

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the research which consists of research background, statement of problem, research objectives, research significances, conceptual framework, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Film, as a modern art form, can be understood as a type of audiovisual literature that combines visual, linguistic, and cultural expression. As Monaco (2009) explains, film operates as art and craft, sensibility and science, tradition and technology, illustrating its position between aesthetic creation and communicative medium. Through dialogue, diction, and tone, films convey emotions, ideologies, and stylistic nuances that mirror literary texts. Hence, analyzing film from a literary and linguistic standpoint enables researchers to explore how language contributes to meaning and characterization.

In the development of a film's aesthetic, the concepts of tone and mood are deeply intertwined with its psychological atmosphere. McKee (1997) suggests that in screenwriting and narrative theory, tone is understood as the attitude a story conveys toward its characters and events, expressed through choices in dialogue, word choice, and dramatic emphasis. According to Ulutas and Aytas (2024), mood is an affect designed in motion pictures which functions as a pervasive atmosphere rather than a fleeting sensation. While moods are typically subjective in daily life, cinema has the unique capacity to externalize these states, suggesting that it is possible to produce moods objectively in movies through a deliberate stylistic order

(Ulutas & Aytaş, 2024). This objective mood creates an affective orientation that prepares the audience for specific emotional engagements, ensuring that the cinematic experience is both intellectually and affectively resonant.

One cinematic genre that heavily relies on language style and cultural nuance is the teen romantic comedy, which captures youth identity, social interaction, and emotional tension through colloquial and humorous dialogue. San Filippo (2020) highlights that rom-coms depend heavily on verbal interaction, witty exchanges, and playful language as key mechanisms for building chemistry and advancing the plot. In this genre, dialogue becomes the core medium through which character identity and relationship dynamics are revealed, particularly through the use of slang, sarcasm, and informal expressions that reflect authentic teenage communication. Because of this reliance on natural and contemporary speech styles, the linguistic texture of a rom-com contributes significantly to tone, mood, humor, and characterization, making verbal nuance an element of audience engagement.

On this basis, the film *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) serves as an ideal material object for this study. As a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* set in a 1990s American high school environment. The film's dialogue is specifically structured with stark verbal contrasts, a blend of witty intellectualism and raw teenage slang loaded with sarcasm. The linguistic richness of the film lies in this abundant use of informal speech to construct the character's personalities and relationships. This dynamic dialogue creates a high probability of translation inconsistencies regarding tone and mood, making it a data case study.

Translation plays a crucial role in enabling cross-cultural communication by transferring meaning from one language to another. Larson (1998) defines translation as the process of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. She emphasizes that translation should be meaning-based rather than form-based, since overly literal translation often results in unnatural expressions and may distort the intended message. This distinction is particularly important when translating expressive and informal language, such as slang or emotionally charged dialogue, where preserving tone and communicative effect is as vital as conveying semantic content.

In audiovisual contexts, translation is most commonly realized through subtitling. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014) define subtitling as the process of transferring spoken dialogue into concise written text that appears on the screen and must synchronize with visual and temporal constraints. They explain that subtitling entails compressing spoken language while maintaining semantic accuracy and stylistic harmony. Similarly, Karamitroglou in Chang (2012: 73) defines subtitling as the translation of the spoken or written source text of a film into a written target text which is superimposed onto the original images, usually at the bottom of the screen. Both definitions highlight that subtitling is not merely linguistic transfer but also a technical process shaped by space, time, and readability.

As the dominant form of translation in the global distribution of films and series, subtitling faces significant challenges, particularly when dealing with informal and culture-bound expressions. The limitations of screen space, time constraints, and synchronization often require translators to condense, rephrase, or simplify

dialogue, which may lead to variations or inconsistencies in the translated text. Previous studies in the Indonesian context, Kuswardani and Septiani (2020) found that subtitle translators frequently apply condensation and paraphrasing to fit timing and readability demands. Likewise, Destaria and Rini (2019) observed that idiomatic and informal expressions are often domesticated or omitted, resulting in partial loss of the original tone. These findings suggest that subtitling involves constant negotiation between fidelity to the source text and naturalness in the target language.

When this textual simplification is executed without stable stylistic control, translation inconsistency occurs. Nababan et al. (2012) asserts that consistency in word choice is a vital determinant of translation acceptability and target readers' comfort in processing the source information. In the realm of subtitling, Gottlieb (1992) emphasizes that while text reduction is inevitable, it must not compromise the linguistic identity of the characters. When identical terms, language styles, or emotional expressions are translated variably throughout a film without a clear contextual or functional justification, the narrative aesthetics and character stability become fragmented, ultimately diminishing the overall translation quality.

Several previous studies have explored the linguistic and cultural dimensions of film adaptations and audiovisual translation. Clement (2008) in her study, *The Postfeminist Mystique: Feminism and Shakespearean Adaptation in 10 Things I Hate About You and She's the Man* examined how *10 Things I Hate About You* adapts Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to reflect postfeminist ideologies. She argues that the film simplifies and commercializes feminist ideas, using humor, irony, and youth culture to portray gender and identity in a conservative,

postfeminist way. The movie's language particularly slang, sarcasm, and informal speech, constructs teenage identity and reinforces its postfeminist narrative tone. Clement's findings demonstrate that film dialogue is not merely a tool for plot advancement but a site for cultural and ideological translation, where linguistic nuances directly shape audience perception.

In addition to the aforementioned works, this is another explored translation techniques within diverse audiovisual contexts. Comprehensive analyses of general subtitle translation techniques across various film genres. For instance, Manipuspika and Winzami (2021) investigated the translation of idioms in the movie *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017), revealing that paraphrasing is the most dominant strategy used to bridge cultural gaps. Beyond technique, the issue of translation quality remains a significant scholarly interest. Romdhathi et al. (2018) highlight that translating subtitles, especially for film dialogue, requires not only linguistic accuracy but also a deep understanding of the source language's culture to maintain the naturalness and intended meaning of the text. Their research emphasizes that a lack of cultural awareness can lead to misinterpretations, particularly when dealing with specific expressions that reflect a character's identity. Furthermore, recent research by Nisak and Ishlahiyah (2025) emphasizes the vital role of cultural translation in maintaining the thematic essence of films, as seen in their study of the culinary themed movie *The Menu* (2022).

The findings of this research regarding inconsistency can be further contextualized by comparing them to these existing studies. For example, the use of generalization and adaptation in this film aligns with the findings of Fitria (2015, 2019) in the translation of *Doraemon "Stand By Me"* and *Crazy Rich Asians*, where translators

often prioritize the target audience's familiarity over literal accuracy. However, the inconsistency in tone found in *10 Things I Hate About You* suggests a unique challenge in maintaining the perceived affect of the film, as informal expressions and swearing words function as emotive language used to release or emphasize both positive and negative human emotions.

As highlighted by Hasibuan and Musfiroh (2021), the difficulty in defining the exact emotional meaning in the target language remains a primary challenge for translators. Failure to employ appropriate procedures, such as cultural equivalent or synonymy, can result in an inability to capture the original's intensity, leading to problems in making the audience feel the intended emotional impact. By building upon these findings, this study fills a gap by examining how specific strategies and technical constraints contribute to the tonal irregularities that disrupt the film's intended emotional resonance.

These translation variations are further compounded by the technical constraints of subtitling, which frequently result shifts in tone and mood. Szarkowska et al. (2026) found that even minor incongruities between dialogue and subtitles may alter viewers' perception of tone and character voice. In youth-oriented films such as *10 Things I Hate About You*, where informal speech and slang are integral to character identity, such translation shifts risk flattening humour and emotional nuance. Thus, examining the subtitling of this film provides an opportunity to investigate how meanings are rendered and how features of language are maintained, altered, or lost in translation, particularly in the Indonesian context.

While the aforementioned studies comprehensively discuss general subtitling techniques, ideological adaptations, and cultural transfer, there is a distinct lack of research focusing on stylistic consistency within a single audiovisual text. Most existing studies analyze translation shifts across different genres or evaluate overall translation errors statically. This study addresses this gap by specifically examining how strategic choices and technical subtitling constraints contribute to the tonal irregularities and mood inconsistencies within the Indonesian subtitles of *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999).

Preliminary observations of the film's Indonesian subtitles reveal a noticeable fluctuation between rigid, literal translations and natural, conversational expressions. For instance, dynamic slang terms meant to sound playful or sarcastic in English are sometimes rendered too formally or flatly in Indonesian. This irregularity disrupts the linguistic flow and alters how viewers perceive character relationships. This phenomenon motivates the researcher to scrutinizing how and why these inconsistencies in style and diction occur, and what impact they have on the coherence and affective resonance of the translated text.

The urgency of this research lies in the fact that most previous subtitling studies have heavily focused on semantic shifts or mechanical text reduction strategies. Very little attention has been paid to the suprasegmental aspects of subtitles, specifically, how they preserve tone and mood. Yet, tone and mood serve as the emotional compass for the audience to decode sarcasm and character dynamics. If subtitles are inconsistent in transferring these two aspects, such as domesticating a sarcastic line into a formal one in one scene, while leaving it highly casual in another, the target audience will experience cognitive dissonance. They see intense

visual expressions but read fluctuating, flat subtitles, which ultimately disrupts the affective resonance essential to the romantic comedy experience.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background above, the problem of this study lies in the inconsistent rendering of tone and mood in the Indonesian subtitles of *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), where informal and sarcastic dialogues is translated unevenly. Therefore, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- 1.2.1 What tones and moods are presented in the English dialogues based on plot and characterization?
- 1.2.2 How do the Indonesian subtitles translate these tones and moods, either consistently or inconsistently?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the researcher is intended:

- 1.3.1 To identify and classify the variations of tones and moods presented in the English dialogues of *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) based on plot development and characterization.
- 1.3.2 To examine how the Indonesian subtitles translate the original tones and moods, either consistently or inconsistently.
- 1.3.3 To analyze the effects of tonal and mood inconsistencies in the Indonesian subtitles on character portrayal and audience interpretation.

1.4 Research Significances

This research is expected to contribute to the field of translation studies and audiovisual translation by highlighting the importance of tone and mood consistency in subtitled films. By focusing on informal dialogue in a teen romantic comedy, this study extends previous research on subtitle translation beyond lexical

accuracy, emphasizing how translation choices influence narrative atmosphere and character construction. Furthermore, this research enriches discussions on the relationship between source text intention and target text reception, particularly in the translation of culturally and emotionally charged expressions.

On a practical level, the findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights for translation students, subtitle translators, and audiovisual practitioners. This study raises awareness of how literal or inappropriate translation strategies may cause inconsistencies in tone and mood, potentially affecting audience engagement and comprehension. By demonstrating concrete examples from film dialogue, the research can serve as a reference for producing more natural, coherent, and context-sensitive subtitles, especially when translating informal and youth-oriented films.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the understanding that translation, particularly in audiovisual media, is not merely the transfer of linguistic meaning but also the transfer of stylistic and emotional nuances embedded within dialogue. In film discourse, dialogue functions not only as a medium of communication between characters but also as a narrative device that shapes characterization, interpersonal dynamics, and the overall emotional atmosphere of a scene.

The analysis in this research begins with the English dialogues as the Source Language (SL). The first analytical step is the identification of tone. Tone refers to the speaker's attitude, stance, or emotional positioning toward a subject or

interlocutor, which can be recognized through lexical choices, expressions, and contextual cues within the plot. Because tone is closely connected to characterization and situational context, its identification requires careful consideration of narrative development and character interaction.

Once tone is identified in the SL, the study proceeds to determine the mood generated by that tone. Mood, in this context, refers to the emotional atmosphere perceived by the audience as a result of the characters' attitudes and interactions. While tone originates from the speaker, mood emerges as its emotional effect within the broader narrative context. Therefore, tone and mood are analytically distinguished yet intrinsically connected.

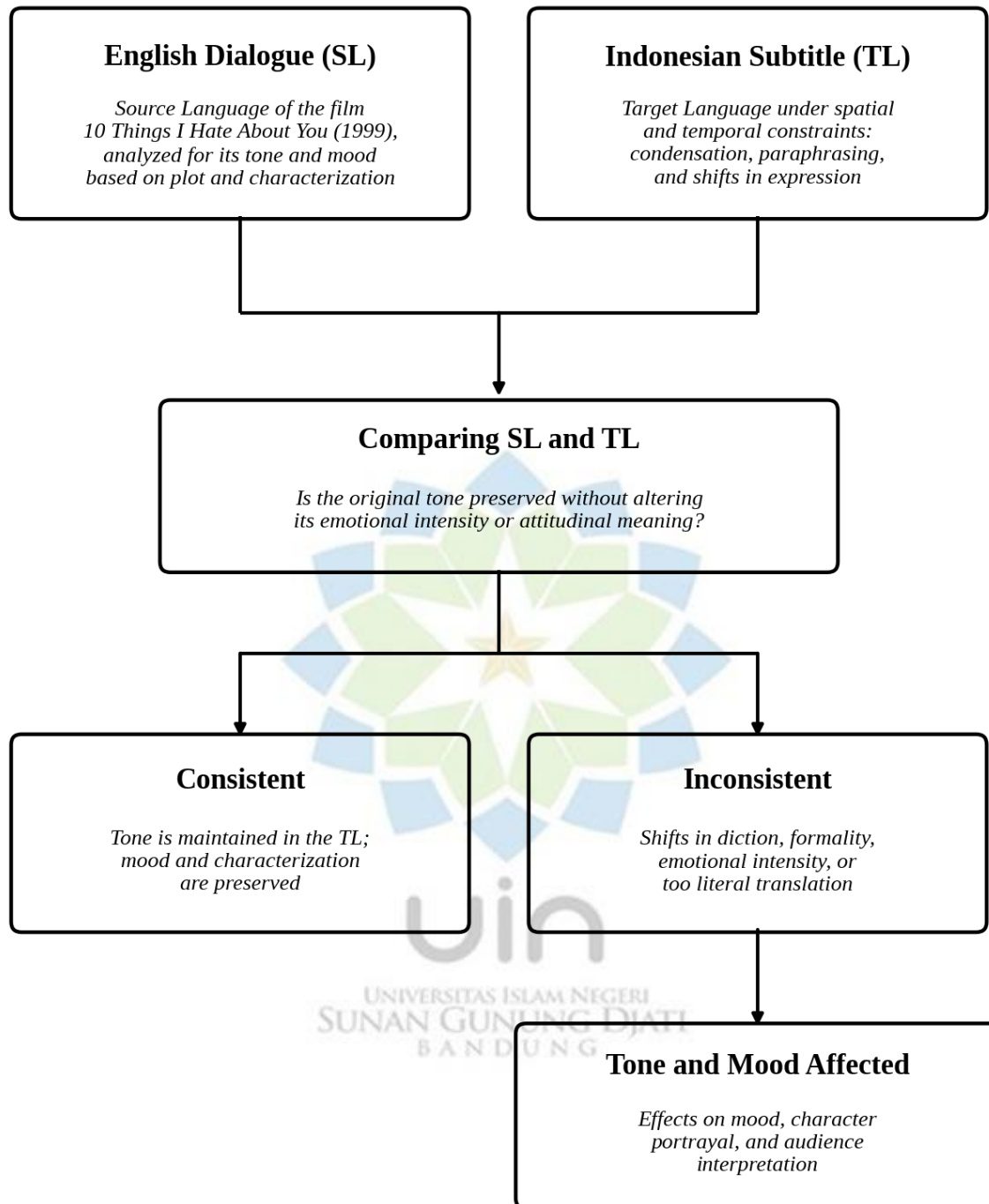
After establishing the tones and moods present in the SL, the Indonesian subtitles as the Target Language (TL) are examined. Since subtitling operates under spatial and temporal constraints, translation choices may involve condensation, paraphrasing, or shifts in expression. These choices may influence the degree to which the original tone is maintained. In this research, consistency refers to the extent to which the TL preserves the tone identified in the SL without altering its emotional intensity or attitudinal meaning.

If the Indonesian subtitles consistently reflect the original tone, the resulting mood is expected to remain aligned with that of the SL. However, when inconsistencies occur, such as shifts in diction, level of formality, emotional intensity, or too literal translation, the tone may be altered. Such alterations can subsequently affect the perceived mood, characterization, or even genre impression of a scene.

Thus, the conceptual framework of this study follows a systematic progression: identification of tone in the SL, determination of mood generated by that tone, evaluation of consistency in the TL, and analysis of the effects of any inconsistencies on mood and characterization. Through this framework, translation is viewed not only as linguistic transfer but also as the negotiation of emotional and stylistic meaning across languages.

The concept of consistency in translation is particularly significant in audiovisual media because tone plays a crucial role in shaping audience perception and emotional engagement. In film discourse, tone influences how viewers interpret characters, relationships, and narrative development. When the tone established in the Source Language (SL) is consistently maintained in the Target Language (TL), the intended mood and characterization are preserved, allowing the audience to experience the film as originally constructed.

However, when inconsistencies occur in translation, shifts in tone may lead to alterations in emotional intensity, pragmatic meaning, or interpersonal dynamics between characters. Such shifts can subtly change how a character is perceived, whether as sarcastic, sincere, aggressive, or humorous and may consequently affect the overall mood of a scene. In a genre that relies heavily on emotional balance and character interaction, inconsistency in tone translation can influence audience interpretation and potentially modify the narrative impact. Therefore, examining consistency is essential not only from a linguistic perspective but also from the standpoint of audience reception and cinematic experience.



1.6 Definition of Key Terms

a. Tone

Tone refers to the attitude conveyed by a speaker or character toward a subject or interlocutor, expressed through diction, style, and emotional nuance in dialogue.

b. Mood

Mood refers to the emotional atmosphere experienced by the audience as a result of the tone, context, and interaction within a scene.

c. Translation

Translation is the process of transferring meaning from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL), prioritizing clarity and equivalence of meaning (Larson, 1998).

a. Subtitling

Subtitling is a form of audiovisual translation that renders spoken dialogue into written text displayed on screen while maintaining synchronization and readability.

b. Inconsistency

Inconsistency in this study refers to shifts or alterations in tone and diction in the Indonesian subtitles that affect the intended mood and characterization of the original English dialogue.

c. Source Language (SL)

The original language of the dialogue analyzed in the film.

d. Target Language (TL)

The translated language presented in the subtitles.