

A Study of the Translation of Religious Expressions in the Film Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah (2023)

Intan Kurnia Sari^{1*}, Mayasari²

^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Language and Communication, Universitas Harapan Medan, Jl. Imam Bonjol No. 35
Medan.
kurniasarii589@gmail.com

Abstract

This research examines the translation of religious expressions in the Indonesian film *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023) and its English subtitles. It aims to identify the types of religious expressions and the translation techniques used, including their effects on meaning and religious values. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the data consisted of Indonesian dialogues and English subtitles collected through documentation and analyzed based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework. A total of 30 religious expressions were identified in five categories: Invocation/Openings (10; 33.3%), Prayers (Du'a) (9; 30.0%), Expressions of Hope or Submission to God's Will (7; 23.3%), Expressions of Gratitude (4; 13.3%), and Greetings (0%). Five translation techniques were identified: Established Equivalence (18; 60.0%), Literal Translation (8; 26.7%), Modulation (2; 6.7%), Amplification (1; 3.3%), and Reduction (1; 3.3%). The findings show that these techniques generally preserved the intended meanings and religious values, although some expressions were linguistically adjusted for naturalness and readability. This research contributes to audiovisual and religious translation studies by highlighting how religious expressions can be translated into English subtitles while maintaining their spiritual and cultural values.

Keywords: Translation Techniques; Religious Expressions; Audiovisual Translation; Subtitling; Molina and Albir

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerjemahan ungkapan keagamaan dalam film Indonesia **Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah** (2023) beserta takarir (*subtitle*) bahasa Inggrisnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis ungkapan keagamaan dan teknik penerjemahan yang digunakan, termasuk dampaknya terhadap makna dan nilai-nilai keagamaan. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, data yang digunakan terdiri atas dialog bahasa Indonesia dan takarir bahasa Inggris yang dikumpulkan melalui studi dokumentasi serta dianalisis berdasarkan kerangka kerja Molina dan Albir (2002). Sebanyak 30 ungkapan keagamaan teridentifikasi dalam lima kategori: Seruan/Pembukaan (10; 33,3%), Doa (9; 30,0%), Ungkapan Harapan atau Penyerahan Diri pada Kehendak Tuhan (7; 23,3%), Ungkapan Rasa Syukur (4; 13,3%), dan Salam (0%). Lima teknik penerjemahan teridentifikasi: Padanan Lazim (*Established Equivalence*) (18; 60,0%), Penerjemahan Harfiah (8; 26,7%), Modulasi (2; 6,7%), Amplifikasi (1; 3,3%), dan Reduksi (1; 3,3%). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teknik-teknik tersebut umumnya mempertahankan makna dan nilai keagamaan yang dimaksud, meskipun beberapa ungkapan disesuaikan secara linguistik demi kejelasan dan keterbacaan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada studi penerjemahan audiovisual dan keagamaan dengan menyoroti bagaimana ungkapan keagamaan dapat diterjemahkan ke dalam takarir bahasa Inggris sembari tetap mempertahankan nilai-nilai spiritual dan budayanya.

Kata kunci: Teknik Penerjemahan; Ungkapan Keagamaan; Penerjemahan Audiovisual; Pembuatan Takarir; Molina dan Albir

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✉ Corresponding author: Intan Kurnia Sari

Email Address: kurniasarii589@gmail.com (Jl. Imam Bonjol No. 35 Medan)

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INTRODUCTION

Religious expressions frequently appear in contemporary films, particularly in narratives that emphasize moral values, spirituality, and the emotional experiences of characters. In Indonesian films with strong religious themes, such expressions are commonly embedded in dialogues to reflect faith, convey moral messages, and enhance the emotional depth of the story. However, when these films are

distributed to international audiences, translating religious expressions into English subtitles becomes a complex task, since differences in cultural background, belief systems, and linguistic structure may lead to shifts in meaning or the loss of important religious nuances (Abdelaal, 2023; Hatim & Munday, 2021; Zhang, 2022).

Translation plays a central role in cross-cultural communication by transferring meaning from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) while maintaining the intended message (Baker, 2022; Rahimi, 2021). In today's globalized media environment, audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, has become an essential medium for transmitting cultural, ideological, and religious values embedded in cinematic works (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2023; Gambier, 2021; Pérez-González, 2021). Subtitling, however, is not merely a linguistic process; it also involves technical constraints such as limited space and time, which require translators to condense and adapt dialogue without losing its core meaning (Pedersen, 2021). Translating religious expressions presents an additional challenge because of their theological depth, emotional resonance, and cultural specificity, so that translators must adopt appropriate techniques to preserve semantic, pragmatic, and spiritual equivalence (Al-Kadi, 2023; Alhaj, 2022; Hatim & Munday, 2021).

Previous studies have examined the translation of religious discourse in various contexts, such as the translation of Islamic expressions in the Qur'an (Alhaj, 2022), the translation of Islamic sermons (Al-Ali & Qasem, 2023), and the translation of religious expressions in Arabic audiovisual media (Al-Kadi, 2023). While valuable, these studies mainly focus on sacred texts, sermons, and Arabic-language films, leaving the translation of religious expressions in Indonesian religious films largely unexplored. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no previous study has specifically analyzed the translation of religious expressions in the film *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023), nor examined how translation techniques contribute to preserving religious meaning and Islamic values in subtitle translation.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, it investigates the translation of religious expressions in an Indonesian religious film, whereas previous studies mainly focused on the Qur'an, Islamic sermons, and Arabic audiovisual media. Second, it specifically examines a range of Islamic religious expressions prayer, gratitude, invocation, hope, and greeting that have not been comprehensively analyzed in Indonesian film subtitling. Third, unlike previous studies that primarily identify translation strategies or discuss translation difficulties in general, this research analyzes how the translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002) contribute to preserving religious meaning and Islamic values in English subtitles.

Based on this background, the problems of this study are formulated as follows: (1) What types of religious expressions are found in the film *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023)? (2) What translation techniques are used to translate these religious expressions into the English subtitles, and how do these techniques affect the conveyed meaning and religious values? Accordingly, this research aims (1) to identify the types of religious expressions found in the film, and (2) to explain the translation techniques used in translating the religious expressions into English subtitles and to examine how these techniques

affect the meaning and religious values conveyed.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich translation studies, particularly in the field of audiovisual and religious translation, by providing insight into how religious expressions are translated in films and how translation techniques influence meaning equivalence and the preservation of religious values. Practically, the findings may benefit translators, students, and educators by offering guidance on effective strategies for translating religious expressions in films, thereby helping to improve subtitle quality and raise awareness of cultural and religious sensitivity in audiovisual translation practice.

METHOD

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative descriptive design to analyze the translation of religious expressions in the film *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023) into its English subtitles. A qualitative approach was chosen because the data consist of words, phrases, and sentences carrying cultural and religious meaning rather than numerical data, and the descriptive method allows the researchers to systematically explain how religious expressions are translated and which techniques are applied in the subtitling process.

Data and Source of Data

The data of this research consist of words, phrases, and sentences found in the dialogue of the film that contain religious expressions, together with their corresponding translations in the English subtitles. The primary source of data is the film itself along with its English subtitles, while secondary sources include books, academic journal articles, and previous studies related to translation, religious expressions, and audiovisual translation.

Data Collection

The data were collected using a documentation technique through the following steps: (1) watching the film repeatedly to understand the storyline, context, and dialogue; (2) reading and matching the Indonesian dialogue with the English subtitles to identify corresponding SL and TL expressions; (3) identifying and classifying words, phrases, and sentences containing religious expressions based on the criteria described in Section 2.3; and (4) transcribing the selected data into a data table, including the Indonesian expressions, their English subtitle translations, and relevant contextual information (timecode).

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed through the following steps: (1) classifying the collected data into types of religious expressions based on their communicative function; (2) identifying the translation technique used for each expression based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework; (3) comparing the SL expression with its TL translation to examine how the technique was applied; (4) examining how the selected technique conveys the intended meaning of the religious expression; (5) analyzing whether the English subtitle preserves the religious values expressed in the original dialogue; and (6) drawing

conclusions regarding the types of religious expressions, the translation techniques applied, and their effects on conveyed meaning and religious values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Religious Expressions

A total of 30 religious expressions were identified in the Indonesian dialogue of the film *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023) and compared with their English subtitles. The expressions were classified into five categories based on their communicative function, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Types of Religious Expressions

No	Type of Religious Expression	Frequency	Percentage
1	Invocation/Openings	10	33.3%
2	Prayers (Du'a)	9	30.0%
3	Expressions of Hope or Submission to God's Will	7	23.3%
4	Expressions of Gratitude	4	13.3%
5	Greetings	0	0%
	Total	30	100%

Table 1 shows that Invocation/Openings is the most dominant category, accounting for 10 data (33.3%). This category includes expressions such as *Masyaallah*, *Allahu Akbar*, *Ya Allah*, *Ya Rabb*, *Astaghfirullah*, and *Innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un*, which are commonly used to invoke, glorify, or remember Allah in various communicative situations. The second most frequent category is Prayers (Du'a), with 9 data (30.0%), representing direct supplication to Allah for guidance, forgiveness, protection, or blessing. Expressions of Hope or Submission to God's Will rank third with 7 data (23.3%), such as *Insyallah* and *Dengan izin Allah*, reflecting trust in God's will, while Expressions of Gratitude appear in 4 data (13.3%), such as *Alhamdulillah*. Greetings such as *Assalamu'alaikum* were not found in the selected data (0%). Overall, the dominance of Invocation/Openings and Prayers (Du'a) suggests that the characters in the film frequently express their faith, emotions, and dependence on Allah, highlighting the strong presence of Islamic values throughout the narrative.

Translation Techniques Applied

Based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, the analysis reveals that the translator applied five translation techniques in rendering the 30 religious expressions into English, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Translation Techniques

No	Translation Technique	Frequency	Percentage
1	Equivalence	18	60.0%
2	Literal Translation	8	26.7%
3	Modulation	2	6.7%
4	Amplification	1	3.3%
5	Reduction	1	3.3%
	Total	30	100%

As shown in Table 2, Equivalence is the most frequently applied technique, occurring 18 times (60.0%). This technique enables the translator to convey religious expressions using natural and culturally acceptable expressions in English while maintaining their communicative function, as in

Masyaallah → "Praise God" and Amin → "Amen". Literal Translation ranks second with 8 occurrences (26.7%), mainly used when the source expression could be transferred directly into English without causing ambiguity, as in *Innalillahi wa inna ilaihi rajiun* → "We surely belong to Allah and to Him we shall return". Modulation appears in 2 data (6.7%), applied when the translator shifts the point of view while maintaining the intended meaning, as in *Bas mau minta kado apa sama Allah?* → "Make a wish to God". Amplification and Reduction each occur once (3.3%): Amplification adds clarifying information, as in *Astaghfirullah* → "I seek forgiveness from God", while Reduction omits part of the original form due to subtitle space constraints, as in *Ya Allah* → "God".

Overall, the dominance of Established Equivalence and Literal Translation indicates that the translator prioritized preserving the original religious meaning of the expressions, either by finding a conventional English counterpart or by transferring the meaning directly, rather than restructuring or omitting content. This tendency reflects an effort to keep the translated subtitles both natural for English-speaking audiences and faithful to the religious and cultural values embedded in the source dialogue.

Illustrative Data Analysis

To further illustrate how each technique operates, several representative data are discussed below.

Data 3 (00:17:00) — SL: "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar." TL: "God is great."

Type: Invocation/Opening Technique: Established Equivalence

The expression *Allahu Akbar* glorifies Allah's greatness. Although the Arabic form is not retained, the translator uses the conventional English expression "God is great" to preserve the same religious function, so the religious meaning is maintained despite the change in wording.

Data 6 (00:22:24) — SL: "Alhamdulillah, sampai dengan selamat." TL: "Thank God you're home safely."

Type: Expression of Gratitude Technique: Established Equivalence

Alhamdulillah expresses gratitude to Allah for safety. The translator renders it into the familiar English expression "Thank God", which sounds natural to the target audience while preserving the sense of gratitude.

Data 8 (00:22:49) — SL: "Ya Allah." TL: "God."

Type: Invocation/Opening Technique: Reduction

Ya Allah is an invocation directly addressing Allah. The subtitle shortens it to "God" by omitting the vocative marker *Ya*; although part of the original form is lost, the reference to God remains clear.

Data 9 (00:27:16) — SL: "Bas mau minta kado apa sama Allah?" TL: "Make a wish to God."

Type: Prayer (Du'a) Technique: Modulation

This expression refers to asking Allah for something. The translator shifts the perspective into "Make a wish to God", changing the wording while maintaining the intended meaning of petitioning God for a blessing.

Data 11 (00:27:26) — SL: "Amin." TL: "Amen."

Type: Prayer (Du'a) Technique: Established Equivalence

Amin is uttered at the end of a prayer to ask Allah to accept a supplication. The translator uses "Amen", the conventional English equivalent that performs the same religious function.

Data 12 (00:33:28) — SL: "Innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un." TL: "We surely belong to Allah and to Him we shall return."

Type: Invocation/Opening Technique: Literal Translation

This Islamic invocation, recited upon receiving news of death or calamity, is transferred directly into English while preserving both its structure and religious meaning.

Data 14 (00:44:25) — SL: "Insya Allah semuanya akan baik-baik saja." TL: "God willing, everything will be alright."

Type: Expression of Hope/Submission Technique: Established Equivalence

Insya Allah reflects submission to God's will regarding the future. The translator uses the conventional English phrase "God willing", which conveys the same pragmatic function of hope and reliance on Allah.

Data 16 (00:52:14) — SL: "Astaghfirullah." TL: "I seek forgiveness from God."

Type: Invocation/Opening Technique: Amplification

Astaghfirullah is an Islamic expression of seeking forgiveness. The translator adds explanatory information, rendering it as a full clause to make the meaning explicit for English-speaking audiences.

Discussion

The findings show that translating religious expressions in *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023) is not merely a matter of replacing words from Indonesian into English; it also requires attention to cultural values, religious meanings, and the contextual message carried by each expression. The translator's preference for Established Equivalence and Literal Translation over more transformative techniques such as Adaptation, Amplification, or Reduction suggests a deliberate strategy to keep the religious and cultural content of the dialogue as intact as possible, while still producing subtitles that read naturally to an English-speaking audience.

This pattern is consistent with the view that religious language carries sacred meaning that cannot always be conveyed through free or highly domesticated translation (Abdelaal, 2023; Hatim & Munday, 2021). At the same time, the limited use of Reduction and Amplification indicates that the translator was mindful of the spatial and temporal constraints of subtitling (Pedersen, 2021) without allowing these constraints to compromise the core religious message. Compared to previous studies that examined religious translation in written texts, sermons, or Arabic-language films (Al-Ali & Qasem, 2023; Al-Kadi, 2023; Alhaj, 2022), the present findings extend the discussion to Indonesian religious cinema and demonstrate that a similar preference for meaning-preserving techniques—rather than domesticating or omitting religious content—can be observed in a different linguistic and cultural setting.

Overall, the results indicate that the translation techniques applied in the English subtitles of *Air*

Mata di Ujung Sajadah (2023) successfully preserved the conveyed meaning and religious values of the original expressions. Although several expressions underwent minor linguistic adjustment to improve readability and naturalness, the essential Islamic messages, cultural meanings, and spiritual values remained understandable for the target audience.

CONCLUSION

This research identified 30 religious expressions in the film *Air Mata di Ujung Sajadah* (2023), classified into five categories based on their communicative function. Invocation/Openings was the most dominant type (10 occurrences, 33.3%), followed by Prayers/Du'a (9, 30.0%), Expressions of Hope or Submission to God's Will (7, 23.3%), and Expressions of Gratitude (4, 13.3%), while Greetings were not identified in the data (0%). These findings indicate that the film predominantly portrays Islamic religious values through invocation, prayer, and submission to Allah, reflecting the characters' beliefs, emotions, and spiritual dependence throughout the narrative.

In terms of translation, the translator applied five techniques based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework: Established Equivalence (18 occurrences, 60.0%), Literal Translation (8, 26.7%), Modulation (2, 6.7%), and Amplification and Reduction (1 each, 3.3%). Established Equivalence was dominant because it allows religious expressions to be rendered using natural, culturally acceptable English expressions while maintaining their communicative function; Literal Translation was mainly used when the source expression could be transferred directly without causing ambiguity, while Modulation, Amplification, and Reduction were applied in specific contexts requiring linguistic or cultural adjustment. Overall, this research concludes that the translation techniques applied in the English subtitles successfully preserved the conveyed meaning and religious values of the original expressions, so that the essential Islamic messages, cultural meanings, and spiritual values remained understandable for the target audience.

Based on these findings, several suggestions are offered. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies using different audiovisual sources and to compare various translation quality assessment frameworks to gain a broader understanding of how translation techniques affect the preservation of religious and cultural values. Translators, particularly those working in audiovisual translation, should give careful consideration to selecting techniques that preserve not only linguistic meaning but also the religious and cultural values of the source text, which requires sufficient cultural and religious knowledge. For students of Translation Studies, this research may serve as a practical reference for evaluating translation from both linguistic and cultural perspectives, while for subtitle viewers and practitioners, it highlights that subtitle translation is not merely a process of replacing words, but a means of conveying cultural and religious significance across languages and cultures.

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