



## The Impact of Translation Techniques toward Translation Quality of Microaggressions Expressions to Transgender in Boys Don't Cry and the Danish Girl

Kennia Wikanditha<sup>1</sup>; M. R. Nababan<sup>2</sup>; Riyadi Santosa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Postgraduate Student, Linguistic Program, Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Linguistic Program, Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i4.3648>

---

### **Abstract**

There are so many American films that use LGBT as the theme now in mainstream media such as Netflix, HBO, and Amazon Premium. Some of those films have been streamed in Indonesia. However, there might be some problems regarding the translated subtitle because Indonesia doesn't have as many gendered-language as America. This research aims to identify the translation techniques and translation quality of microaggression expressions in Boys Don't Cry and The Danish Girl film subtitles. Further, this paper also aims to find the difference between microaggressions expressions uttered by male and female speakers. This research uses the descriptive qualitative method. This qualitative descriptive research is an embedded-cased study and product-oriented translation research. The source data of the research are microaggression expressions directed toward transgender in Boys Don't Cry and The Danish Girl. The data are collected through document analysis and FGD (Focus Group Discussion). The results of this research reveal that there are thirteen translation techniques found in the two films. However, some techniques affect the translation quality of microaggressions expressions in a bad way, which are discursive creation, generalization, and literal.

**Keywords:** *Translation; Techniques; Quality; Microaggressions; LGBT*

### **Introduction**

According to Sue (2010), microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. One of the groups that are marginalized is LGBT people. This community often becomes the target of bullying by heterosexual people. The cause of this problem is the heterosexism that is deeply rooted among them. Female to male transgender in general is the target of microaggressions by strangers. On the other hand, male-to-female transgender is usually the targets of microaggressions among families or people who are close to them. One of the types of microaggressions received by transgender is misgendering. For example, in English, when we refer to female to male transgender as she, it is counted as microaggression although it can be done intentionally or unintentionally.

This can be a serious problem when someone wants to translate gendered terms from English to Indonesian as in general Indonesian doesn't have a gendered-language system. Both he and she are translated into *dia* or *ia* and the pronouns don't have any equivalence translations other than *dia* or *ia*. In mainstream media, subtitle translators surely face the same problem related to the gendered-language system. Furthermore, the Indonesian language doesn't have specific terms for referring to LGBT such as queer, dyke, faggot, tranny, non-binary, etc. Meanwhile, in Indonesian, there is no other term to refer to LGBT besides *waria*, *bencong*, *homo*, and *maho*. Those words don't have equivalent words in English and vice versa.

Based on the explanation in the first and second paragraphs, it can be concluded that an in-depth study about this matter is needed. There are some previous studies related to this topic. Flotow and Hernandez (2018), Argyriou (2021), Baros (2021), and Yavuz (2015) described the strategies to solve problems that happen during the process of translating some gendered languages into non-gendered-languages. The focus of their studies is translation process research. Thus, research about translation products concerning translation techniques used to translate microaggression expressions toward LGBT and its translation quality is still limited. Hence, this research aims to analyze the translation techniques used to translate microaggressions expressions and their qualities in *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl* subtitles.

Microaggressions theory from Sue (2010) is used in this research to classify the forms of microaggressions toward LGBT. Sue has categorized the forms of microaggressions toward marginalized groups in detail. He divided microaggressions into three forms which are microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. The difference between those three forms of microaggressions can be seen in the way they are delivered, the intention, and also the time microaggressions happen. Microassault is almost the same as traditional hatred toward marginalized groups, it's the same with traditional racism and sexism. Microassault is considered a blatant attack. The intention is crystal clear which is to derogate the marginalized, to humiliate, and to hurt them. However, the perpetrators of microinsult and microinvalidation are different. They disguise their beliefs and their hatred toward the marginalized until the outbreak. Microinsult and microinvalidation are unlikely from microassault because they can be done deliberately or not. Furthermore, the intention is sometimes not to hurt the marginalized. However, the damages from microinsult and microinvalidation are enormous. The marginalized are used to dealing with microassault because it's done openly while they can't prepare themselves if the attack is wrapped in a good sentence (Sue, 2010: 56)

Molina & Albir's theory about translation techniques is used to classify the techniques used to translate microaggression expressions toward LGBT in those two films, *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl*. This theory (2002) is chosen because it accommodates the needs of this research, which is to analyze the micro-units of the text. If the theory from Molina and Albir (2002) is compared to Baker's (1992) and Karamitroglou's (2000), it is superior as it's more complete and complex than the other. It also covers the techniques that other researchers haven't explored. Furthermore, the instrument used to rate the translation quality is from Nababan (2012). There are some instruments out there that are used to rate the translation quality of a translation such as an instrument from Machali (2000). However, this instrument is only focused on readability, so it hasn't focused on accuracy and acceptability. Thus, the instrument from Nababan (2012) is chosen because it covers three aspects of translation quality which are accuracy, acceptability, and readability, so the result of this research is more holistic and trustworthy.

## **Research Methodology**

This research uses Sociolinguistics as the approach and is translation research because it involves two languages, English as the source text and Indonesian as the target text. Further, this is descriptive qualitative research because it is based on some axioms from a qualitative study perspective. One of them is that the reality of the researcher cannot be separated from the research object. This research is also

grounded research because the domains that influence the research have been decided at the very beginning.

The location of this research is a movie about LGBT thus the source of data that are used in this research are (1) subtitle from two films entitled *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl* that contains microaggressions expressions toward transgender and (2) two informants to assess the translation quality of the data. Data used in this research is primary data that consists of two aspects, the first one is linguistics data and the second one is translation data. Linguistic data in this research are all the subtitle contain microaggressions expressions toward transgender in the source text. Meanwhile, the translation data used in this research are all the subtitle contain microaggressions expressions toward transgender in the target text.

Purposive sampling is used in this research to get the data according to the domains of the research. Content analysis and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) are used in this research to collect the data. In the end, the data are analyzed through four steps which are (1) domain analysis, (2) taxonomy analysis, (3) componential analysis, and lastly (4) cultural theme analysis.

## Results and Discussions

### a.) Form of Microaggressions Toward Transgender

Sue (2010) suggests that there are many types of microaggressions toward the marginalized. There are racial microaggressions that the target is people of color, disability microaggressions that the target is people with disability, gender microaggressions that the target is usually women, and sexual orientation-based microaggressions that the target is LGBT. This research uses sexual orientation-based microaggressions as the object of this paper is transgender. Further, there are three forms of microaggressions which are microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidations. In this paper, there are differences in the way male speakers and female speakers deliver their microaggressions expressions toward transgender characters in *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl*.

**Table 3.1**  
**Forms of Microaggressions toward Transgender by Male and Female Speakers.**

Types of LGBT	Sex and Gender of The Perpetrator	Forms of Microaggressions	Σ	%
Female to Male Transgender in <i>Boys Don't Cry</i>	Female	<i>Microassault</i>	1	1,07%
		<i>Microinsult</i>	5	5,37%
		<i>Microinvalidation</i>	2	2,15%
	Σ Female Perpetrators		8	8,59%
	Male	<i>Microassault</i>	20	21,50%
		<i>Microinsult</i>	5	5,37%
<i>Microinvalidation</i>		16	17,20%	
Σ Male Perpetrators		41	44,07%	
Male to Female Transgender in <i>The Danish Girl</i>	Female	<i>Microinsult</i>	4	4,30%
		<i>Microinvalidation</i>	13	13,97%
	Σ Σ Female Perpetrators		17	18,27%
	Male	<i>Microassault</i>	4	4,30%
		<i>Microinsult</i>	4	4,30%
		<i>Microinvalidation</i>	19	20,43%
Σ Male Perpetrators		27	29,03%	
<b>The Amount of Microaggressions Expressions Found</b>			<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on table 3.1, from 93 data found in the subtitle from two films, female perpetrators barely do microassault toward both FTM and MTF transgender. It is stated that microassault was done once toward FTM transgender. Meanwhile, the forms of microaggressions often used by female perpetrators are microinsult (5,37% toward FTM and 4,3% toward MTF) and microinvalidation (2,15% toward FTM and 13,97% toward MTF). Furthermore, the amount of microaggressions done by male perpetrators is significantly enormous. It is stated that male perpetrators mostly did microassault instead of microinsult and microinvalidation. Microassault is done 20 times or around 21,5% of the data toward FTM, and it's done 4 times or around 4,30% of the data toward MTF. The amount of microassault by male perpetrators toward FTM speaks volumes. Most male perpetrators don't see female to male transgender as a man. They still consider FTM transgender as a woman despite the condition in which the transgender has come out. Microassault done by male perpetrators in *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl* is clearly to mock and to derogate the transgender who is the main characters of both films. They don't have hidden intentions, just pure mockery. Further, the male perpetrators of microassault usually are strangers and those who are not close to recipients. In the films, the perpetrators casually do microassaults because they are in their comfort zone in which they have many people to back them up because they share the same ideologies about transgender (Nadal, 2012; Torino, 2019; Anzani, 2021).

The amount of microassault done by male perpetrators is not significant. It is found that microinsult is done 5 times or about 5,37% of the data toward FTM and is done 4 times or around 4,30% of the data toward MTF. Microinsult is done by male perpetrators that are close to the main characters because they strongly reject the idea of their 'friends' being transgender. The microinsult sometimes happens beyond the perpetrator's awareness (Anzani, 2021). Lastly, microinvalidation is done 16 times toward FTM and 19 times toward MTF. In line with microinsult done by male perpetrators, in microinvalidation, the male speakers are also close with the transgender who are the main characters in both films. In *Boys Don't Cry*, microinvalidation mostly done with hidden agenda which is to question the FTM's decision about transforming.

### b.) Microaggressions Expressions Translation Techniques

From the perspective of translation studies, the use of some translation techniques will impact the quality of the translation. According to Molina & Albir (2002), there is a technique that will affect the translation quality in a good way which is established equivalent. However, it's not always the case because when the established equivalent is combined with some techniques such as discursive creation, generalization, and literal, it will make a less accurate, less acceptable, and less readable translation. In table 3.2, it can be seen that established equivalent is the technique that is used frequently by the translators in both films. This technique appears 151 times in both films. After established equivalent, the most frequent technique used in both films is variation. It appears 39 times. Further, discursive creation appears 10 times in both films. The least used techniques in both films are literal (1 time) and transposition (1 time). Although literal is used only once it affects the translation quality in a bad way. From table 3.2, the use of the literal technique reduces all three aspects of translation quality.

**Table 3.2**  
**Microaggressions Expressions Translation Techniques**

Film Title	The Sexuality of the Speaker	Form of Microaggressions	Translation Techniques	Σ	The Average Score of Translation Quality		
					KA	KB	KT
Boys Don't Cry	Female	Microinsult	Established Equivalent	5	2,2	2,6	2,6
			Discursive Creation	3			
			Variation	2			
			Modulation	1			

Male	Microinvalidation	Established				
		Equivalent	2			
		Variation	1			
		Discursive		2,5	3	3
	Microassault	Creation	1			
		Pure				
		Borrowing	1			
		Established				
	Microassault	Equivalent	1	3	3	3
		Explicitation	1			
		Variation	1			
	Microinsult	Established				
		Equivalent	13	3	3	3
		Variation	3			
Modulation		1				
Microinvalidation	Established					
	Equivalent	10				
	Pure					
	Borrowing	6				
	Variation	4				
	Discursive		2,7	2,9	2,9	
	Creation	2				
	Generalization	2				
	Explicitation	2				
	Compensation	1				
Microassault	Transposition	1				
	Established					
	Equivalent	22				
	Variation	8				
	Particularization	6				
	Discursive					
	Creation	3	2,7	2,9	2,9	
	Explicitation	3				
	Generalization	2				
	Paraphrase	1				
The Danish Girl	Microinsult	Implicitation				
		Modulation				
		Compensation	1			
		Established				
Female	Microinsult	Equivalent	9			
		Variation	2	2,5	2,7	2,7
		Generalization	1		5	5
		Literal	1			
	Microinvalidation	Established				
		Equivalent	25			
		Variation	8			
		Pure		2,9	3	3
		Borrowing	3			
		Generalization	2			
Implisitation	1					

Male	Microinsult	Eksplisitation	1	3	3	3
		Paraphrase	1			
		Established Equivalent	7			
	Microinvalidation	Modulation	1	3	3	3
		Established Equivalent	49			
		Variation	8			
	Microassault	Eksplisitation	6	2,75	3	3
		Implicitation	3			
		Modulation	2			
		Paraphrase	2			
		Pure Borrowing	2			
		Established Equivalent	8			
		Variation	2			
		Compensation	1			
		Discursive Creation	1			

In addition, the use of discursive creation also reduces the translation quality of microaggression expressions in *Boys Don't Cry's* and *The Danish Girl's* subtitle. In *Boys Don't Cry*, the translator uses discursive creation mostly because he/she doesn't understand the hidden microaggression spoken by the characters. Meanwhile, in *The Danish Girl*, the translator uses discursive creation to insinuate his/her belief about transgender. In the source text, the male speaker in *The Danish Girl* said "*He's a lesbian.*" but it is translated into "*Dia lesbian busuk.*" in the target text. The addition of *busuk* in the target text affects the accuracy of the translation. It also makes the translator visible. He/she adds his/her own opinion that being a lesbian is related to something dirty. Hence he/she chooses to add '*busuk*' in the translation. This can be said that the translator in *The Danish Girl* has done microaggression toward the transgender character through the subtitle that he/she translated.

Further, the use of generalization by the translators in both films also affect the quality of the translation of microaggression expression toward transgender. However, the use of this technique is inevitable because Indonesian doesn't have many gendered languages as in English. Here is the example of the use of generalization in the subtitle:

ST : "Why is *she* fuckin' makin' lies like that?"  
 TT : "Kenapa *dia* berbohong seperti itu?"

The word *she* is translated into *dia* which reduces the accuracy of the translation. This is in line with the opinion from Nadal, if a female to male transgender has come out as a male, people around him should address him as a male (Nadal, 2012). If someone misgendering an FTM transgender purposely, it is considered as microaggression. Translating *she* into *dia* not only reduces the accuracy of the translation but also dismisses the microaggression expression in the subtitle.

Finally, the translator in *The Danish Girl* uses the literal technique once in the subtitle. The use of this technique is mainly because the translator doesn't understand the context when the dialog happens. The dialog tells us that Gerda complains to Hans that Einar doesn't function as a man as he transitions into a male to female transgender. Gerda doesn't like how Einar changes as time goes by, so she says to Hans, "*He's not working.*" it is translated into "*Dia tidak bekerja lagi.*" The use of this technique reduces the quality of the translation and deletes the hidden microaggression expression in the target text.

## Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that male speakers mostly use microassault to express their hatred toward transgender characters in both films. The use of microassault is motivated by heterosexism that develops among heterosexual people. Male speakers in both films tend to express their inferiority toward transgender by denigrating and mocking them. Hence, female to male transgender is the one who often gets microassault. Moreover, female speakers mostly use microinsult and microinvalidation to attack transgender. In both *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl*, the female perpetrators are those who are close to the transgender characters in the films. In short, as what has been said by Sue (2010), microinsult is done sometimes beyond the perpetrator's awareness and this is the case in both films.

From the perspective of translation studies, from the findings, it can be seen that the use of discursive creation, generalization, and literal techniques are critical to the translation quality of microaggressions expressions in the films. Translators should avoid using discursive creation to make themselves visible. As Nababan (2000) said, being a translator should be faithful to the source text. It means that as a translator, we don't have the right to add or to omit information beyond the text. The use of the generalization technique is inevitable because the Indonesian language doesn't have a gendered-language system as in English. Lastly, as a translator, we have to know well the context of the text that we translate. If we don't understand what is going on in the text, there is a chance that we will make a less accurate, less acceptable, and less readable translation.

## References

- Anzani, A. (2021). *Microaggressions towards lesbian and transgender women: Biased information gathering when working alongside gender and sexual minorities*. Journal of Clinical Psychology 77(6):1-14. DOI:10.1002/jclp.23140
- Molina, L., Albir, A. H. (2002). *Translation techniques revisited: A dynamic and functionalist approach*. Meta: Translator's Journal, 47(4), 498-512. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar>
- Nababan, M.R., Nuraeni, & Sumardiono. (2012). *Pengembangan model penilaian kualitas terjemahan*. Kajian Linguistik Dan Sastra, 24(1),39-57
- Nadal, L. (2012). *Interpersonal and Systemic Microaggressions toward Transgender People: Implications for Counseling*. Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 6:55-82, 2012.
- Santosa, R. (2017). *Metode penelitian kualitatif kebahasaan*. Surakarta: UNS Press
- Spradely, J.P. (1980). *Participant Observation (The Development Research Sequence, Anthropology)*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Sue, DW. (2010). *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Torino, G. (2018). *Microaggression Theory: Influence and Implications*. New Jersey: Wiley Publishing.

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).