

Analysis of Subtitle Translation in *Home Sweet Loan* Movie: Unit Shift and Readability of Intimate Dialogues

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of unit shifts in translating intimate dialogues from Indonesian to English subtitles in *Home Sweet Loan* (2024), on readability and emotional nuances. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis, this research applies Catford's (1965) theory of translation shifts focusing on unit shift, Joos's (1967) language styles framework containing intimate language style, and Nababan et al.'s (2012) on readability assessment to evaluate the data sourced from official Netflix subtitles. A total of 64 instances of intimate dialogue of language style were identified, with 52 unit shifts, primarily from word to phrase, with 21 data (32.81%), and 12 data found with no unit shift. The average readability score was 2.5 out of 3, indicating moderate comprehensibility, though improvements are needed. The research concludes that unit shifts are essential for linguistic and cultural adaptation, but they pose challenges in preserving the interpersonal tone and emotional depth of intimate dialogues. These findings show that subtitle translation can really affect how the audience sees the way characters speak and the mood of the scene, meaning that translation choices can change how people experience the story. Future research is recommended to explore the impact of other types of translation shifts on different language styles and broader subtitle contexts.

Keywords: *audiovisual translation, intimate language style, readability aspect, subtitle translation, unit shift.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As an audiovisual product, a movie is not only a medium of storytelling but also a cultural expression that matches social values, emotional depth, and language style. Subtitling, as a significant mode of audiovisual translation, is crucial in transferring the intended meaning across languages while maintaining readability and emotional nuance

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Citation: Mardhiyah, K., Rakhmi, F. P., & Indrayani, S. (2025). Analysis of subtitle translation in *Home Sweet Loan* movie: Unit shift and readability of intimate dialogues. *English Education Journal*, 16(3), 173-185.

<https://doi.org/10.24815/eej.v16i3.48335>

Received 24 June 2025; Revised 29 June 2025; Accepted 19 July 2025

Available online 31 July 2025

([Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007, 2020](#); [Nisa & Kholis, 2024](#)). It operates within medium-specific constraints while allowing creative possibilities, enhancing the viewer's understanding and engagement with the content ([Zanotti, 2022](#)).

In emotionally charged scenes involving close relationships, tone, implicit meaning, and intimacy are often conveyed through specific linguistic features typically used in intimate communication ([Joos, 1967](#)). These features may be altered during the translation process due to translation shifts, particularly unit shifts, which involve changes in grammatical level or sentence structure ([Catford, 1965](#)). This will present a challenge in translating subtitles.

Understanding how unit shifts affect the translation of intimate expressions is crucial, especially in maintaining subtitles' readability and emotional tone. This research aims to analyze how unit shifts in the Indonesian verbatim and English subtitles of *Home Sweet Loan* affect the readability of intimate language style. The findings are expected to improve subtitle quality, particularly in cases where balancing emotional communication and linguistic adaptation is crucial.

This research focuses on the subtitle translation of the 2024 Indonesian drama film *Home Sweet Loan*, available on Netflix. It examines how Indonesian expressions that use intimate language are translated into English subtitles, especially when there are changes in translation units (unit shifts). The film contains many emotionally rich conversations, making it a good example for studying how intimacy and translation shifts affect meaning. The analysis is based on 64 segments that show both intimate language and unit shifts. Other types of translation are not included in this research.

The significance of this research includes both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, this research contributes to translation and linguistics research by providing insights into how unit shifts and intimate language style interact in subtitle translation, particularly in emotionally nuanced contexts. It also improves the understanding of how structural shifts can impact the readability of translated texts, particularly in audiovisual media.

Practically, the research is expected to provide valuable references for students, researchers, and translators working in audiovisual translation. It can serve as a foundation for future research on the impact of grammatical shifts on language style and readability.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Intimate Language Style

[Joos \(1967\)](#) defined intimate language style as the most personal form of communication, typically used among close family members, couples, or best friends. This style is characterized by ellipsis, emotional language, and a shared understanding between speakers. In subtitle translation, maintaining the emotional nuance of this style is difficult, especially when the structure must be adjusted for brevity or clarity. While [Handayani \(2023\)](#) and [N. K. Dewi and Sulatra \(2024\)](#) have identified casual and intimate styles in subtitles, the research result do not examine how translation shifts affect these styles in the target language.

2.2 Unit Shift

[Catford \(1965\)](#) introduced the concept of unit shift as one of the four types of category shifts in translation, which occurs when a linguistic unit in the source language is translated into a different unit in the target language, such as a word-to-phrase or a clause-to-sentence shift, and more. This phenomenon often occurs in subtitle translation, where spatial and temporal constraints often require the expansion of segments. Previous research by [Fitria \(2020\)](#) and [Sulaiman et al. \(2024\)](#) have shown that unit shifts often occur in audiovisual contexts but do not connect these shifts to language style or readability.

2.3 Readability

Readability is one of the quality aspects of translation. According to [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#), readability refers to how easily the target audience can understand the target language. This is assessed based on sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar, and the logical flow of context. In subtitling, readability is significantly impacted by the constraints of time and space, which can lead to translation shifts. While readability assessments are common in general translation research, they are rarely explicitly applied to the specific challenges of subtitle translation, particularly concerning intimate language and structural shifts ([Araghi & Palangkaraya, 2024](#); [Jimenez-Crespo, 2022](#)).

2.4 Previous Research

Subtitle translation often requires significant changes to grammatical structures due to the time and space limitations of audiovisual media. Researchers have examined aspects such as unit shifts and language style separately within this field ([Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020](#)). These grammatical adjustments are crucial to ensure that the subtitles remain clear, concise, and readable within the brief time available, while still conveying the original meaning accurately.

Meanwhile, research focusing on language style, particularly intimate style, have analyzed how this style reflects emotional closeness in dialogue. For example, [Octaviani and Purwarno \(2021\)](#) found that the use of intimate language in *The Notebook* shows emotional closeness between characters through things like how they address each other, the special words they use, and their family-like relationships. These elements help create a sense of warmth and familiarity that makes the characters feel more connected to one another. Similarly, [D. P. A. C. Dewi et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Pratiwi and Suastini \(2023\)](#) found that intimate language helps make the characters' interactions feel deeper and more emotional. Their findings highlight how language can strengthen relationships and bring more meaning to the dialogue in the film.

This research aims to analyze the patterns of intimate language style and identify the types of unit shifts that occur in the Indonesian-English subtitle translation of *Home Sweet Loan*. It also examines how these unit shifts influence the readability of intimate expressions, especially in conveying emotional nuance. By addressing these aspects, the research contributes to a more integrated understanding of how translation shifts and language style interact in audiovisual translation.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research aims to explore and describe how unit shifts affect the readability of intimate language styles in the subtitle translation of *Home Sweet Loan*. Adopting a qualitative-descriptive approach, this research analyzes the language in audiovisual contexts, especially in intimate dialogues. [Kriyantono \(2020\)](#) claims that descriptive qualitative research is a strategy that systematically, factually, and accurately describes data by attempting to explore depth or more profound meaning. Rather than focusing solely on numerical outcomes, this approach seeks to explore the meanings behind behaviors, experiences, and social patterns, allowing researchers to interpret findings within their real-life settings ([Deckert & Wilson, 2023](#)).

3.1 Data Collection and Sources

The data comes from the Indonesian drama *Home Sweet Loan*, which was officially released on Netflix in 2024. The primary data includes Indonesian verbatim and English subtitle segments that show intimate language style characteristics and unit shifts. To assess readability, the data were evaluated by two linguistics undergraduate and graduate students who had watched the film, using [Nababan et al.'s \(2012\)](#) readability scale. The secondary data consisted of supporting references, including journal articles, previous research, and theoretical works on subtitle translation, unit shift ([Catford, 1965](#)), speech styles ([Joos, 1967](#)), and readability.

3.2 Sampling Technique

In qualitative research, purposive sampling is a method in which researchers intentionally select specific individuals or cases because they possess certain traits or experiences directly relevant to the topic being studied. According to [Creswell \(2014\)](#), purposive sampling refers to a qualitative sampling technique where researchers select participants based on pre-defined criteria relevant to the research question. It is a strategic approach to choosing individuals or sites purposefully to gain in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. This method emphasizes selecting participants who can offer rich and relevant insights for the research ([Campbell et al., 2020](#)).

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out using content analysis. This method was applied by identifying and analyzing segments from the Indonesian verbatim and English subtitles of *Home Sweet Loan* that contain intimate language styles and unit shifts. The selected subtitle segments were systematically classified with contextual details. A small-scale evaluation was conducted with two respondents skilled in both Indonesian and English, each with a background in linguistics or translation, to assess readability, using the readability scale proposed by [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#). The evaluation focused on clarity, naturalness, and emotional coherence.

3.4 Data Validity

To ensure data validity, the research employed triangulation techniques involving both data sources and methods. It involves using multiple methods or data sources to enhance the validity and reliability of research findings. It is a strategy to strengthen research by combining different perspectives and approaches to the same research question. Triangulation allows researchers to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the research topic ([Given, 2016](#)).

Data were collected from the Indonesian verbatim and English subtitles, categorized by contextual observations from the movie. Triangulation of methods was implemented by combining content analysis with a small-scale readability assessment involving qualified respondents. This cross-verification helped improve the credibility of the findings and ensured consistency in identifying unit shifts, intimate language styles, and their impact on subtitle readability.

3.5 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, this research uses the [Spradley \(1979, 1980\)](#) approach to qualitative data analysis, which is often used in ethnographic research. This approach follows a clear and organized process to find and understand cultural knowledge and meaning. It looks at how people understand their world through the language they use and the experiences they share. This research applies Spradley's four main steps of analysis:

1. Domain Analysis, focuses on identifying broader categories (domains) of cultural knowledge within the data. This analysis was used to identify dialogue segments that reflect intimate language styles based on the characteristics of [Joos \(1967\)](#) and the English subtitle pair, contextual elements, character relationships, and emotional tone.
2. Taxonomic Analysis, involves creating hierarchical structures (like flowcharts or diagrams) to illustrate the relationships between different domains and subdomains. The data were examined and classified according to the type of unit shift proposed by [Catford \(1965\)](#).
3. Componential Analysis, delves deeper into the meaning of terms within a domain. It identifies the specific features or attributes that distinguish one concept from another within a domain, revealing nuances in meaning. This stage linked the results of domain and taxonomic analysis to the quality of subtitle readability, as assessed according to [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#), focusing on clarity, naturalness, and emotional nuance.
4. Cultural Theme Analysis, involves identifying overarching themes or patterns that connect different domains and subdomains. This allows researchers to understand the broader cultural understandings and meanings present in the data. This stage involved discovering how unit shifts in translation affect the preservation of interpersonal dynamics and social values in the English subtitles of *Home Sweet Loan*.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

A total of 64 subtitle pairs were identified as containing an intimate language style in the Indonesian source language (SL), based on [Joos's \(1967\)](#) theory as the data source. These dialogues typically involved informal expressions, emotional tones, and close personal relationships, such as between parents and children, siblings, or close friends. Examples and the analysis are provided below:

Data : 07/25:33/BF/WP
Context : Danan jokingly responded to his best friend's statement about renting his apartment.
SL : *Anjing, dibilang sarang zina.*

The word “*Anjing*” is used casually among best friends to express closeness, reflecting the natural and personal tone that characterizes this language style.

4.1.1 Unit Shift

Using [Catford's \(1965\)](#) concept of unit shifts, Table 1 presents the distribution and types of linguistic unit shifts identified in the subtitle translation of intimate dialogues in the *Home Sweet Loan* movie.

Table 1. Frequency of linguistic unit shifts.

No.	Unit Linguistic (SL to TL)	Number of Data	%
1.	Word to Phrase	21	32.81%
2.	Word to Clause	1	1.56%
3.	Phrase to Word	5	7.81%
4.	Phrase to Clause	7	10.94%
5.	Phrase to Sentences	5	7.81%
6.	Clause to Phrase	1	1.56%
7.	Clause to Sentences	7	10.94%
8.	Sentences to Word	1	1.56%
9.	Sentences to Phrase	4	6.25%
10.	No Unit Shift	12	18.75%
Total		64	100%

1. Word to Phrase

This type of shift occurred in 21 data (32.81%). It illustrates how a single word in SL is translated into a phrase in TL, typically for improved clarity or cultural adaptation.

Data : 01/03:26/FM/WP
SL : “*Kaivan, cepet.*”
TL : “*Kaivan, come on.*”

The word “*cepat*” was translated into the phrase “*come on*” in English. This expression conveys urgency more naturally in informal English, aligning with the intimate tone.

2. Word to Clause

This type is shown in 1 data set (1.56%), showing a change from a word to a clause in TL that is usually used for elaboration or contextual clarity.

Data : 22/11:37/FM/WC
SL : “*Kan kata Oma barengan.*”
TL : “Grandma said, our room!”

The word “*barengan*,” meaning together or sharing, was expanded into “our room!” in TL, which adds context for clarity.

3. Phrase to Word

This type was identified with 5 data (7.81%), where phrases in SL were reduced to a single word in TL for conciseness and clarity.

Data : 23/08:18/BF/PW
SL : “*Gak ada uang lembur, balik lu!*”
TL : “No overtime! Go home!”

The phrase “*uang lembur*” was simplified to “overtime,” maintaining the meaning while making the expression more concise and natural in TL.

4. Phrase to Clause

This shift is shown in 7 data (10.94%), showing a change from a phrase in SL to a clause in TL.

Data : 29/12:25/FM/PC
SL : “*Enak aja, kamar Kaivan!*”
TL : “You wish. It’s my room!”

The phrase “*kamar Kaivan*” was changed to the clause “It’s my room!” The shift improved the emotional tone and clarity of the response in English, aligning with the speaker’s intent.

5. Phrase to Sentences

This shift appeared in 5 data (7.81%), expanding phrases into sentences in TL.

Data : 35/01:49/BF/PS
SL : “*Eitss, agak padet, ya?*”
TL : “It’s a bit cramped.”

The phrase “*agak padet*” was expanded into a sentence for grammatical completeness and clarity in TL.

6. Clause to Phrase

This shift was found in 1 data (1.56%) and simplified a clause into a phrase.

Data : 41/31:45/BF/CP
SL : “*Ih, lu kalo ngomong, Mi, amit-amit.*”
TL : “You and your mouth.”

The SL was condensed into an idiomatic phrase to retain its informal tone and expressiveness.

7. Clauses to Sentences

This shift occurred in 7 data (10.94%), reflecting a clause expanded into sentences for coherence.

Data : 41/04:09/FM/CS
 SL : “Nanti pas udah gede, bisa-bisa jadi masalah tuh kalau komunikasi sama ibunya aja begitu.”
 TL : “He’s going to grow up problematic. If that’s how he communicates with his mother.”

This restructuring increased clarity and emphasized causality.

8. Sentences to Word

Only 1 data (1.56%) occurs in this shift, changing sentences into words.

Data : 44/31:48/BF/SW
 SL : “Sialan lu semua. Memang gua kurang apaan?”
 TL : “Seriously. What is it that I lack?”

A single word preserved the emotional tone and was common in spontaneous speech.

9. Sentences to Phrase

This shift was found in 4 data (6.25%), simplifying sentence structures.

Data : 50/04:07/FM/SP
 SL : “Kasih tau si Kaivan.”
 TL : “Poor Kaivan.”

TL used a concise expression that efficiently conveyed sympathy without redundancy.

10. No Unit Shift

In 12 data (18.75%), no unit shift occurred, which means TL retained the same unit as SL.

Data : 56/21:56/CP/NU
 SL : “Makanya orang yang pas-pasan kayak aku gak berhak punya rumah sendiri?”
 TL : “So, ordinary people like me don’t deserve to own a house?”

A word-for-word equivalence was used to maintain nuance and flow.

4.1.2 Readability

Readability assessment was also conducted using the translation quality evaluation model proposed by [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#). Based on the analysis of 64 subtitle data points, Table 2 shows that 36 data (56.25%) were classified as readable, while 25 data (39.06%)

were less readable, and the remaining 3 data (4.69%) were unreadable, with an average score of 2.5.

Table 2. Frequency of readability scores of subtitle translation.

Score Parameter		Data	%
3	Readable	36	56.25%
2	Less Readable	25	39.06%
1	Unreadable	3	4.69%
Total		64	100%
Avarage Score: $36 \times 3 + 25 \times 2 + (3 \times 1) / 64$			2.5

1. Readable

This category scored 3, which includes translations that are easily understood, natural in tone, and consistent with the original emotional context. These subtitles successfully preserve the conversational flow of the SL into the TL.

Data : 08/23:42/FM/WP
 SL : “*Kaivan bisa gak mainnya di sini aja?*”
 TL : “Can’t you watch your son here?”

The Indonesian question was translated into a concise and natural English expression. The use of “can’t” made the sentence direct and emotionally resonant, reflecting the speaker’s frustration in a way that aligns with informal English usage.

2. Less Readable

Subtitles in this category that scored 2 are still generally comprehensible but may contain minor tone or emotional intensity deviations. These issues slightly reduce the overall naturalness or clarity.

Data : 53/15:01/FM/NU
 SL : “*Ibu sama Bapak juga gak bisa beli rumah sendiri.*”
 TL : “Your dad and I can’t possibly afford to buy one.”

The insertion of the word “possibly” added an unnecessary sense of dramatization, which was not present in the original SL tone and compromised the factual tone intended by the speaker.

3. Unreadable

The lowest category, which scored 1, includes subtitles that are difficult to understand due to awkward structure, formality, or failure to convey the original tone and meaning. The translation may appear disjointed or unnatural.

Data : 03/06:29/BF/WP
 SL : “*Ogah, nanti pada susah ditagihnya.*”
 TL : “No, thanks. Do not want people keeping open tabs.”

The TL sounded too formal and disjointed, losing the informal and dismissive tone of “ogah.” The phrase “keeping open tabs” also felt unnatural in this context, making it less accessible for viewers.

These results highlight the translator's challenge in balancing emotional accuracy in intimate language style, structural adaptation in unit shifts, and audience comprehension in the readability of subtitle translations.

4.2 Discussion

The analysis identifies intimate language style that aligns with [Joos \(1967\)](#) in the original Indonesian dialogues of *Home Sweet Loan*. This style includes informal vocabulary, emotional expressions, and terms of affection such as “Mi” or “Sayang”. [Joos \(1967\)](#) categorizes this as the most personal and emotionally charged form of language, used primarily in close relationships like family members or romantic partners. In the case of *Home Sweet Loan*, the dialogue captures this intimacy through phrases that reflect strong emotional expressions and shared understanding between characters.

While many studies focus on different aspects of language style, this research is also relevant to the work of [Fitria \(2020\)](#), who examined casual and intimate styles in subtitle translation. Fitria's analysis reveals that emotionally expressive styles, like the intimate style found in *Home Sweet Loan*, play a significant role in character development and audience engagement. The current research affirms that this style is essential for creating emotional depth, aligning with [D. P. A. C. Dewi et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Pratiwi and Suastini \(2023\)](#), who found that the intimacy reflected in language style fosters emotional connections between characters.

Moreover, in subtitle translation, the translation shift that supports with [Catford's \(1965\)](#) theory, especially unit shifts is use, and this research identifies several types, such as word-to-phrase (32.81%), phrase-to-clause (10.94%), and clause-to-sentence (10.94%) shifts, as seen in Table 4.2. These shifts reflect the need to adapt the language to fit the cultural and grammatical structures of the TL.

Unit shift is a transformation of linguistic units between the SL and TL that does not correspond directly, especially at the word, phrase, or sentence levels. The research aligns with [Sulaiman et al. \(2024\)](#), who noted the frequent use of unit shifts to bridge linguistic gaps in subtitles. The word-to-phrase shift is crucial in expanding expressions to maintain clarity and convey the intended message.

Unlike previous research, which focus solely on specific types of shifts, this research provides an in-depth analysis of how unit shifts impact the intimacy of language. For instance, word-to-phrase shifts often preserve the emotional depth of the dialogues, as seen in the translation of informal expressions into more elaborate phrases to enhance their meaning in English.

Next, the readability of the subtitles was evaluated using [Nababan et al.'s \(2012\)](#) readability scale. Results show that 56.25% of the subtitles are readable, 39.06% are less readable, and 4.69% are unreadable. The average readability score of 2.5 indicates that most subtitles are understandable, though some could benefit from further refinement to enhance clarity and fluency.

[Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#) emphasize the importance of clarity and emotional coherence in subtitle translation. The readability standard involves more than just linguistic accuracy. It also includes the ease with which the audience can absorb the content and the emotional tone.

The impact of unit shifts on readability has been previously discussed by [Sulaiman et al. \(2024\)](#), who highlighted how structural changes improve clarity but can sometimes diminish emotional nuances. This research reaffirms the findings, as the readability of the

subtitles was sometimes compromised by shifts that altered the emotional depth of the original dialogues. However, achieving a balance between accuracy and emotional authenticity in subtitle translation is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication. Subtitle translation not only conveys the literal meaning of dialogues but also captures the emotional nuances that resonate with the target audience. This balance is essential for enhancing the viewer's cinematic experience and ensuring that the film's intended impact is preserved across cultures ([Damayanti & Sari, 2024](#); [Nisa & Kholis, 2024](#)).

While most dialogues underwent unit shifts, 12 data (18.75%) showed no unit shift. These instances indicate that the translation could remain unchanged or omitted, preserving the original language's structure and tone. The no-shift cases reflect the natural equivalence between the SL and TL, which helps maintain emotional and linguistic fidelity.

The no-unit shift occurrences are in line with [Fitria \(2020\)](#), who observed that, in some cases, maintaining the original structure without altering the language unit can enhance the emotional resonance and maintain the integrity of the SL meaning. This further supports [Sulaiman et al. \(2024\)](#), who argue that no shift can sometimes be the best choice for direct equivalence, particularly when preserving emotional tone is crucial in intimate dialogues.

The research confirms that unit shifts are essential for adapting subtitles linguistically and culturally. However, they often compromise the emotional depth of intimate dialogues. By integrating [Joos's \(1967\)](#) theory of intimate language style and [Catford's \(1965\)](#) theory of unit shifts, the research illustrates the delicate balance translators must maintain between preserving emotional depth and ensuring clarity in the TL.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research examined the interaction between intimate language style, unit shifts, and readability in the subtitle translation of *Home Sweet Loan*. The results indicate that intimate language style, characterized by emotional closeness and informal expressions, often requires unit shifts to achieve naturalness and clarity in the TL. These shifts help convey the original tone but can reduce readability if overused or misapplied.

The readability analysis revealed that while most subtitles were readable, a significant portion was less readable or unreadable due to structural or language style mismatches. This confirms that successful subtitle translation of intimate dialogues depends on accurate linguistic transfer, preserving emotional resonance, and maintaining viewer comprehension.

Future research could expand this research by exploring subtitle translations of other language styles, such as consultative or frozen styles, or by comparing machine-generated subtitles with human translation regarding emotional tone retention and readability. Moreover, incorporating a larger sample of respondents into readability assessments could provide more comprehensive insights into audience reception.

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