

Translation Techniques for Political and Military Terms in the Subtitles of *al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah*

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Abstract

The growing volume of audiovisual content has made documentary subtitling a demanding form of translation. Among the terms that require particular attention are political and military expressions, which often carry ideological, cultural, and historical associations. This study examines how political, military, and combined political-military terms are translated in the Indonesian subtitles of Joe Hattab's Arabic documentary al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah, using Molina and Albir's taxonomy of translation techniques. The study uses a qualitative descriptive approach and content analysis. Nineteen specialized terms were taken from the 16-minute, 10-second documentary through repeated viewing and coding, before being classified according to the framework. The results show a clear pattern: established equivalent was the most frequently used technique (8 of 19, 42.1%), followed by literal translation (7 of 19, 36.8%), borrowing, and modulation (2 of 19 each, 10.5%). The selection of techniques was largely shaped by contextual considerations and the need for clarity in the Indonesian subtitles. The findings highlight the relevance of cultural awareness and a functional view of equivalence when rendering sensitive political-military terminology in subtitles,

offering a practical reference for audiovisual translators and translator-training programmes.

Abstrak

Perkembangan konten audiovisual yang pesat menjadikan penerjemahan film dokumenter semakin menuntut kecermatan. Istilah politik-militer merupakan salah satu unsur yang sensitif dalam penerjemahan takarir karena membawa muatan ideologis, budaya, dan historis. Penelitian ini menganalisis teknik penerjemahan yang diterapkan pada istilah politik, militer, dan gabungan politik-militer dalam takarir bahasa Indonesia film dokumenter berbahasa Arab *al-Maḥalliyah al-Sūrīyah* karya Joe Hattab, dengan berpedoman pada taksonomi teknik penerjemahan Molina dan Albir. Penelitian ini menggunakan rancangan deskriptif kualitatif dengan analisis isi. Sebanyak 19 istilah khusus diidentifikasi dari dokumenter berdurasi 16 menit 10 detik melalui pengamatan berulang dan pengodean, kemudian diklasifikasikan berdasarkan kerangka tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pola yang jelas: padanan lazim merupakan teknik yang paling sering digunakan (8 dari 19, 42,1%), disusul terjemahan literal (7 dari 19, 36,8%), peminjaman, dan modulasi (masing-masing 2 dari 19, 10,5%). Pemilihan teknik terutama dipengaruhi oleh pertimbangan kontekstual dan kebutuhan kejelasan dalam takarir bahasa Indonesia. Temuan ini menegaskan relevansi kepekaan budaya dan pandangan fungsional terhadap kesepadanan saat menerjemahkan istilah politik-militer yang sensitif dalam takarir, serta memberikan rujukan praktis bagi penerjemah audiovisual dan program pendidikan penerjemah.

المخلص

أدى النمو السريع للمحتوى السمعي البصري إلى جعل ترجمة الأفلام الوثائقية أكثر تطلباً. وتعد المصطلحات السياسية والعسكرية من العناصر الحساسة في الترجمة على الشاشة، لأنها تحمل أبعاداً أيديولوجية وثقافية وتاريخية. تحلل هذه الدراسة تقنيات الترجمة المطبقة على المصطلحات السياسية والعسكرية والمصطلحات

السياسية-العسكرية المركبة في النصوص المترجمة إلى الإندونيسية للفيلم الوثائقي العربي «المحلية السورية» لجو خطاب، بالاستناد إلى تصنيف تقنيات الترجمة الذي اقترحه مولينا وألبير. واعتمدت الدراسة منهجا وصفيًا كيفيًا باستخدام تحليل المحتوى. واستخرج تسعة عشر مصطلحا متخصصا من الفيلم، الذي تبلغ مدته ست عشرة دقيقة وعشر ثوان، من خلال المشاهدة المتكررة والتميز، ثم صنفت المصطلحات وفقا لهذا الإطار. وأظهرت النتائج نمطا واضحا؛ إذ كان المكافئ المعتمد أكثر التقنيات استخداما (٨ من ١٩، بنسبة ٤٢,١٪)، تليه الترجمة الحرفية (٧ من ١٩، بنسبة ٣٦,٨٪)، ثم الاقتراض والتحوير (مصطلحان لكل منهما، بنسبة ١٠,٥٪). وتأثر اختيار التقنيات بدرجة كبيرة بالاعتبارات السياقية والحاجة إلى الوضوح في النصوص المترجمة إلى الإندونيسية. وتبرز النتائج أهمية الحساسية الثقافية والنظرة الوظيفية إلى التكافؤ عند ترجمة المصطلحات السياسية والعسكرية والسياسية-العسكرية الحساسة في النصوص على الشاشة، بما يوفر مرجعا عمليا للمترجمين في مجال الترجمة السمعية البصرية وبرامج تدريب المترجمين.

Keywords: content analysis; military terms; political terms; subtitling; translation techniques

Introduction

Over the past few decades, subtitling has developed from a largely technical expedient of the post-silent era into a key instrument of global communication on digital platforms such as YouTube and Netflix.¹ Broadly defined, it constitutes a mode of audiovisual translation in which the dialogue of a programme is converted into written text that is synchronized with its image and soundtrack.² Because subtitles must be

¹ Sakut Anshori, *Penerjemahan Audiovisual* (Curup: LP2 IAIN Curup, 2024).

² Rahma Ilyas and Yayah Nurhidayah, "Penerjemahan Teks Audio Visual (Subtitling)," *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA* 5, no. 2 (2019): 154–60, <https://ejournal.unma.ac.id/index.php/educatio/article/view/398>; Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie, *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 1997); Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael,

processed rapidly and must not obscure the visual information, they are produced within tight spatial and temporal limits, ordinarily confined to a few short lines shown for only a matter of seconds.³ Subtitling has likewise been characterized as a conventionalized and semiotically intricate form of translation, insofar as it relays transient polysemiotic texts to a mass audience by drawing simultaneously on several nonverbal channels.⁴ These constraints bear directly on the present investigation, since they delimit the range of techniques a subtitler can realistically employ when rendering specialized terms.

However, subtitling grows far harder when a documentary carries political and military terminology. In this context, translation is more than working with words; it develops cultural awareness, because every choice can affect how audiences read sensitive issues such as the conflict in Syria.

Political and military terms carry more than lexical difficulty; they carry a high risk of skewing the message. Krisztina Sárosi-Márdirosz emphasizes that the translation of political texts requires strategies that consider historical meaning, rhetorical elements, and ideological norms without

Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling (London: Routledge, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759678>.

³ Heidrun Gerzymisch Arbogast, "Introduction to Multidimensional Translation Research" (Saarbrücken: Advanced Translation Research Center (ATRC), 2008), http://translationconcepts.org/pdf/MultidimensionalTranslationResearch_Forli_05-2008.pdf.

⁴ Henrik Gottlieb, "Multidimensional Translation: Semantics Turned Semiotics," in *Proceedings of the Marie Curie Euroconferences MuTra: Challenges of Multidimensional Translation (EU High Level Scientific Conference Series)*, ed. Sandra Nauert and Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast (Saarbrücken, 2005), 1–29, https://www.euroconferences.info/proceedings/2005_Proceedings/2005_Gottlieb_Henrik.pdf.

any “fixed recipe” for their transfer.⁵ The risk of bias arises when sensitive terms such as “coup,” “liberation army,” or “military bloc” are translated without considering the ideological weight they carry.

Recent studies by Ghnaim et al. show that subtitling sensitive content makes translators steer between social norms and cultural change, all while guarding against message distortion.⁶ A term such as coup, liberation army, or military bloc can therefore shift how audiences see the events, in both direct and indirect ways. Audience diversity and shifting media norms also shape how subtitlers adapt the text to the culturally situated context of viewers.

Although studies on translation techniques continue to develop, research that specifically examines political and military terminology in Arabic-to-Indonesian subtitles is still very limited. Yet, political documentaries such as Joe Hattab’s work on the Syrian conflict serve as the main gateway for cross-cultural public opinion. Inaccuracy in choosing translation techniques not only obscures information but also risks creating unwanted narrative bias.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the translation techniques of political and military terms in the subtitles of the Arabic documentary titled “*al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah*” by Joe Hattab using Molina and Albir’s framework. This research aims to examine how certain techniques are used to maintain the accuracy of meaning and communicative function in the target language. Using a qualitative descriptive method through content analysis, this study is expected to contribute to the

⁵ Krisztina Sárosi-Márdirosz, “Problems Related to the Translation of Political Texts,” *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica* 6, no. 2 (2015): 159–80, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ausp-2015-0012>.

⁶ Feda Ghnaim et al., “Complexity in Subtitling: Interacting Factors Influencing Decisions on Sensitive Content from English to Arabic,” *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture* 8, no. 2020 (2024): 770–85, <https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.855>.

standards of subtitling practices for sensitive terms in the documentary genre.

To analyze the translation of political and military terms in the documentary, this study adopts the framework proposed by Molina and Albir,⁷ who define translation techniques as micro-level procedures applied to words, phrases, or sentences and used to transfer meaning while considering context, function, and equivalence.⁸ Following this framework, the extracted terms were classified according to the techniques that appear in the subtitles. Four techniques were identified: literal translation, established equivalent, borrowing, and modulation, a classification that partially overlaps the classical procedures of comparative stylistics.⁹ Literal translation reproduces the source expression as closely as possible when its form and meaning are already familiar to the target audience.¹⁰ Established equivalent uses a conventionalized equivalent in the target language even when it differs in form, in order to preserve recognizability. Borrowing retains the source term unchanged, typically for internationally known names and organizations. Modulation shifts the point of view or category of thought so that the message reads more naturally in the target language. Seen together, the four techniques form the lens through which the data are read in the Results section.

The data for this study were obtained from the Arabic-language documentary “*al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah*” by Joe Hattab, which was selected purposively because it contains a

⁷ Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir, “Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functional Approach,” *Meta* 47, no. 4 (2004): 498–512, <https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar>.

⁸ Zuchruddin Suryawinata and Sugeng Hariyanto, *Terjemahan: Pengantar Teori dan Praktek* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003).

⁹ Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995).

¹⁰ Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1988).

dense concentration of politically and militarily sensitive terms related to the Syrian conflict. The documentary was transcribed, and every subtitle carrying a political, military, or combined political-military term was extracted and recorded as part of the corpus. Through repeated reading and systematic coding based on the categories of Molina and Albir's framework, 19 specialized terms were identified and grouped into three categories: political terms (6), military terms (8), and combined political-military terms (5). To reduce subjectivity in the classification, the coding was reviewed and cross-verified through discussion among the researchers until agreement was reached. The frequency of each technique was then tabulated to show the overall distribution across the corpus.

Results

The analysis identified 19 specialized terms in the subtitles of the documentary *"al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah"* and examined the translation techniques used to render them from Arabic into Indonesian. The data are classified into three categories: political terms (6 data), military terms (8 data), and combined political-military terms (5 data). Each term is examined by comparing the Arabic source expression with its Indonesian subtitle and identifying the technique applied according to Molina and Albir's framework. The findings are grouped into three categories to show how political and military terms were rendered in Indonesian subtitles. Technique frequencies summarize the pattern across 19 terms.

Political Terms

Political terms in the documentary refer to governmental systems, political movements, and ideological concepts. Six terms were identified in the subtitle corpus and analyzed according to Molina and Albir's framework of translation techniques. The terms and their corresponding Indonesian translations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Analysis of political terms

Arabic Term	Indonesian Translation	English Translation	Translation Technique
الحكم الإسلامي (<i>al-ḥukm al-Islāmī</i>)	<i>Kekuasaan Islam</i>	Islamic power	Literal
العهد الأموي (<i>al-'ahd al-Umawī</i>)	<i>Daulah Umayyah</i>	Umayyah dynasty	Established Equivalent
حزب البعث (<i>ḥizb al-Ba'th</i>)	<i>Partai Ba'ath</i>	Ba'ath party	Borrowing
الطائفية (<i>al-ṭā'ifiyah</i>)	<i>Sektarianisme</i>	Sectarianism	Established Equivalent
الاستفراد بالسلطة (<i>al-istifrād bi-al-sulṭah</i>)	<i>Memonopoli kekuasaan</i>	Monopolizing power	Modulation
الإصلاح (<i>al-islāḥ</i>)	<i>Reformasi</i>	Reformation	Established Equivalent

Table 1 shows that the political terms are predominantly translated using literal translation and established equivalent. The term “*al-ḥukm al-Islāmī*” (*kekuasaan Islam*) is translated literally, while the term “*al-islāḥ*” (*reformasi*) is translated using established equivalent; although it literally means 'repair' or 'improvement', it is rendered as '*reformasi*' in Indonesian. Likewise, *al-'ahd al-Umawī* (*Daulah Umayyah*) and *al-ṭā'ifiyah* (*sektarianisme*) employ established equivalent because these expressions have conventional counterparts in Indonesian. In contrast, *al-istifrād bi-al-sulṭah* (*memonopoli kekuasaan*) is translated through modulation to convey its intended meaning more naturally.

Military Terms

Military terms in the documentary refer to armed forces, military operations, weapons, and conflict-related activities. Eight terms were identified in the subtitle corpus and examined according to Molina and Albir’s framework of

translation techniques. Their corresponding Arabic expressions, Indonesian translations, and identified techniques are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Analysis of military terms

Arabic Term	Indonesian Translation	English Translation	Translation Technique
الجيش السوري (<i>al-jaysh al-Sūrī</i>)	<i>Tentara Suriah</i>	Syrian Arab Army	Literal
الجيش الحر (<i>al-jaysh al-Ḥurr</i>)	<i>Tentara Pembebasan Suriah</i>	Free Syrian Army	Established Equivalent
سرايا الدفاع (<i>sarāyā al-difā'</i>)	<i>Brigade pertahanan</i>	Defense Brigades	Established Equivalent
الأسلحة الكيماوية (<i>al-asliḥah al-kīmāwīyah</i>)	<i>Senjata kimia</i>	Chemical weapons	Literal
المجاهدين (<i>al-mujāhidīn</i>)	<i>Pejuang</i>	Fighters (or militants/comb atants, depending on the ideological nuance)	Modulation
الارض المحروقة (<i>al-arḍ al-maḥrūqah</i>)	<i>Kampanye bumi hangus</i>	Scorched-earth campaign	Established Equivalent
غرفة عمليات الجنوب (<i>ghurfat 'amaliyyāt al-Janūb</i>)	<i>Ruang operasi selatan</i>	Southern Operations Room	Established Equivalent
ودكها بالمدفعية/ الطائرات/الدبابات (<i>wadakkahā bi-al-madfa'iyah / al-ṭā'irāt / al-dabbābāt</i>)	<i>Bombardir/artileri/serangan udara/ tank</i>	Bombardment/artillery/airstrike/tank	Literal

The military terms are translated using literal, established equivalent, and modulation techniques, as presented in Table

2. Terms such as "*al-jaysh al-Sūrī*" (*Tentara Suriah*) and "*al-asliḥah al-kīmāwīyah*" (*Senjata kimia*) are translated literally. "*al-jaysh al-Ḥurr*" (*Tentara Pembebasan Suriah*) and "*sarāyā al-difā*" (*Brigade Pertahanan*) are translated using established equivalent. The term "*al-mujāhidīn*" (*pejuang*) is translated using modulation. Meanwhile, "*al-arḍ al-maḥrūqah*" is translated as "*kampanye bumi hangus*" using established equivalent. The phrase "*ghurfat ‘amaliyyāt al-Janūb*" (*ruang operasi selatan*) is translated using established equivalent. Finally, "*wadakkahā bil-madfa‘īyah/al-ṭā’irāt/al-dabbābāt*" is translated literally.

Political-Military Terms

Political-military terms combine political and military references, particularly those associated with organizations, state institutions, and the Syrian conflict. Five terms were identified in the subtitle corpus and analyzed according to Molina and Albir’s framework of translation techniques. Their translations and the techniques applied to each term are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Analysis of political-military terms

Arabic Term	Indonesian Translation	English Translation	Translation Technique
انقلاب (<i>inqilāb</i>)	<i>Kudeta</i>	Coup	Established Equivalent
قوات سورية الديمقراطية (<i>quwāt Sūriyyah al-Dīmuqrāṭīyah</i>)	<i>Pasukan demokratik Suriah</i>	Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)	Literal
تنظيم داعش (<i>tanẓīm Dā‘ish</i>)	<i>ISIS</i>	ISIS	Borrowing
وزير الدفاع (<i>wazīr al-difā’</i>)	<i>Menteri Pertahanan</i>	Minister of Defense	Literal
مخابرات العالم (<i>mukhābarāt al-‘ālam</i>)	<i>Badan intelijen dunia</i>	Global intelligence agencies	Literal

The political-military terms are translated using established equivalent, literal, and borrowing techniques, as presented in Table 3. The term "*inqilab*" (*kudeta*) is translated using established equivalent. For terms such as "*quwāt Sūriyyah al-Dīmuqrāṭīyah*" (*pasukan demokratik Suriah*) and "*wazīr al-difā*" (*menteri pertahanan*), literal techniques are used. Meanwhile, "*tanzīm Dā'ish*" is retained as ISIS using borrowing. "*mukhābarāt al-ālam*" (*badan intelijen dunia*) is also translated literally.

To provide an overall view of the translation techniques identified across the three categories, the frequencies of established equivalent, literal translation, borrowing, and modulation were calculated from the 19 terms analyzed. The distribution of these techniques and their corresponding percentages are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Frequency of translation techniques

Translation Technique	Frequency	Percentage
Established Equivalent	8	42.1%
Literal Translation	7	36.8%
Borrowing	2	10.5%
Modulation	2	10.5%
Total	19	100%

As shown in Table 4, established equivalent (42.1%) and literal translation (36.8%) were the most frequently used techniques among the 19 analyzed terms.

Discussion

The analysis of the subtitles of the documentary *al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūriyah* shows the use of four translation techniques to transfer political, military, and combined political-military terms from Arabic to Indonesian. Of the 19 terms analyzed, established equivalent was the most frequently used technique (8 of 19), followed by literal translation (7 of 19), borrowing (2 of 19), and modulation (2 of 19). The distribution indicates that the translation of sensitive

terminology in this documentary relied mainly on conventionalized target-language equivalents and close rendering of source expressions, while borrowing and modulation were used more selectively.

The clearest tendency in the data is the translator's reliance on established equivalent. This preference suggests that conventional terminology played an important role in rendering political and military vocabulary for Indonesian readers. Terms such as *kudeta*, *tentara pembebasan*, and *kampanye bumi hangus* have recognizable counterparts in Indonesian political and military discourse, making established equivalents a practical choice when such conventional forms are available. At the same time, the notable frequency of literal translation points to a complementary approach. When a source expression can be transferred without substantial semantic adjustment, close rendering allows its specific denotative meaning to be retained. The two techniques therefore appear to serve related but distinct functions: established equivalent draws on conventional target-language usage, whereas literal translation maintains a close relationship with the source expression.

The findings can be compared with previous studies on Arabic-to-Indonesian subtitling. Ilham et al., in their study of Arabic subtitles in short films on Instagram, emphasize the role of context and culture in translation decisions.¹¹ Their study, however, reports greater use of reduction and amplification, whereas the present study shows a higher frequency of established equivalent and literal translation. The difference may be related to the characteristics of the source material and medium. The present study focuses on a documentary dealing with politically and militarily sensitive content, where the

¹¹ Muhammad Arifin Ilham et al., "Analisis Teknik Penerjemahan Subtitle Bahasa Arab ke Bahasa Indonesia pada Film Pendek Akun Instagram @arabiyatalks," *Jurnal Pesastra (Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra)* 2, no. 1 (2025): 10–18, <https://doi.org/10.36709/pesastra.v2i1.62>.

preservation of specific terminology may require closer attention to denotative meaning. The comparison therefore suggests that the distribution of translation techniques may vary according to the communicative context and characteristics of the audiovisual material.

A similar tendency can be seen in Puruhito's study of Netflix subtitles, in which established equivalent is identified as an important technique for presenting expressions in forms familiar to the target audience.¹² The present findings likewise show that conventional Indonesian equivalents can provide accessible renderings of terms that are already familiar in the target language. This is evident in expressions such as *kudeta* and *tentara pembebasan*. Rather than demonstrating a general rule about subtitling success, however, the finding indicates that the availability of familiar target-language equivalents can influence technique selection in the present corpus.

The findings also relate to research on conflict-related and documentary subtitling. Kadi, in examining subtitles of conflict-related documentaries on Syria, emphasizes the need to handle sensitive content carefully so that translated information remains accurate without distorting the source account.¹³ This concern is relevant to the present corpus, where established equivalent and literal translation account for most of the identified techniques. In the English-to-Arabic direction, Thawabteh emphasizes the interpretive and technical intricacies of documentary translation and their implications for translator training.¹⁴ Sharkas et al. further

¹² Gregorius Gyan Puruhito, "Analisis Teknik Penerjemahan Kata Umpatan pada Subtitle Serial Netflix 'Everything Sucks,'" in *Seminar Nasional Linguistik dan Sastra (SEMANTIKS)* (Surakarta: Universitas Sebelas Maret, 2021), 499–508, <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/prosidingsemantiks/article/view/53039>.

¹³ Ghadah Kadi, "Subtitling Accounts of Conflict-Related Gender-Based Violence in Documentaries: Voices from Syria," *New Voices in Translation Studies* 30, no. 1 (2025): 31–71, <https://doi.org/10.14456/nvts.2025.2>.

¹⁴ Mohammad Ahmad Thawabteh and Amer Al-Adwan, "The Intricacies of Voicing Over Documentaries from English into Arabic:

show that audience reception can shape documentary translation, including the treatment of titles and terminology,¹⁵ while Ashraf illustrates how the multimodal constraints of documentaries can guide translators toward explicit and reader-oriented solutions.¹⁶ Although these studies involve different language pairs, genres, and units of analysis, they support the broader observation that documentary subtitling decisions are shaped by contextual and communicative considerations rather than by mechanical transfer alone.

Related considerations can also be found in previous studies of Arabic subtitling. Ibourk and Al-Adwan, using eye-tracking evidence, demonstrate that the viewing experience of Arabic-script subtitles is affected by spatial and temporal design choices, underscoring the reception dimension of subtitling decisions.¹⁷ Al Salem et al. likewise show that culture-bound expressions require careful treatment in subtitling, particularly when translators balance fidelity with audience expectations.¹⁸ These studies do not directly examine the four techniques identified in the present corpus, but they provide relevant support for considering clarity and contextual appropriateness in subtitling decisions. In the present study,

Implications for Translator Training," *Heliyon* 7, no. 7 (2021): e07302, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07302>.

¹⁵ Hala Sharkas et al., "Title Translation in Documentary Films: A Reception Study," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12, no. 1 (2025): 1542, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05844-2>.

¹⁶ Maha Ashraf, "Subtitling Climate Change: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis Study of Key Structural Differences in the Subtitles of Two Climate Documentaries on Netflix," *The International Journal of Communication and Linguistic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2024): 163–79, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7882/cgp/v23i01/163-179>.

¹⁷ El Mehdi Ibourk and Amer Al-Adwan, "Subtitling Virtual Reality into Arabic: Eye Tracking 360-Degree Video for Exploring Viewing Experience," *Lebende Sprachen* 64, no. 2 (2019): 286–308, <https://doi.org/10.1515/les-2019-0016>.

¹⁸ Mohd Nour Al Salem et al., "Cultural Nuances in Subtitling the Religious Discourse Marker Wallah in Jordanian Drama into English," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12, no. 1 (2025): 330, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04515-6>.

this broader emphasis on accessibility and contextual appropriateness is relevant to the frequent use of established equivalents, particularly when familiar Indonesian terms provide accessible renderings of sensitive source expressions.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be related to the principle of functional equivalence, which emphasizes the relationship between source meaning, communicative function, and target-audience comprehension.¹⁹ The use of modulation in translating *al-mujāhidīn* as *pejuang* and *al-istifrād bi-al-sultāh* as *memonopoli kekuasaan* illustrates cases in which the target expression does not simply reproduce the source form but conveys the intended meaning through a different linguistic formulation. Such choices indicate the relevance of considering communicative function alongside formal correspondence when translating politically sensitive terminology.

One possible explanation for the predominance of established equivalent and literal translation in this corpus is the conventionalization of terminology associated with the Syrian conflict. Because the documentary deals with a protracted and widely reported conflict, some political and military terms may already have familiar renderings in Arabic-language media and in Indonesian discourse. This may reduce the range of plausible translation choices and favor established equivalents. At the same time, the sensitivity of ideological terms may encourage a relatively cautious approach that prioritizes the preservation of denotative meaning over stylistic variation. This explanation is consistent with the distribution found in the present corpus, but it remains interpretive rather than directly tested. A larger corpus involving different documentaries, translators, and ideological positions would be needed to determine whether the observed

¹⁹ Yinli Gao, "Analysis of Eugene Nida's Translation Theory," *International Journal of Education and Humanities* 10, no. 1 (2023): 203–6, <https://doi.org/10.54097/ijeh.v10i1.11120>.

distribution represents a recurring tendency or the particular choices found in this documentary.

The relationship between subtitling and political meaning can also be considered through Pérez-González's discussion of activist amateur subtitling, in which subtitling may participate in the circulation of political meanings and affective responses in digital spaces.²⁰ The present study does not examine activist subtitling or audience responses, so the comparison should be treated as contextual rather than as evidence that the subtitles analyzed here directly shape public opinion. Nevertheless, the political and conflict-related content of the documentary highlights why terminological choices deserve careful consideration when source expressions carry ideological associations.

The findings can also be understood from a functional perspective on translation. Baker emphasizes the need to balance meaning, function, and ease of processing in the receiving context.²¹ In this view, the value of a translation technique does not depend solely on its formal resemblance to the source but also on its ability to convey the relevant meaning in an accessible target-language form. This perspective is particularly relevant to established equivalents such as *kudeta* and *tentara pembebasan*, whose conventionalized forms allow the source meanings to be rendered in expressions familiar to Indonesian readers.

Khair et al. similarly argue for the importance of functional equivalence when translating culture-bound expressions.²²

²⁰ Luis Pérez-González, "The Politics of Affect in Activist Amateur Subtitling," in *Citizen Media and Public Spaces*, ed. Mona Baker and Bolette B. Blaagaard (London: Routledge, 2016), 118–35, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315726632-7>.

²¹ Mona Baker, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (London: Routledge, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203832929>.

²² Baker Bani Khair et al., "Functional Equivalence: A Top Priority in Translating Jordanian Culture-Bound Expressions," *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10, no. 3 (2024): 278–86, <https://ejal.info/manuscript/index.php/ejal/article/view/923>.

Although their study concerns a different cultural and linguistic context, the principle is relevant to the present findings because several terms in the corpus require the translator to consider how a source expression functions in the target context. Shen and Purba also discuss functional equivalence and translation procedures in different language pairs and text types.²³ These studies provide a theoretical basis for interpreting the present findings, but the distribution observed in *al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah* should remain understood as specific to the corpus rather than as evidence of a broader pattern in Indonesian subtitling practice.

The ideological dimension of translation choices becomes particularly relevant when dealing with politically charged terminology. Ayyad demonstrates how lexical decisions in political translation can encode competing political interpretations,²⁴ while his later work on conflict-related translation further illustrates the interpretive complexity of translating politically sensitive material.²⁵ Kadhim and Hijjo likewise emphasize translator agency in English-Arabic news translation, where terminological choices can influence the structure and interpretation of the translated text.²⁶ Within

²³ Min Shen, "C-E Translation of Jiang Zilong's Short Story Mr. Big on the Basis of Functional Equivalence Theory," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 11, no. 3 (2020): 486–90, <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1103.18>; Anita Purba et al., "Translation: The Implementation of Molina and Albir's Theory in a Movie from English into Indonesian," *Studies in Media and Communication* 11, no. 5 (2023): 25–32, <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i5.6011>.

²⁴ Ahmad Y Ayyad, "Uncovering Ideology in Translation: A Case Study of Arabic and Hebrew Translations of the "Roadmap Plan"," *Journal of Language and Politics* 11, no. 2 (2012): 250–72, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.11.2.05ayy>.

²⁵ Ahmad Ayyad, "Translating Peace Proposals in Times of Conflict," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translating and Interpreting Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2025), 379–95, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003355847-27>.

²⁶ Kais A Kadhim and Nael F M Hijjo, "The Translator's Agency and the Text Superstructure in the English-Arabic News Translation," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 50, no. 6 (2021): 610–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2021.1910067>.

Arabic-to-Indonesian translation, Al Munawar et al. show how domestication and foreignization can reflect underlying translation ideologies.²⁷ These studies help situate the present findings within a wider discussion of ideology and translator choice. In the present corpus, the rendering of *al-mujāhidīn* as *pejuang* can be considered an example in which a lexical choice affects the framing of a politically sensitive term. However, the available data do not establish the translator's ideological intention, so the choice is more appropriately interpreted as the result of semantic and contextual considerations that may also have ideological implications.

The practical implications of the findings concern the translator's ability to select techniques according to the characteristics of the source term and the target context. The use of established equivalent for *al-arḍ al-maḥrūqah* as *kampanye bumi hangus*, for example, illustrates the usefulness of a conventional target-language expression when an appropriate equivalent is available.²⁸ More broadly, the findings highlight the importance of considering semantic accuracy, contextual meaning, and the readability constraints of subtitles when translating sensitive political and military terminology. This is particularly relevant to translator training, where knowledge of translation procedures needs to be accompanied by cultural and contextual awareness.

The practical relevance of linguistic and cultural competence is also supported by previous studies on Arabic translation. Rahmadi demonstrates that insufficient attention to morphological derivation and religious context can produce

²⁷ Agil Husein Al Munawar et al., "Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in the Translation of Humorous Hadiths: An Inquiry into Translation Ideology," *Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2025): 63–84, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.7.1.26831>.

²⁸ Benny Hoedoro Hoed, *Penerjemahan dan Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2006).

translation errors,²⁹ while Kamila et al. emphasize the role of Arabic-language training in strengthening students' translation ability.³⁰ Although these studies address different materials from the present documentary corpus, they reinforce the importance of linguistic competence and contextual understanding in translation practice. For audiovisual translators, such competence is particularly important when specialized terms carry political, military, historical, or ideological associations.

The findings together indicate that the translation of political and military terms in this documentary is not governed by a single technique. Established equivalent and literal translation account for most of the corpus, while borrowing and modulation appear in only a limited number of cases. The distribution suggests that established terminology, contextual reading, and the communicative demands of subtitling all shaped the choices. These conclusions, however, should not be generalized beyond the scope of the study. The analysis rests on one documentary lasting sixteen minutes and ten seconds and on nineteen specialized terms wherever, and the classification of each technique always involves interpreting the audiovisual context. Research across more documentaries, more translators, other language pairs, or audience-perception data would provide a broader basis for these findings.

²⁹ Agustian Rahmadi, "Kesalahan Penerjemahan Google Translate Pada Hadis Arbain Berdasarkan Konteks Keagamaan (Kajian Akar Kata Dan Morfologi Turunan)," *Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies* 4, no. 1 (2022): 69–94, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.4.1.8332>.

³⁰ Annisa Nabhan Kamila et al., "Dawr Tajribat "Bandongan" al-Ta'limīyah fī al-Qudrah 'alā Tarjamat al-Mubtada' wa-al-Khabar min Wajhat Naẓar Ṭalabat Qism Ta'lim al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah," *Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2024): 187–204, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.6.2.23367>.

Conclusion

The subtitles of *al-Maḥallīyah al-Sūrīyah* in Indonesian turn four technical techniques: literal translation, established equivalent, borrowing, and modulation. Established equivalent and literal translation occur most frequently, whereas borrowing and modulation appear only occasionally. The translator appears to rely on established equivalents already in Indonesian usage and, where none exists, on renderings that keep the term close in form and meaning, thereby preserving the political and cultural weight of the terminology. Choice of technique, however, is not determined by lexical form alone: the context and the communicative function of the text also shape which rendering fits the subtitle. The point matters especially in documentary subtitling, where political and military terms can carry historical and cultural associations beyond their immediate lexical meaning.

These findings remain bounded by the scope of the corpus: one documentary lasting sixteen minutes and ten seconds, nineteen terms, and a classification that involves reading the audiovisual context. Future research with a larger corpus, more documentaries, other language pairs, or a greater variety of terms would indicate how far the results apply, and audience-perception data could test how viewers understand specific words under different techniques. For Arabic-Indonesian documentary subtitling, the practical implication is that reaching for a suitable technique must weigh meaning in context, cultural associations, and the communicative purpose of the subtitle, not rely on lexical form alone.

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