniques and forms of equivalence—such as formal and dynamic equivalence—used in subtitling taboo words, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural translation practices in the cinematic context.

Another example is the study by Derli et al. (2019) titled *"An Analysis of Taboo Words in Rich Brian's Song Lyrics."* Their research aimed to identify the types and functions of taboo words in the lyrics, and the team employed a simple random-sampling approach to collect the data. By contrast, the present study aims to classify the types of taboo words, examine the translation techniques, and determine the forms of equivalence found in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Beyond those differences in object, data set, theoretical framework, and analytic method, our investigation also integrates an audiovisual-translation perspective, thereby providing new insights that distinguish it from earlier work in the field.

The Wolf of Wall Street, a film rich in profane and obscene language, offers a compelling case for studying subtitling strategies. As noted by Bordwell et al. (2004), films are artistic constructs shaped by narrative structures and cultural contexts. Therefore, translation is not merely a linguistic task but also a creative endeavor that requires balancing fidelity to the original and sensitivity to the target audience.

By identifying the types of taboo words, the translation techniques employed, and the forms of equivalence attained in the subtitling of the movie, this research offers a clearer picture of the hurdles translators face when balancing target-culture norms about politeness with the linguistic accuracy required to relay the source dialogue naturally. The findings are expected to demonstrate that rendering taboo language is not simply a matter of word choice, but a culturally embedded practice that demands careful negotiation between preserving the film's original tone and respecting the audience's social and religious sensibilities. In doing so, the study contributes fresh insights to audiovisual-translation scholarship and highlights how subtitling strategies mediate meaning across cultures. Beyond filling an academic gap, the analysis provides a practical framework—complete with taxonomies and annotated examples—that helps Indonesian viewers and translation practitioners understand why particular solutions were selected for *The Wolf of Wall Street*, thereby making the film's dialogue and overall narrative more accessible.

2. Methodology

In this research, the researchers use a descriptive-qualitative method, which emphasizes meaning and interpretation rather than quantification. This method is suitable for analyzing the translation of taboo words, as it allows for a deep examination of linguistic and cultural nuances. The objective of this research is to identify appropriate translation techniques and equivalence strategies used in translating taboo words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* movie.

According to Arikunto (2002), data sources can be classified into primary and secondary types.

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In this study, primary data consist of 584 instances of taboo words taken directly from *The Wolf of Wall Street* movie and its official Indonesian subtitles. These data include words, phrases, and sentences that contain taboo expressions, which were then analyzed based on their types, translation techniques, and types of translation equivalence. Meanwhile, secondary data include the film's published screenplay, subtitle files, and relevant scholarly literature (e.g., Jay, 1992; Molina & Albir, 2002; Nida, 1964), which support the analysis framework and aid in data validation and classification.

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, which, according to Patton (2002), involves selecting information-rich cases that can provide in-depth insights into the phenomenon under study. The selection of *The Wolf of Wall Street* was based on specific criteria: (1) the movie contains a high frequency of taboo expressions, (2) it is culturally significant and widely circulated, and (3) it has an official Indonesian subtitle, making it suitable for analyzing translation techniques and equivalence. To avoid ambiguity, it is clarified here that purposive sampling was applied to the selection of the movie, while total sampling was used to extract all relevant instances of taboo expressions within the chosen film.

The technique of collecting data involved a detailed examination of the selected movie. The film was watched thoroughly while the Indonesian subtitle file was examined simultaneously. Dialogue containing taboo expressions was transcribed and paired with its corresponding subtitle. Each pair of source text (ST) and target text (TT) was recorded in a data table, including time stamps and context, to ensure accurate analysis and interpretation (Arikunto, 2002).

The technique of analyzing data involved classifying the taboo words based on Jay's (1992) typology of taboo language, identifying the translation techniques used based on the framework by Molina and Albir (2002), and categorizing the type of equivalence used (formal or dynamic) following Nida's (1964) theory. The frequency and dominance of each technique and equivalence type were calculated, and the contextual and cultural relevance of each translation choice was interpreted qualitatively.

To ensure data validity, this research employed triangulation and expert validation. An expert in audiovisual translation was consulted to check and verify the accuracy of the ST–TT pairs and the classification of techniques and equivalence. Additionally, the data were cross-checked with the movie script and supporting literature to minimize subjectivity and increase reliability in the analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Result

This study identified a total of 584 instances of taboo words in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, classified into four categories: epithets, obscenities, vulgarities, and profanities, with epithets being the most frequently occurring type. Alongside this, four translation techniques were found: reduction, established equivalent, literal translation, and pure borrowing, with reduction being the most widely applied. In terms of translation equivalence, the vast majority of cases were rendered using dynamic equivalence, while a small portion employed formal equivalence.

These findings are not presented in isolation. Rather, the study aims to demonstrate how the use of specific translation techniques directly influences the type of equivalence achieved. For example, reduction often results in dynamic equivalence because it involves omitting or softening the taboo expression to suit the cultural sensitivities of the Indonesian audience. In contrast, literal translation tends to preserve the structure and offensive tone of the original, aligning more closely with formal equivalence, although this approach is used sparingly due to cultural constraints.

By integrating these elements, the analysis provides a more holistic view of how taboo language is translated not only linguistically, but also pragmatically and culturally. This synthesis highlights the

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interrelationship between translation techniques and equivalence outcomes, offering deeper insight into the translator's strategies for balancing fidelity and appropriateness in cross-cultural film translation.

To better understand the translator's strategy in handling taboo words, the following subsections present a detailed breakdown of the findings, including (1) the types and frequency of taboo words, (2) the translation techniques applied, and (3) the corresponding types of translation equivalence. These components are then interpreted collectively to assess how the choice of technique influences the equivalence produced in the target language.

To provide a clearer picture of the findings, the data are categorized based on the types and frequency of occurrence of taboo words found in the source text. This classification is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Summary of Taboo Words*

Taboo Words	Amount
Epithets	477
Vulgarity	40
Obscenity	48
Profanity	19
Total	**584**

Based on Table 1, the analysis categorizes the taboo words into four types, each with its corresponding frequency of occurrence. *Vulgarity* is identified 40 times, while *profanity* appears 19 times. *Epithets* are the most frequently occurring type, with 477 instances, followed by *obscenity* with 48 occurrences. In total, the analysis identifies 584 instances of taboo words across these categories, highlighting their diversity and prevalence within the dataset.

In addition to identifying the types of taboo words, this study also examines the translation techniques used to render these expressions into the target language. A summary of the techniques and their respective frequencies is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Summary of Translate Technique*

Translation Technique	Amount
Pure Borrowing	3
Established Equivalent	190
Literal	23
Reduction	368
Total	**584**

In Table 2, four translation techniques—as defined by Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002)—are recorded and ranked by frequency of use in subtitling the film's taboo words. Reduction is the most frequently observed technique (368 instances); it omits or condenses a taboo word when a direct equivalent would sound excessively harsh or violate subtitle guidelines. Established equivalent appears 190 times; this procedure replaces a source-text taboo word with a target-language expression that is widely recognized and pragmatically comparable, thereby preserving meaning and situational tone. Literal translation occurs in 23 cases, rendering a taboo word word-for-word to maintain formal correspondence, even though this solution may fail to convey all cultural

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connotations. Pure borrowing is the least used technique (3 instances); it transfers the source-language word unchanged into the target language because no suitable equivalent exists or because the original form carries stylistic value.

Together, these techniques show how subtitlers select concrete procedures to balance two competing demands: (1) faithfulness to the source dialogue's force and register and (2) acceptability for Indonesian viewers whose cultural norms restrict overt profanity. By judiciously omitting, substituting, translating literally, or borrowing terms, translators manage to convey the film's aggressive tone while ensuring that the subtitles remain intelligible and culturally appropriate.

Following the examination of translation techniques, the analysis further explores the types of equivalence applied in rendering the taboo words. The distribution of these types of equivalence is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Summary of translate equivalence*

Translation Equivalence	Amount
Dynamic Equivalence	558
Formal Equivalence	26
Total	**584**

Table 3 summarizes the use of translation equivalence types, highlighting the frequency of each category found in the analyzed data, which totals 584 instances of translated taboo words. Dynamic equivalence, which was identified 558 times, emphasizes conveying the intended meaning and emotional impact of the original taboo words in a way that feels natural and culturally appropriate for the target audience. In contrast, formal equivalence, found in 26 instances, adopts a more literal translation approach that strives to retain the exact structure and wording of the source expressions.

3.1. Analysis

3.1.1. Analysis of Taboo Words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* Movie

a. Epithets

Epithets are adjective or descriptive phrases that highlight a characteristic quality of the person or thing being referred to which can also involve various types of derogatory terms, such as "bitch" and "fag." and human excretory system. Many of the insults reflect the speaker's lack of respect for others.

Data Code: D210/E/R/FE "*Oh, shit!*"

In the example "Oh, shit!", the epithet "shit" serves to convey a happiness that Jordan (a character from the movie) feels as he inhales the drug from Naomi's (a character from the movie) breast. It emphasizes the speaker's burst of emotion in a short but strong way ~~which~~ in line with the definition of epithets.

Data Code: D337/O/L/DE *"**Fuck!**"*

Similarly, the epithet "Fuck!" as cursing functions similarly which is to convey Jordan's emotion of annoyance and to express anger. He is annoyed because he gets tied up in an airplane chair with a seatbelt and cannot get out of the situation.

In both examples, epithets like "shit" and "fuck" are cursing words serving not only as a way to convey displeasure but also to convey a burst of emotion in enjoyment, reflecting the speaker's attitude or emotional state in a direct and unfiltered manner. It illustrates that epithets can be used to convey any strong emotion of the speaker just by using a simple word which aligns with the definition of epithet.

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b. Profanity

Profanity refers to language that shows a lack of respect for religious beliefs, often expressed through insulting, irreverent, or indifferent remarks about sacred matters. In the provided examples, both data contain profanity centered around religious figures.

Data Code: D53/P/EE/DE *"Jesus Christ, the spread on these is huge."*

In the utterance "Jesus Christ, the spread on these is huge," the phrase "Jesus Christ" functions as an interjection expressing surprise, rather than frustration, in response to an unexpectedly large price spread. This use of "Jesus Christ" is identified as profane because it involves taking the name of a revered religious figure in vain, a common practice in colloquial English to intensify emotional reactions such as shock or disbelief.

Data Code: D54/P/EE/DE *"Jesus! That's my mortgage, man."*

Similarly, in "Jesus! That's my mortgage, man", "Jesus!" is used as an expletive to express astonishment or concern. This usage, like the previous example, employs religious terminology in a way that some may find offensive or disrespectful.

The examples illustrate how profanity can be used to intensify emotions or reactions in informal speech. However, such expressions—especially those involving religious references—may also be perceived as offensive or inappropriate in certain contexts, particularly when used by individuals who are unaware of or indifferent to the religious significance of the terms.

c. Vulgarity

Vulgarity refers to a language used by ordinary people, often those who are unsophisticated, unrefined, or under-educated. It does not fulfil any specific purpose beyond the basic needs of everyday communication.

Data Code: D409/V/EE/DE ***"Motherfucker!"***

In the exclamation "Motherfucker!", the term "motherfucker" is a crude and offensive expression commonly used in informal speech, often as a form of name-calling when someone is angry or annoyed. The word originates from a taboo insult and is generally regarded as inappropriate in polite or formal settings. Based on the definition of vulgarity provided earlier—language typically used by ordinary people who may be unsophisticated or unrefined—this example qualifies as vulgarity, as it serves no higher communicative function beyond expressing raw emotion in everyday, informal interactions.

Data Code: D491/V/EE/DE *"* Take your suit, *take your dick*, okay…"

Similarly, in the utterance "Take your suit, take your dick, okay…", the word "dick" is a vulgar slang term referring to male genitalia, used here in a direct and unrefined manner. This expression exemplifies vulgarity, as it reflects coarse language typically found in informal or emotionally charged contexts. While such terms may occur in casual speech, they are generally deemed inappropriate in formal, educational, or public settings due to their explicit and potentially offensive nature.

The examples illustrate how vulgarity can function as a form of name-calling, using coarse or unsophisticated language to express strong emotions such as anger, frustration, or contempt. While such expressions are often found in informal or emotionally intense conversations, they may be perceived as offensive or inappropriate in more formal, polite, or professional settings.

d. Obscenity

Obscenity refers to language that is considered extremely offensive or morally repugnant, often involving explicit references to sexual acts, bodily functions, or other taboo subjects. While references to sexuality can also appear in vulgar or epithetic expressions, they are typically classified as obscene when the language is graphic, explicit, and intended to provoke strong moral or emotional reactions. In contrast, vulgarity may include less explicit or more colloquial references to sex, and epithets may

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involve sexual terms when used to insult or degrade someone.

Data Code: D14/O/EE/DE *"Why don't you blow me,* Hanna?*"*

In the utterance "Why don't you blow me, Hanna?", the verb "blow" is a slang term that explicitly refers to a sexual act, making the expression an example of obscenity. The use of such language is deliberately provocative, intended to offend, assert dominance, or express hostility in an unrestrained and confrontational manner, reflecting the speaker's disregard for social norms or politeness conventions.

Data Code: D2/O/EE/DE *"I fuck hookers maybe five, six times a week."*

Similarly, in "I fuck hookers maybe five, six times a week", the word "fuck" is used as a vulgar term for sexual intercourse. This type of cursing is direct and explicit, aiming to emphasize the frequency or intensity of the speaker's actions.

The examples demonstrate how obscenity can be used to express harsh or explicit realities, often through language that is intentionally shocking, sexually explicit, or socially transgressive. This type of language reflects a direct and unfiltered mode of communication, commonly found in certain media, subcultures, or emotionally charged interactions. However, obscene language is highly controversial and is generally considered offensive or unacceptable in most social, educational, or professional environments.

3.1.2. Analysis of Translation Techniques for Taboo Words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* Movie

a. Pure Borrowing

Pure borrowing involves directly transferring the original taboo words into the target language without any modification in form or meaning, thereby retaining their emotional intensity and pragmatic effect. This technique is also referred to as transliteration, which in this context means maintaining the source language words entirely—both in pronunciation and spelling (Purnomo, 2021). It should be noted that, in line with Molina and Albir (2002), pure borrowing is classified as a translation technique, not a strategy.

Data Code: D395/E/PB/FE

SL: *" Oh, my gosh. The Emperor of* ***Fucksville*** *came down from* ***Fucksville*** *to give me a pass!"*

TL: *"*Ya Tuhan. Kaisar dari ***Fucksville*** turun dari ***Fucksville*** untuk memberi kelonggaran!*"*

In the translated sentence "Ya Tuhan. Kaisar dari ***Fucksville*** turun dari ***Fucksville*** untuk memberi kelonggaran!", the term *Fucksville* is retained in its original form. This reflects the use of the *pure borrowing* technique, in which a word from the source language (SL) is directly transferred into the target language (TL) without modification. The decision to retain *Fucksville* stems from the absence of an equivalent expression in Indonesian that could fully capture its vulgar nuance and satirical tone. By borrowing the original term, the translator preserves both the emotional intensity and cultural specificity of the utterance. This case also exemplifies *formal equivalence*, where the translation closely follows the structure and wording of the original rather than prioritizing naturalness in the TL.

Data Code: D353/E/PB/FE

SL: *"*How do you say "***rathole***" in British?"

TL: *"*Bagaimana kamu mengatakan "***rathole***" dalam bahasa Inggris British?*"*

In this example, the word ***rathole*** is preserved in its original English form in the translation, without any modification. This indicates the use of the *pure borrowing* technique, where the source word is maintained in the target text due to the absence of a culturally or linguistically appropriate

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equivalent in Indonesian. By doing so, the translation maintains the authenticity and lexical intensity of the original expression, allowing the intended nuance to remain intact across languages.

The examples illustrate how pure borrowing allows translators to convey the raw emotions and intensity of the original expression effectively by borrowing words from source language.

b. Literal Translation

The literal translation technique involves translating text word-for-word, maintaining the original structure and sequence of words.

Data Code: D214/E/L/FE

SL: *"*- What are you doing... - That ***whore*** from the party?*"*

TL: *"*Apa yang kau lakukan... / Dia ***pelacur*** di pesta itu ?*"*

In this excerpt, the taboo word "whore" is translated into "pelacur" using the *established equivalent* technique. The translator selects a target language term that is culturally and semantically recognized as an appropriate equivalent, preserving the offensive connotation of the source word. By choosing "pelacur," the translation maintains both the derogatory meaning and emotional impact intended in the original utterance.

This choice demonstrates a deliberate attempt to retain the harshness and directness of the source text, which aligns with the movie's overall tone and character interactions. Unlike *euphemism*, which would involve softening or mitigating the vulgarity (e.g., using a more polite or indirect term like "wanita nakal"), or *generalization*, which might replace "whore" with a broader, less offensive term (e.g., "perempuan itu"), the use of *established equivalent* ensures that the cultural force and pragmatic function of the taboo expression are effectively preserved in the target language.

Data Code: D352/E/L/FE

SL: *"*Money talks and ***bullshit*** takes the bus."

TL: *"*Uang berbicara dan ***omong kosong*** naik bus.*"*

In this example, the entire expression is translated using the *literal translation* technique, with the taboo word "bullshit" rendered as "omong kosong." While this technique involves translating the text word-for-word, it overlooks the idiomatic nature of the original phrase. The English idiom "Money talks and bullshit takes the bus" carries a sarcastic and culturally embedded meaning, implying that money holds real power, while empty talk is dismissed or left behind.

The literal rendering into "Uang berbicara dan omong kosong naik bus" fails to preserve the idiomatic impact, tone, and style of the source text. Although the individual words are correctly translated, the expression loses its sarcastic punch and may appear awkward or unclear to Indonesian audiences unfamiliar with the original idiom. In this case, a more appropriate translation strategy, such as *idiomatic translation* or *equivalence*, would have better conveyed the underlying pragmatic force and stylistic richness of the original utterance.

c. Established equivalent

Established equivalent is a translation technique that involves using terms or expressions widely acknowledged as standard equivalents in the target language. These equivalents are generally available in bilingual dictionaries or frequently appear in language in use across various communicative contexts.

Data Code: D582/V/EE/DE

SL: *"So listen. I've met* ***some bad motherfuckers*** *in my life."*

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TL: *"Jadi dengarkan. Aku pernah bertemu dengan **beberapa orang jahat** dalam hidupku."*

In this example, the taboo word *motherfuckers* is translated into *orang jahat* using the *established equivalent* technique. Rather than rendering the expression literally as *bajingan* or *brengsek*—which would retain the vulgarity of the original—the translator opts for a more neutral and socially acceptable term. This choice reflects an effort to preserve the core meaning while adapting the tone to suit the cultural norms of the target language.

By using *orang jahat*, the translator avoids the offensive connotation of the original word and replaces it with a broadly understood equivalent in everyday Indonesian. While this reduces the vulgar impact, it ensures that the general message remains comprehensible and appropriate for the target audience. This strategy aligns with Molina and Albir's (2025) explanation of *established equivalent*, in which the translator uses an equivalent expression that is conventional and contextually appropriate in the target language.

Data Code: D6/E/EE/DE

SL: *"* I'm 22 years old, newly married, ***and already a money-crazed little shit."***

TL: *"* Umurku 22 tahun, baru menikah..., ***...dan tergila-gila dengan uang."***

In this excerpt, the taboo word ***shit*** is not rendered in the target text; the translator conveys only the idea of being "money-crazed" with *tergila-gila dengan uang* and omits the vulgar intensifier altogether. This solution represents a **euphemistic modulation (omission)** rather than an *established equivalent*: the offensive term is softened—indeed removed—to meet Indonesian socio-cultural norms and avoid offending the audience. While the core meaning ("obsessed with money") is preserved, the loss of the taboo element reduces the source text's colloquial harshness and the speaker's self-deprecating tone. Such modulation illustrates how translators sometimes sacrifice vulgar force to maintain acceptability in the target language, especially when no natural, equally strong yet publishable equivalent for the taboo word exists.

d. Reduction

Reduction technique in translation involves simplifying or condensing the original text sometimes involves omitting word from the source text to convey the essential meaning more succinctly in the target language.

Data Code: D1/E/R/DE

SL: *"Twenty-five grand to **the first cocksucker** to hit a bull's eye!"*

TL: *"*25 ribu dolar bagi ***yang pertama*** menancap tepat di tengah!*"*

In this example, the taboo word **"cocksucker"** is entirely omitted in the translation. The translator renders only the neutral referent "yang pertama," applying the **reduction** technique. This strategy involves deleting the offensive lexical item while retaining the essential meaning of the sentence.

The omission of "cocksucker" eliminates the vulgar and aggressive tone of the original utterance, likely to avoid violating cultural and linguistic norms in Indonesian. While the message of the reward and action remains intact, the loss of the taboo word reduces the stylistic intensity and speaker's provocative register. This demonstrates how the reduction technique prioritizes acceptability and clarity in the target language over stylistic fidelity to the source.

Data Code: D269/E/R/DE

SL: *"You get them fired up so they **push the shit out of this stock**. Okay?"*

TL: *"Buatlah mereka bersemangat sehingga mereka **mengeluarkan stok ini**. Oke?"*

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In this sentence, the taboo intensifier ***shit*** in the phrasal idiom **"push the shit out of (something)"** is entirely omitted in the target text. The translator reduces the clause to *mengeluarkan stok ini* ("sell/release this stock"), applying the **reduction (omission)** technique. As a result, the vulgar force that amplifies the directive in the source language is lost. While the basic instruction—"sell the stock energetically"—remains comprehensible, the omission softens the original's aggressive tone and diminishes its persuasive urgency. This case illustrates how reduction can ensure cultural acceptability in Indonesian but at the cost of the taboo word's emphatic impact and the speaker's hard-selling attitude.

3.1.2. Analysis of Translation Equivalence in *The Wolf of Wall Street* Movie

a. Formal Equivalence

Formal Equivalence focuses on preserving the exact structure and wording of the source text, ensuring that the translated version remains as faithful as possible to the original language.

Data Code: D392/E/L/FE

SL: *"You got a big **fucking** mouth, you know."*

TL: *"Kamu punya mulut besar **sialan**, tahu."*

This example illustrates the application of **formal equivalence** in which the translator closely follows the original sentence structure and word order. The phrase "You got a big fucking mouth" is rendered as "Kamu punya mulut besar sialan," maintaining the grammatical construction of subject + verb + object + intensifier. Although the taboo word *fucking* is translated into *sialan*, which is slightly milder in the Indonesian context, the translator preserves its function as an emotional intensifier modifying "mouth."

Moreover, the tag question "you know" is also retained as "tahu," which reflects the same pragmatic force of seeking confirmation or emphasizing the statement. By keeping both the sentence structure and the placement of expressive elements intact, the translation demonstrates formal equivalence—not only in terms of word meaning but also syntactic and rhetorical form. This preserves the tone, aggression, and emotional urgency of the original utterance.

Data Code: D416/E/L/FE

SL: *"**Fuck**! Let's take, uh... Let's take two more each."*

TL: *"**Sial**! Ayo ambil, uh... Ayo ambil lagi masing-masing dua."*

This translation demonstrates the application of **formal equivalence** by preserving the structure, order, and functional elements of the source utterance. The interjection "Fuck!" is rendered as "Sial!", functioning similarly as an emotional outburst at the beginning of the sentence. The imperative structure "Let's take... Let's take two more each" is translated directly into "Ayo ambil... Ayo ambil lagi masing-masing dua," maintaining both repetition and syntactic construction.

Even the hesitation marker "uh..." is retained, which reflects the source text's spontaneous spoken style. This consistent replication of sentence components—including taboo word placement, speech disfluency, and sequential commands—exemplifies how formal equivalence prioritizes syntactic and rhetorical fidelity over naturalness. Although the Indonesian version may sound slightly rigid or awkward in informal conversation, this approach ensures that the emotional tone and urgency of the source language are conveyed as faithfully as possible.

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b. Dynamic Equivalence

Dynamic equivalence focuses on conveying the meaning and effect of the source text in a manner that is natural and relatable to the target audience, often prioritizing the overall message and emotional impact over a word-for-word translation.

Data Code: D468/O/EE/DE

SL: *"- I **fucking** love you, Jordan! - I **fucking** love you."*

TL: *"- Aku **sangat** mencintaimu, Jordan! - Aku **sangat** mencintaimu."*

In this example, the taboo intensifier **"fucking"** is rendered as **"sangat"**, indicating a shift from vulgar expression to a neutral intensifier. The translator employs a form of **euphemistic modulation**, replacing the expletive with a more socially acceptable equivalent to suit cultural norms in the target language.

While this strategy preserves the emotional emphasis and urgency of the original utterance, it eliminates the crude, raw tone conveyed by the taboo word. The translation becomes more polite and culturally appropriate for Indonesian audiences, but at the cost of losing the speaker's informal and passionate expression. This case illustrates how the translator balances emotional content with linguistic acceptability through *euphemistic modulation*, rather than *established equivalent* or *literal translation*.

Data Code: D478/E/EE/DE

SL: *"...is trying to **fuck me**, you know that."*

TL: *"...mencoba untuk **menjebakku**, kau tahu itu."*

In this instance, the taboo verb ***fuck***—which expresses a strong sense of betrayal and aggression—is rendered as ***menjebak*** ("set me up"), a neutral term that carries none of the original vulgar force. The translator therefore applies **euphemistic modulation combined with reduction**: the crude lexical impact is softened and the slang component completely removed to meet Indonesian cultural norms.

Although the core propositional meaning ("someone is attempting to harm or undermine me") is preserved, the emotional weight and speaker's raw anger are attenuated. The shift from an expletive to a neutral verb diminishes the source text's intensity, illustrating how the translator prioritizes acceptability over stylistic fidelity. Consequently, the translation communicates the information clearly but does **not** replicate the affective charge embedded in the taboo word—an inevitable trade-off when strong profanity lacks an equally forceful yet publishable equivalent in the target language.

3.2. Discussion

a. Taboo Words

The researchers identified 584 instances of taboo words, divided into four categories: 477 epithets, 48 obscenities, 40 vulgarities, and 19 profanities. Among these, epithets are by far the most dominant category, with frequent use of terms like *fuck*, *shit*, and *fucking*. This aligns with Bednarek's (2019) findings, where such words occurred 483 times across 16 media scripts. Crystal (n.d.) also explains that such high usage of epithets reflects informal and emotionally intense discourse practices, particularly in confrontational or expressive situations. This pattern highlights how taboo epithets function as a normalized element of informal communication, particularly in media depicting intense, aggressive, or emotionally charged environments.

In the cultural context of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, the high frequency of epithets directly reflects

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the toxic, hyper-masculine, and high-pressure Wall Street environment. Characters use harsh and taboo language to assert dominance, vent frustration, and foster camaraderie within a morally unrestrained corporate world. Azzaro et al. (2018) note that taboo language often functions as a form of linguistic rebellion and identity marking, which explains its frequent use in such settings. The language mirrors real-life financial subcultures where bravado, excess, and defiance of conventional norms are normalized and even celebrated. It also emphasizes the absence of boundaries in the world depicted—linguistically, ethically, and professionally.

In contrast, obscenities—often related to sexual acts or bodily functions—appeared only 48 times. This finding contrasts with Derli et al. (2019), where obscenities were the most frequent category (49 of 89 instances) in song lyrics. Widowati et al. (2020) suggest that genre plays a significant role in determining the intensity and type of taboo expressions used, with films being more constrained by narrative and censorship norms than music. This suggests that while music may lean into shock value for artistic or entertainment purposes, film—even one as provocative as *The Wolf of Wall Street*—may use such language more sparingly, reflecting the contextual and narrative limitations of screen storytelling. Still, the inclusion of obscenities reinforces the film's portrayal of a culture where hedonism and explicit behaviour are normalized, though perhaps more often expressed through actions than through dialogue.

Vulgarities, totalling 40, also contribute to the film's gritty realism but do not dominate the discourse. These are used to further emphasize characters' informality and brashness, often in peer-to-peer interactions.

The least frequent type of taboo language is profanity, with just 19 instances. Given that profanities often involve religious references, their scarcity is unsurprising. *The Wolf of Wall Street* presents a world largely devoid of religious or spiritual discourse. The absence of religious themes in both plot and character development explains this minimal use. This finding aligns with Bednarek (2019), where profanity also had the lowest occurrence. Crystal (n.d.) posits that religious taboos, while potent, are increasingly avoided in global media due to their potential to offend across cultures.

In conclusion, the use of taboo words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* is not random but culturally and contextually embedded. These linguistic choices reflect the values, behaviours, and communication styles of the film's characters, rooted in a corporate culture of power, excess, and moral ambiguity. This study illustrates how language—even offensive language—serves as a tool for realism, character development, and cultural critique.

b. Translation Techniques

Reduction is clearly dominant. Following Barzegar's (2008) view that reduction functions as a pragmatic safety valve in conservative linguistic settings, the subtitle often omits or tones down profanity to meet Indonesian broadcast standards. Established equivalents appear about half as often as reduction (190 vs. 368 cases). In line with Nababan (2003), these instances show the translator searching for TL terms that are recognisably taboo—yet socially tolerable—so the dialogue still feels natural to Indonesian viewers.

Why does reduction outstrip established equivalents? In the source film, many taboo words work mainly as intensifiers (e.g., "fucking brilliant") rather than literal insults. Because their pragmatic load is to add emotional punch rather than new propositional content, the translator often chooses to drop or soften them without harming narrative clarity. When the taboo term carries essential meaning (e.g., as a direct insult), the translator is more likely to retain it via an established equivalent.

Overall, the distribution of techniques highlights the delicate balance between preserving the illocutionary force of taboo language and respecting TL cultural norms.

On the other hand, literal translation and pure borrowing are the least used techniques in the

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data. Lörscher (1991) notes that literal translation often fails when handling idiomatic or emotionally charged content, such as taboo words, because it overlooks the socio-pragmatic functions embedded in the source language.

Pure borrowing appears only rarely, likely because most English taboo words carry strong culture-specific connotations that are not easily transferable into the target language. Directly borrowing such terms could either render them meaningless to the target audience or make them sound even more offensive due to the lack of cultural filtering.

Unlike previous studies, which tend to focus primarily on the categorization or frequency of taboo words, this research emphasizes the translation techniques employed to mediate their meanings across languages. Therefore, the results are not directly comparable to earlier studies, but they offer a complementary perspective by highlighting how translators deal with profanity pragmatically in subtitling contexts.

In summary, each translation technique offers distinct advantages and limitations in conveying the meaning and intent behind taboo words across different linguistic and cultural contexts. While omission may help maintain acceptability in the target language, it often results in a loss of expressive force and character voice. Therefore, the choice of technique should be guided by the translator's awareness of cultural norms, the communicative function of the taboo word, and the intended audience. In many cases, a combination of strategies—such as reduction, modulation, or using culturally appropriate equivalents—may better preserve both meaning and impact.

c. Translation Equivalence

The researchers identified 584 instances of taboo words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* and categorized their translations into two types of equivalence: dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence. Out of these, 561 instances were classified as dynamic equivalence, while only 23 employed formal equivalence. According to Nida's theory (1964), dynamic equivalence emphasizes producing a similar communicative effect on the target audience, especially when literal translation would result in expressions that are culturally inappropriate or pragmatically unacceptable. This finding suggests a strong tendency toward dynamic equivalence in the translation of taboo words in the film.

Dynamic equivalence involves adapting the meaning of the source language into expressions that are natural, acceptable, and contextually appropriate in the target language. Rather than focusing on preserving exact wording or grammatical form, this approach seeks to replicate the function and emotional effect of the original utterance. In dealing with taboo expressions, dynamic equivalence often results in the softening, euphemizing, or contextual adjusting of explicit language to prevent offense.

It is important to note, however, that dynamic equivalence is a type of equivalence, not a translation method per se, as defined by Newmark (1988) and further distinguished by Molina and Albir (2002), who separate translation techniques from translation methods. In this study, dynamic equivalence emerges as the dominant approach because it allows the translator to mediate the tension between maintaining textual meaning and honoring cultural norms of appropriateness. This is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where direct renderings of vulgar or sexually explicit language may be seen as impolite, offensive, or culturally unacceptable.

On the other hand, formal equivalence, which involves preserving the grammatical form and lexical structure of the source language, was used sparingly in this study. According to Newmark (1988), this approach often prioritizes linguistic accuracy over communicative effectiveness and may fail to convey the intended meaning—especially when dealing with culturally sensitive or expressive language. Although Newmark does not specifically address taboo words, his broader critique of formal equivalence supports the idea that such an approach may be inadequate for emotionally charged or context-specific expressions.

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Widowati et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of adaptive strategies, such as euphemization, cultural substitution, or pragmatic modulation, when translating sensitive materials for Indonesian audiences. These strategies differ from translation techniques in that they refer to broader decision-making frameworks shaped by cultural, institutional, and audience-related factors, rather than individual word-level procedures. In the Indonesian context, such adaptations are often necessary to balance fidelity to the source text with acceptability and appropriateness in the target culture.

The use of dynamic equivalence in the translation of taboo words aligns with the understanding that language is deeply embedded in culture. Taboo expressions, in particular, often carry culture-specific connotations that may vary drastically between languages. A word that is considered highly offensive in one culture may have a far milder or even neutral meaning in another.

In this case, the translator—whose identity is not explicitly stated in the subtitle release—appears to have prioritized communicative effect over literal form. The consistent use of dynamic equivalence suggests an awareness of cross-cultural sensitivities and an intentional effort to prevent the translated version from sounding excessively offensive or culturally inappropriate to Indonesian audiences.

Additionally, the translator's reliance on dynamic equivalence can be seen as a way to maintain the overall tone and intent of the film while making it more palatable for the target audience. In a film like *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which is known for its explicit language and themes, maintaining the impact of the dialogue while ensuring it fits within the cultural boundaries of the target audience is a delicate balance. Dynamic equivalence allows the translator to achieve this balance by finding culturally appropriate substitutes for the original taboo words.

Since this study did not delve into translation equivalence in previous research, no direct comparisons can be made. However, the findings highlight the importance of considering cultural nuances when translating sensitive content like taboo words. The heavy reliance on dynamic equivalence in this research suggests that translators must prioritize cultural respect and fluency over literal accuracy when translating for diverse audiences. Ultimately, this study sheds light on the intricate process of translating taboo words and the importance of adapting language to fit cultural contexts, even when it means deviating from the original text.

In summary, both formal and dynamic equivalence play essential roles in translating taboo language, balancing linguistic accuracy with cultural sensitivity. While formal equivalence ensures precision and fidelity to the source text, dynamic equivalence facilitates cross-cultural understanding by prioritizing the audience's experience and emotional resonance (Nida, 2021; Newmark, 1988). Numerous studies (e.g., Azzaro et al., 2018; Widowati et al., 2020) underscore that Western cultures, particularly American, often embrace directness and emotional expressiveness—including the frequent use of taboo words—as a reflection of individualism and identity. In contrast, Eastern cultures like Indonesia tend to avoid overtly explicit language to maintain social harmony and politeness, which are core cultural values (Farida & Yuliana, 2019; Shalihah & Winarsih, 2023). By drawing insights from such research, translators can employ a nuanced approach that meets the communicative needs of diverse audiences while maintaining respect for linguistic and cultural boundaries. This culturally responsive approach allows translators to navigate the complexities of taboo language effectively, ensuring that the translated text retains its intended meaning and impact across different cultural contexts. Ultimately, by combining elements of both formal and dynamic equivalence, translators can produce translations that are accurate, culturally sensitive, and communicatively effective, thereby promoting deeper intercultural understanding and communication.

The findings from the study of *The Wolf of Wall Street* highlight a significant contrast between Western (particularly American) culture and Indonesian/Eastern culture, especially in the use and perception of taboo language. In the American context, as reflected in the film, the frequent use of taboo

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words-including epithets, obscenities, vulgarities, and profanities- illustrates a communication style that is direct, aggressive, and emotionally expressive. This is especially common in high-pressure environments like Wall Street, where assertiveness and dominance are often emphasized. Western culture tends to value individual expression and freedom of speech, even if that involves using offensive or provocative language. In films and media, such language is often considered a tool for realism and character development.

In contrast, Indonesian culture, rooted in Eastern values, places a much stronger emphasis on politeness, respect, and social harmony (locally referred to as *rukun*). Direct expression of strong emotions, especially through offensive language, is generally frowned upon. Public discourse and media in Indonesia are more conservative, and there are cultural and sometimes even legal restrictions on the use of vulgar language. This cultural orientation explains why, during the translation of *The Wolf of Wall Street* into Indonesian, the most frequently used technique was reduction-where offensive words were softened or entirely omitted. This approach reflects a deliberate effort to make the content more culturally appropriate for the target audience.

Moreover, the data show a strong preference for dynamic equivalence—understood here in Nida's sense as a receptor-oriented type of equivalence, not a "translation method" in Newmark's (1988) taxonomy. By aiming for a comparable communicative effect in the target audience, dynamic equivalence permits the translator to soften, euphemise, or omit English profanity that would breach Indonesian norms. This inevitably dampens the emotional impact and tone of many utterances, yet preserves each line's core propositional meaning and narrative function.

In 190 cases the translator employs established equivalents—culturally recognisable Indonesian taboo terms such as *brengsek* or *tai*—to retain some expressive force without overstepping local standards. Pure borrowing of English expletives, by contrast, occurs only three times. Such borrowing is rare because the words either have low semantic resonance for most Indonesian viewers or remain offensive even when understood, making them unsuitable for subtitled release.

This distribution of strategies underlines the subtitle's balancing act between fidelity to the source and sensitivity to the target culture's pragmatic constraints.

These linguistic choices reflect deeper cultural values. Western communication norms tend to be more individualistic and informal, valuing directness and emotional transparency. In contrast, Eastern norms—particularly those in Indonesia—prioritize group harmony, indirectness, and the maintenance of social respect in interpersonal interactions.

The different ways taboo language is handled in *The Wolf of Wall Street* and its Indonesian translation demonstrate not only linguistic variation, but also core cultural differences. While the original English script uses profanity liberally to express emotion, assertiveness, or humor, the Indonesian subtitles often omit, soften, or replace such expressions to align with local expectations of politeness and appropriateness. This contrast reveals how language mediates broader cultural attitudes toward authority, emotion, and public decorum.

When translations of American films like *The Wolf of Wall Street* carefully adapt their language to suit Indonesian cultural norms—especially in rendering taboo expressions—viewers are able to engage with global content in a way that feels more accessible and appropriate. For instance, by applying translation techniques such as reduction, dynamic equivalence, and established equivalence, translators soften or replace offensive language that would otherwise clash with Indonesian values of politeness and social harmony.

Although this process often involves a loss of the original emotional tone, it helps ensure that viewers can still follow the plot, understand character motivations, and grasp the thematic intent of the film without being alienated by harsh or explicit language. In this sense, the translator's selective

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adaptations help bridge cultural communication styles: the direct, emotionally charged dialogue typical of American cinema is reshaped into forms more acceptable within the indirect and respectful norms of Indonesian discourse.

Furthermore, such culturally informed decisions help uphold local expectations of decency in public media, contributing to the preservation of language sensitivity and ethical standards. While some expressive nuances are inevitably reduced, the main narrative and character dynamics remain intelligible and engaging. Ultimately, culturally responsive translations do not replicate the source text verbatim but negotiate meaning across cultures to make foreign films more relatable, enjoyable, and contextually appropriate for Indonesian audiences.

Referring to the discussion above, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, particularly regarding cultural and media diversity. The analysis focused exclusively on a single film, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which may not represent the full range of techniques used in translating taboo language across different cultural contexts and media formats.

Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope by incorporating a comparative and multimodal approach—analyzing diverse sources such as social media content (e.g., TikTok, Twitter), music lyrics, novels, and other audiovisual materials. Such an approach would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how taboo words are translated and adapted across various platforms, genres, and cultural settings.

This recommendation aligns with the perspective of Widarwati et al. (2024), who emphasize the ongoing need for innovation in translation studies to reflect the evolving nature of language, media, and intercultural communication.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated the translation of taboo words in *The Wolf of Wall Street* and aimed to address three main objectives: (1) to classify the types of taboo words found in the film, (2) to identify the translation techniques applied in rendering those taboo words into Indonesian subtitles, and (3) to examine the types of translation equivalence used in the process.

Based on the analysis, a total of 584 instances of taboo words were found, categorized into epithets, obscenities, vulgarities, and profanities, with epithets emerging as the most frequent type. These results reflect the aggressive and informal communication style of the film's characters, particularly within the high-pressure, hyper-masculine culture of a Wall Street stock company.

The analysis also revealed that reduction was the most commonly used technique, followed by established equivalent, literal translation, and pure borrowing. In terms of translation equivalence, the translator predominantly applied dynamic equivalence, with only a small number of instances rendered using formal equivalence. These findings underscore the translator’s efforts to adapt offensive language in a way that aligns with Indonesian cultural and communicative norms, balancing fidelity to the original dialogue with sensitivity to the target audience.

Second, the study analyzes the translation techniques applied in rendering the taboo words into Indonesian. Among the four identified techniques, reduction was the most frequently used. According to Barzegar (2008) and Nababan (2003), both reduction and established equivalent are commonly employed in contexts that demand cultural sensitivity, particularly when direct translations may be inappropriate or offensive.

These techniques do not merely translate the words literally but modify or soften the expressions

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to better suit the linguistic norms and socio-cultural expectations of the target audience—especially in conservative societies like Indonesia. It is important to note that the term "adapt" here refers to the adjustment of expression for cultural appropriateness, and not to adaptation as a distinct technique in the taxonomy of Molina and Albir (2002).

Lastly, the research examines translation equivalence, revealing that dynamic equivalence was predominantly applied in translating taboo expressions. According to Nida (1964) and Newmark (1988), dynamic equivalence prioritizes the effect on the target audience by conveying intended meaning in a way that feels natural and culturally appropriate. This approach allows translators to respect local norms while maintaining communicative clarity and narrative coherence.

It is important to note that in this context, dynamic equivalence refers to a type of equivalence, not a translation method as defined in Newmark's framework. The findings thus indicate the translator's tendency to focus on meaning-based rendering rather than word-for-word correspondence, especially when dealing with sensitive or offensive content.

As such, culturally sensitive translation not only enhances audience comprehension and enjoyment but also fosters cross-cultural understanding. This ensures content is accessible, relatable, and ethically appropriate within the target culture.

The contrast between the original English dialogue and the Indonesian subtitles in *The Wolf of Wall Street* illustrates a broader cultural divide between Western and Indonesian communication norms. American culture often accepts directness, strong emotion, and the shock value of taboo language, whereas Indonesian culture prioritises politeness, restraint, and social harmony. The translator's main solutions—especially reduction, dynamic equivalence, and the use of established Indonesian taboo terms such as *brengsek* or *tai*—represent a deliberate balancing act. These techniques soften the raw tone of the source text so it remains acceptable to local viewers, yet still convey the narrative's key meanings and character dynamics. Inevitably, part of the original aggressiveness is lost, so the result is *communicatively faithful* rather than *stylistically identical*. Even with this tonal shift, a culturally sensitive translation improves audience comprehension and fosters cross-cultural understanding by presenting global narratives in forms that respect the target culture's ethical and linguistic expectations.

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