



## **Teaching Dubbing Translation in Indonesian Classroom: Benefits and Challenges**

Niken Paramita

Universitas Widyagama Malang

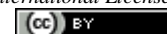
[niken.paramita@gmail.com](mailto:niken.paramita@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Currently, dubbed version of imported films or programs are available as one of the options of content localization, aside from subtitles. Despite the potential of dubbing and dubbing translation, especially in Indonesia, not many departments in higher education institutions offer lesson in dubbing translation. This article aims to propose what topics can be covered in a dubbing translation lesson, why dubbing translation lesson is important, and what dilemmas arise in teaching dubbing translation. The study was conducted using literature review method. Future research may be done to find the gap between the translation skills required in Indonesian dubbing industry and the ones acquired by Translation students in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Dubbing Translation, Audiovisual Translation Pedagogy, Indonesian Classroom, Review Method.

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### **1. Introduction**

Subtitling and dubbing are very popular to the viewers of films and other programs, either on television, cinema, or online video sharing platforms like YouTube. According to Cambridge Dictionary [1], subtitles are the “words shown at the bottom of a film or television picture to explain what is being said.” Meanwhile, dubbing, coming from the verb to dub, is defined as “to change the sounds and speech on a film or television program, especially to a different language”[1].

Both subtitling and dubbing are parts of audiovisual translation, i.e. the translation of the verbal element of a video [2], especially the dialogs spoken by the people appearing in the video. For dubbing, the voice actors should synchronize and mimic their pronunciation to match that of the original actors. Synchronization is also an important factor in subtitling, where the sentences should occur at the perfect time: not appearing and disappearing too fast or too slow.

Apart from subtitling and dubbing’s difference in term of the output mode, which is spoken and written, certain preferential variance among viewers from different countries occurs. According to a 2011 study by the European Commission [3], Spain and Germany preferred dubbing for their imported cinematic films and TV programs.

Meanwhile, the UK, Portugal, Netherlands and Belgium chose subtitling as the language transfer method. Such difference in inclination is affected by

differences in the economic, language and cultural policies by each government, as well as the viewers’ habit in each country [3]. Recent studies suggested that Asian and North American countries, as well as the UK and Australia tend to favor subtitling; whereas, South American and European countries tend to prefer dubbing [4].

This divide, however, tends to be irrelevant over time. Audiovisual contents nowadays get more global and more diverse, both in term of the content categories and the audience, requiring them to be as inclusive as possible. As Chaume stated, “Audiovisual content is no longer mono cultural, audiences are no longer mono cultural, and AVT is no longer confined to using one mode, but different modes, combined when necessary, fulfilling different needs”[5].

With the rise of the internet, globalized and inclusive content is a common phenomenon. Companies seek to gain wider audience and embrace local values by providing localization to their products [6], including more options for localization means. This is evident in countries within Asia Pacific region, including Southeast Asia, where the market (of audiovisual content, e-commerce, games, etc.) is huge and half of the internet users reside [7]. For example, from a personal observation, cable TV channels and streaming services available for Indonesian viewers such as Disney+ Hotstar and HBO give both options of subtitles and dubbing in their broadcast films or series. This way, audience are given liberty to choose the preferred localization means. Amazon Prime Video, a subsidiary business of Amazon Group, recently also did

similar action in localization albeit having been in Southeast Asia market since 2016, citing the goal of becoming “the most local of global streaming services” [8].

As one form of audiovisual translation, dubbing provides the viewers with the comfort of understanding what is being said onscreen without having to read the translation [9]. This advantage especially works best for utterances with high speed or long sentences. Seen from the cultural point of view, dubbing is beneficial when a content provider needs to align themselves with local culture and characteristics [10], through products like feature films, series, online games, or other commercial audiovisual contents.

The reasons above are probably why dubbing is more appealing to those who want more local flavor to the existing audiovisual products. In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, dubbing is done to contents that aim at family or a specific type of audience (e.g., gamers). An Indonesian TV channel, for example, decided to broadcast a dubbed version, instead of a subtitled one, of an already-famous imported drama series so that the fans of the said series could rewatch it and the non-fans family members could enjoy it without the hassle of reading fast-paced subtitles [11]. Another instance is how dubbing of online game *Genshin Impact* could bring together the gaming community, who recently held a dubbing competition for the players [12]. The scoring criteria consisted of diction/word choice, tone modulation and vocal intensity, and rhythm adaptation/synchronization.

With the potentials of dubbing, it is unfortunate that subtitling is learned more than dubbing in Translation and English Language classrooms, especially in Indonesia where imported films and programs are abundant. A study revealed that out of 12 (twelve) observed English Departments in Indonesian higher education institutions, only 4 (four) of them covered Audiovisual Translation topics in their Translation classes [13]. The materials and activities done in such classes revolved around subtitling practice and subtitles analysis. Other studies showed that dubbing is mainly used in Indonesian classrooms to support certain aspects of language learning, usually speaking [14]. It is expected that when Translation learners are given more exposure to dubbing and dubbing translation, they gain more analytical and practical skills in the field. This might be reflected from the quantity and varieties of published articles on dubbing translation and its teaching, and/or published curriculum of a Translation course which contains the expected learning outcome or the graduate profiles.

With these considerations in mind, the article aims to analyze the possible topics related to dubbing translation lesson that can be covered in Translation

classes in Indonesia. The article also identifies the benefits and limitations of applying such lesson in a Translation class.

## **2. Research Method**

The study was conducted using literature review method, in particular semi-structured or narrative review. Snyder [15] suggested that this method is useful for providing an overview, especially the progress of knowledge, of an issue or a topic. Especially semi-structured review can be used to identify and synthesize all relevant information regarding the topic. The information was then analyzed using content analysis. This method and analysis are useful when one wants to explore common issues in certain research discipline. The results are presented in the following section in a narrative manner according to the order of (1) the objective of teaching dubbing translation and issues surrounding the subject matter; (2) the topics to teach about dubbing translation; (3) the benefits of integrating dubbing translation lesson for English Language learners and Translation Studies learners; and (4) the challenges of teaching dubbing translation and the possible solutions to overcome them.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

Teaching dubbing translation in a Translation class stems from and harks back to the core subject of this matter: the objective of having a dubbing translation lesson, i.e., producing a competent translator for dubbing work, and the issues related to dubbing translation. The formulation of the competences of audiovisual translators, including dubbing translators, has been done by many researchers and experts of audiovisual translation (AVT). One of the formulas was a synthesis by Merchán [16], which encompasses (1) contrastive competences of both Source Language and Target Language; (2) extralinguistic competences like the tidbits and contexts related to the Source Text, (3) methodological competences to work on the Source Text; (4) instrumental competences to use technology effectively; and (5) translation problem-solving competences. Apart from that, there are important issues on dubbing and dubbing translation that should be noted. They are the synchronization of dubbing translation, the dubbing process, the idiosyncrasy of dubbed language, and voice and prosody of dubbing result [17]. Those topics might be considered when dubbing translation is to be integrated in a Translation class since the learners should know how to translate a dubbing script with its own constraints and unique characteristics.

### **3.1. Topics taught about dubbing translation**

From the abovementioned considerations, there are at least 4 (four) topics that can be taught about dubbing

translation. They are the three kinds of synchrony in a dubbing result, the linguistic characteristics of dubbed conversation, the strategies and techniques of dubbing translation, and steps of dubbing.

The first topic is three kinds of synchrony that must be achieved in dubbing, i.e., lip-synch, kinesic synchrony, and isochrony[18]. Considering that dubbing is made for the comfort of the viewers, the translation must be domesticated in such a way that viewers do not painfully feel it is a translation. This is what Chaume quoted as the “impression of reality”.

Lip-synch is defined as the synchrony between the character’s onscreen lip movement and the translated words being uttered. Sometimes lip-synch is also called phonetic synchronization. In practice, lip-synch might refers to both isochrony and phonetic synchronization [19]. However, in translating the dubbing script, eventually it is the visual aspect of the content that can help determine whether certain lip movements are very visible that they require synchronization or whether they can be disregarded to produce a more natural-sounding Target Language.

Kinesic synchrony is the synchrony between the translation and the character’s body language or gesture. A visually evident gesture or facial expression may require a complete paraphrase in the Source Language translation. This is necessary so that the translated words match with the characters’ physical gestures [19].

Isochrony is the rhythmic and chronological equal division that occur in a language, which should be paid attention to in term of dubbing. In dubbing, the translated utterances must fit as soon as the onscreen characters open their mouth and close their mouth. The neglect of isochrony can result in the characters’ mouth opening while no words are heard, or otherwise the words are heard when the mouth is already closed. To produce isochrony, the translator should be aware of the language pair and the characteristics of each language. One language might need more length than the others to convey the same message [19].

The second topic to learn is the linguistic characteristics of dubbed conversation. In a study of the dubbed text characteristics in an English to German dubbing context, it was found that a dubbed dialog typically has (1) a high frequency of anglicisms (English-influenced loan words, grammatical structure, and pragmatic style), (2) a more formal, written-text stylistic elements instead of spoken ones, and (3) reduced cohesive elements [9]. Besides that, dubbing and dubbed dialogs are usually characterized by the presence of “prefabricated orality” [18]; [20]. This refers to the utterances produced by scriptwriters (or translators, in this case) that sound believable and

realistic to the viewers, even though they are the result of a careful planning in advance. Nonetheless, translators should not tempt to imitate spontaneous utterances, and seek acceptability of the Target Text according to the system and the factors within the said system [20].

The third topic is the strategies and techniques that can be applied to achieve synchrony, accuracy, acceptability in doing dubbing translation [18]. stated there are several types of strategies employed by translators in dubbing. The first type is documentation strategy, which is built to make up for the lacking presence of cultural aspect. The second type is comprehension strategy in order to understand the original utterance (Source Text). The third type is translators’ own strategies to rewrite the Source Text into the Translated Text. This is where they need to consider carefully the word choice based on the acceptability and priorities of the relevant factors. The last type is mnemonic strategies so that the translators do not repeat the same procedures, which might cause monotonous translation result.

As for the translation techniques, there are several identifications from experts. Delabatista in Chaume [18] listed such techniques as (1) repetition of the same word order as in the Source Text, (2) word order change, (3) substitution of word with either synonyms, antonyms, or other means, (4) omission or addition of some elements, and (5) reduction, explicitation, or reiteration of information [18], mentioned explicitation, implicitation, foreignization, and domestication strategies in audiovisual translation that are also applicable in dubbing translation [19]. illustrated a detailed steps in doing adaptation of dubbing script in order to achieve synchrony, accuracy and acceptability, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

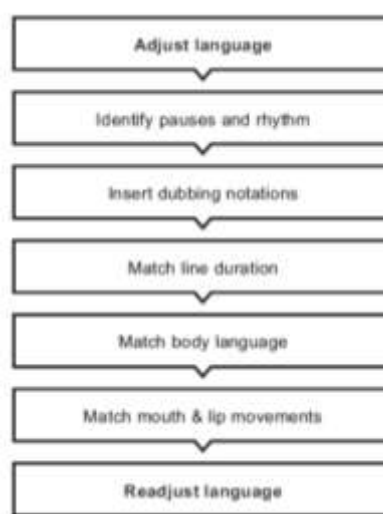


Fig 1. Steps of dubbing script adaptation/translation[19]

While Miggiani's description applies exclusively for the translator of dubbing script (who sometimes also performs the task of a dialog writer due to the nature of the job), there are other technical steps of dubbing and dubbing translation [21]. He listed stages of dubbing production, including its translation, which begins with the delivery of the "master" video of the film or program along with its script or transcription and specific instruction by the client to the agency or dubbing studio. Those are forwarded to the translator who then starts to work on the translation. At times, the translator must work with a not-so-accurate script or even no script at all. It is followed by proofreading and synchronization process, which can be done by a separate person or the translator him/herself. It can be said that the process of translation is also a dialog writing, since it involves taking care of the lip-sync, adding symbols to help the dubbers know how to deliver their lines, and making the script fit for oral discourse. After a few finishing touches, the script is brought to production division for use in the dubbing work. At this point, the dubbing director works with the voice talents or dubbers to create the end product [17].

The abovementioned topics (i.e., kinds of synchrony, linguistics characteristics of dubbed sentences, strategies and techniques in dubbing translation, and steps of dubbing) are very crucial in the dubbing translation learning process. They are not only relevant for translators in training, especially those wanting to work with audiovisual texts, but also beneficial for English Language learners in general.

### 3.2. Advantages of having dubbing translation

The advantages of learning dubbing translation include enriching students' language skills both in Source Language and Target Language, developing their global socio-cultural literacy through understanding of the context of the utterances, as well as improving their skills with technology [22]; [23]. Those advantages generally come with the learning of Translation, especially in Audiovisual Translation, where students do not focus only on certain linguistic aspects, but also pay attention to the pragmatic, discourse, and semiotic factors of an utterance. In addition, they must work with technology since the text is not limited to two-dimensional writing and the supporting tools come in the form of the most updated software or hardware.

Dubbing translation lessons also provide a good challenge in the process, especially regarding the constraints as well as dialog writing. When applied as a project or a group task, the learning of dubbing translation can give the learners sense of professional work in term of task distribution and translators' role in the dubbing process. This is, in (Sokoli, 2020), is referred to as "audiovisual (AV) skills," including AV speaking and AV writing, as well as AV reading and

AV listening. AV speaking and AV writing signify "(learners') ability to produce speech and writing, respectively, in combination with the video, taking into consideration and adapting to its other elements, such as speed, voice quality, performance, shot transition. For example, in dubbing there are certain time restrictions and synchronisation demands: the learner's utterance has to be produced at the same speed as the pace used by the original character. AV reading and AV listening refer to oral and written comprehension with the combined effect of the elements of the multimodal material."

Particularly in Indonesia, the most reported use of dubbing in a language class is to improve speaking micro-skills, especially pronunciation [14];[23];[24]. Thus, even students who do not study Translation courses can still gain benefit from dubbing lessons. Apart from that, dubbing activity in class may improve learners' engagement [25] and confidence [24], which are crucial in language learning and translators' training.

With that said, there are challenges in teaching dubbing translation to language learners and translators-to-be. The main limitation stems from the fact that dubbing is a complex process. It is not just about translation but also a whole series of steps where the people involved must make preparation for voice recording and creating a dubbing product that is integrated seamlessly with the original video. As described above, dubbing requires a collaboration among translators, dialog writers, dubbing directors, voice talents or dubbers, and sound engineers.

This workflow might make the focus sways from teaching translation to organizing the technical aspects. This is a dilemma for classroom situation although in practice such multitask is somewhat inescapable, especially in today's digitalized life. In fact, back in 2009, the European Masters in Translation (EMT) listed technological competence as one of five competences that should be possessed by translation service providers (i.e., translators)[26]. Other competences include language, thematic (subject matter), intercultural, and information mining.



Figure. 2 EMT's 2009 model of translation competence

In order not to confuse the focus, the teacher or lecturer should go back to their planned learning outcome. That way, they can be aware of the priorities of the planned lesson, whether it exclusively focuses on the dubbing script translation (without thinking much about the other technical aspects) or it explores the whole journey of doing dubbing translation from beginning to end. This is important since the mastery of technical aspect is also an important translation skill nowadays.

Another situation regarding the teaching of dubbing translation is related to the most-reported benefit of teaching dubbing is on the improvement of learners' speaking skills, as mentioned earlier. Dubbing translation lesson might give results in students' translation skills, but is also useful to train students' pronunciation.

Again, referring to this, the teacher or lecturer should identify their planned learning outcome, the focus, and priorities, whether they want to integrate dubbing lessons as a way to improve the learners' speaking skills or to teach dubbing translation as a part of audiovisual translation learning. The implication is that the teacher or lecturer's priorities may determine the choice of the Source Language and Target Language. For instance, the teachers' focus on improving students' English speaking skills will require them to find a video along with its script that is spoken in a non-English language. That way, the video can be translated and dubbed into English, which means that the learners will have a chance to demonstrate their speaking micro-skills aside from the translational skills.

In a case where the teachers or lecturers wants to build the learners' translational skills especially with audiovisual texts, they can choose working with either English to non-English language pair or non-English to English language pair as a part of the teaching material. A dubbing translation task from English to non-English (i.e., Indonesian) language should be able to build learners' mastery in understanding English terminology, figurative language, and contextual meaning of a certain utterance. It should also be able to improve learners' competence in listening, pragmatics, and cross-cultural knowledge. At the same time, the resulting translation should represent the accurate and acceptable utterances in the non-English (i.e., Indonesian) Target Language, both linguistically and non-linguistically [27]. On the other hand, a dubbing translation task from non-English to English language should improve or reflect learners' competence in the linguistic and non-linguistic (pragmatic, cultural, or political) aspect of the Source Text, as well as their ability to recreate the meaning into an accurate and acceptable Target Text. In this regard, learners' productive skills in writing are fully demonstrated.

Related to the above challenges, it is imperative that a dubbing translation lesson be taught by a competent teacher or lecturer. Audiovisual translation, including dubbing, has its own characteristics compared to literary translation or legal translation. Therefore, it should be noted that the teacher/lecturer possesses the required knowledge, competence and experience in the field. What and how much they know about dubbing translation, both in theory and practice, determine the success of the lesson.

Last but definitely not least, a class of dubbing translation understandably demands a supporting infrastructure. Teachers and learners should be able to conveniently do the learning process, share the necessary files, and present the related translation works. Therefore, supporting and compatible software, hardware, online and offline resources are mandatory for the ideal learning environment of dubbing translation.

Future research on this topic may be done to find the gap between the translation skills required in Indonesian (or Southeast Asian) dubbing industry, and the skills acquired by Translation students in Indonesia (or Southeast Asia). It might lead to a needs analysis of a curriculum of Audiovisual Translation, especially dubbing translation, that corresponds with industry's needs.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Teaching dubbing translation in a Translation class stems from the objective of having a dubbing translation lesson, i.e., producing a competent translator for dubbing work, and the issues related to dubbing translation. Based on the formulation of the competences of audiovisual translators, including dubbing translators, there are at least four topics that can be taught about dubbing translation. They are the three kinds of synchrony in a dubbing result, the linguistic characteristics of dubbed conversation, the strategies and techniques of dubbing translation, and steps of dubbing.

The advantages of learning dubbing translation include enriching students' language skills both in Source Language and Target Language, developing their global socio-cultural literacy through understanding of the context of the utterances, as well as improving their skills with technology. When applied as a project or a group task, the learning of dubbing translation can give the students a sense of professional work in term of task distribution and translators' role in the dubbing process. The most important advantage of learning dubbing translation is that students will acquire "audiovisual (AV) skills," including AV speaking and AV writing, as well as AV reading and AV listening. Additionally, dubbing activity in class may improve students' engagement and confidence.

Nonetheless, there are dilemmas in teaching dubbing translation. First, dubbing is a complex process. This workflow might make the focus sways from teaching translation to organizing the technical aspects. Second, teaching dubbing translation might also sway the focus from students' translation skills to their speaking skills. In such cases, the teacher or lecturer should identify their planned learning outcomes to determine the focus and priorities. That way, they can decide whether the lesson is going to be exclusively about the translation process without considering technical aspects or fully integrate the whole process of dubbing. The teacher can also decide whether they want to integrate dubbing lessons as a way to improve the learners' speaking skills or to teach dubbing translation as a part of audiovisual translation learning. The implication is that the teacher or lecturer's priorities may determine the choice of the Source Language and Target Language .

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