

TRANSLATION OF EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS BY PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST CHARACTERS IN *THE WITCHER SERIES*

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Received: 2025-10-21

Accepted: 2025-11-25

Published: 2025-12-10

Abstract

This study examines the translation of expressive speech acts in the Netflix series *The Witcher*, focusing on the protagonist Geralt of Rivia and the antagonist Cahir Mawr Dyffryn. Expressive speech acts—such as apology, gratitude, condolence, lament, congratulation, protest, and praise—play a crucial role in conveying emotions and shaping character identity. A total of 158 utterances were analyzed from English–Indonesian subtitle pairs using qualitative descriptive methods, supported by translation quality assessment based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Findings reveal distinct pragmatic patterns: Geralt frequently uses empathetic expressions like protest, apology, and regret, reflecting moral engagement and interpersonal sensitivity, while Cahir predominantly employs praise and boasting, emphasizing authority and self-image. Analysis of 700 translation instances shows that established equivalence (56.14%) and variation (17.29%) were the most common techniques, supporting naturalness, readability, and cultural appropriateness. Techniques such as modulation, paraphrase, amplification, and compensation were applied to preserve pragmatic force and emotional nuance. Overall, translation quality was high, with mean scores of 2.84 (accuracy), 2.76 (acceptability), and 2.89 (readability). This study contributes a novel perspective by linking expressive speech acts with character function and translation strategies in subtitling. The findings emphasize the importance of selecting translation techniques that maintain pragmatic intent, emotional impact, and character portrayal, offering guidance for audiovisual translators and informing future research on cross-cultural narrative translation.

Keywords: *expressive speech acts; subtitling; translation shift; translation techniques; translation quality.*

1. Introduction

Speech events refer to linguistic interactions that occur within specific situational contexts. Among the various types of speech acts, expressive speech acts are important because they convey psychological states such as gratitude, apology, condolence, congratulation, lamenting, protest, and praise. These utterances carry not only

communicative intent but also emotional and cultural values, making them relevant for analysis in pragmatics and translation studies (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

In audiovisual media, expressive speech acts contribute to character construction and emotional resonance. In the Netflix adaptation of *The Witcher*, expressive acts are frequently used by the protagonist, Geralt of Rivia, and the antagonist, Cahir Mawr Dyffryn. Their contrasting narrative positions provide a valuable context for examining differences in pragmatic expression and how these are represented in translation.

Subtitling presents specific challenges because translators must maintain the illocutionary force while ensuring naturalness, brevity, and readability. Certain techniques, such as modulation or paraphrase, may enhance acceptability but subtly change the original pragmatic intent, potentially influencing audience perception (Nida & Taber, 1982).

Previous research has examined expressive speech acts and their translation (Syarif, Nababan & Santosa, 2020; Anindiyastuti & Basari, 2022). However, most studies emphasize classification and translation techniques without fully integrating translation quality assessment. Other studies that evaluate both translation techniques and quality (e.g., Nurhidayah, 2013; Cahyanisa, 2021) generally analyze expressive speech acts across all characters without differentiating protagonist and antagonist roles. Thus, previous studies have not fully explored how expressive functions, translation techniques, translation shifts, and translation quality interact differently across character roles in subtitling contexts.

To address this gap, the present study analyzes the translation of expressive speech acts in *The Witcher*, focusing on the protagonist and antagonist. The research aims to:

1. Identify the types of expressive speech acts used by both characters.
2. Analyse the characters portrayal based on the expressive utterance.
3. Analyse the translation techniques applied in subtitling.
4. Evaluate translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

Integrating pragmatic and translation analysis, this study provides a more detailed understanding of how expressive meanings are transferred in audiovisual translation and how translation strategies influence pragmatic equivalence and character representation.

2. Literature Review

Pragmatics concerns how language is interpreted in context, examining the relationship between linguistic forms and the physical, social, and psychological circumstances in which they occur (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). Within pragmatics, speech act theory introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1979) proposes that utterances are actions performed through language. Expressive speech acts specifically convey the speaker's psychological states such as apology, gratitude, protest, lament, congratulation, or praise (Ronan, 2015), making them crucial in character portrayal and interpersonal dynamics.

In translation studies, Nida and Taber (1982) emphasize that translation requires reproducing meaning and communicative intent from the source to the target language. Molina and Albir (2002) categorize eighteen translation techniques such as literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and paraphrase, which represent micro-level decisions taken by translators when transferring meaning. Quality in translation is commonly assessed using the framework of accuracy, acceptability, and readability, as formalized by Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012).

Audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, introduces additional constraints that distinguish it from written translation. Subtitles must respect spatial and temporal limits—typically no more than two lines on screen and 35–42 characters per line—while remaining synchronized with image and dialogue (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007). Given these limitations, translators often condense, reorganize, or paraphrase expressive acts to preserve pragmatic intent and viewer comprehension. Consequently, subtitling demands a balance between linguistic fidelity, viewer processing load, and emotional resonance.

Based on previous studies conducted by several researchers, “Translation Technique of Women Anger Speech Act in Television Series 13 Reasons Why Season 1” by Syarif, Nababan & Satosa (2020) and “Translation Techniques of Expressive Speech Acts of the Main Characters Used in the Subtitle of The Princess Switch Movie” by Anindiyastuti, A. D., & Basari, A. (2022), the findings of both studies primarily reveal the various types of expressive speech acts in the films as well as how translation techniques were employed.

Meanwhile, other previous studies, such as “An Analysis of Translation Techniques and Quality in Terms of Accuracy, Acceptability and Readability of Pi’s Expressive Speech Act in the Film Life of Pi” by Nurhidayah, A. (2013) and “Analisis Kualitas Terjemahan Tindak Tutar Ekspresif dalam Subtitle Film Little Women” by Cahyanisa, W. (2021), examined expressive speech acts and translation quality. In evaluating translation quality, it is also necessary to analyze the translation techniques applied.

Therefore, this study identifies a research gap, namely the analysis of expressive speech acts in both the main protagonist and antagonist characters, the translation techniques used, the quality of the translation, and how the application of translation techniques functions in reflecting each character.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study applies a qualitative descriptive research design supported by quantitative scoring derived from translation quality assessment. The design is aligned with product-oriented translation research, examining the subtitling of expressive speech acts in *The Witcher* Seasons 1 and 2.

3.2 Data and Data Source

The data consist of 158 expressive utterances spoken by the protagonist (Geralt of Rivia) and the antagonist (Cahir Mawr Dyffryn). The data were extracted from English–Indonesian subtitle pairs and verified by rewatching each scene to ensure contextual accuracy.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed to restrict the dataset to utterances that met predefined criteria, namely:

1. the utterance must belong to an expressive speech act,
2. it must be spoken by the protagonist or antagonist, and
3. the utterance must appear in both source and target language subtitles.

This approach ensured relevance and prevented unnecessary data expansion.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out through:

1. Documentation, involving extraction and alignment of English and Indonesian subtitle scripts;
2. Scene verification, where audio-visual segments were re-examined to confirm tone, speaker intention, and pragmatic force;
3. analysing the collected data using a focus group discussion involving three ratters, who would assess the types of expressive speech acts, translation techniques, and translation quality.

3.5 Rater Selection

Translation quality evaluation was conducted by three expert raters selected using purposive expert sampling. All raters satisfied the following criteria:

- advanced proficiency in English and Indonesian,
- academic background in linguistics and/or translation,
- familiarity with pragmatics, particularly speech act theory,
- minimum five years of translation experience,
- prior involvement in translation quality evaluation.

The FGD (focus group discussion) was conducted over two days to carry out the assessment. In the first meeting, the raters identified various forms of expressive speech acts and classified them based on their functions, while in the second meeting, the raters worked collaboratively to examine the use of translation techniques and assess the translation quality.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed through Spradley's ethnographic analytical stages, comprising:

1. Domain analysis,
2. Taxonomic analysis,
3. Componential analysis, and
4. Cultural theme analysis.

Translation techniques were identified according to Molina and Albir's (2002) classification, while translation shifts were determined by comparing source–target structural changes. Meanwhile Translation quality was measured using the evaluation model of Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012), consisting of:

- Accuracy,
- Acceptability,
- Readability.

Each parameter was scored using a 1–3 Likert-type rating scale, where:

- 3 = high quality,
- 2 = moderate quality,
- 1 = low quality.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

Inter-rater reliability was calculated using percentage agreement, following Miles and Huberman (1994). Differences in scoring were discussed during FGD until consensus was achieved, with minimum agreement of >75% considered acceptable.

Research validity was ensured through:

- Source triangulation, by comparing audio-visual scenes with subtitle texts, and
- Method triangulation, using documentation and FGD as complementary procedures.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

This study analyzed 158 expressive speech acts produced by the protagonist (Geralt) and antagonist (Cahir) in *The Witcher* Seasons 1–2. A total of 700 translation techniques were identified. The data show that conventional equivalence and variation dominated the subtitling process.

4.1.1 Types of Expressive Speech Acts

As the result we find eleven types of expressive speech acts based on Searle's theory. Here are the eleven expressive speech acts translated into English, Apologizing, Thanking, Expressing regret, Lamenting, Boasting, Protesting / Complaining, Condoling, Congratulating, Praising, Complimenting, Welcoming.

Geralt of Rivia (Protagonist)

Total expressive acts: 118

Table 1

Distribution of Expressive Speech Acts by Protagonist Character

No.	Expressive Speech Act	Frequency
1	Apologizing	19
2	Expressing regret	15
3	Lamenting	8
4	Protesting / Complaining	27
5	Compliment	10
6	Congratulating	15
7	Condoling	9
8	Welcoming	15

1. Apologizing

“I apologize for the abrupt intrusion”

Context:

Geralt arrives unexpectedly during a tense situation and recognizes that his entrance may have caused disruption.

This utterance functions as an explicit expressive speech act of apology. It shows Geralt acknowledging that he has violated a conversational or social norm (entering without invitation). Although Geralt is known for his stoicism, this apology reflects his ability to respect social expectations and to accept responsibility for minor offenses. The illocutionary

force is direct: to mitigate possible negative feelings from the hearer by showing regret for the interruption.

2. Expressing Regret

“It’s hard to regret something you didn’t choose.”

Context:

Geralt is speaking about how destiny has shaped his life. Many major events have been imposed upon him rather than chosen freely.

This utterance is an expressive speech act of regret, but not in the form of personal apology. Instead, it expresses philosophical regret about the nature of a life controlled by destiny rather than agency. Geralt frames regret as difficult when one has not actively made the choice that led to the outcome. The utterance therefore reflects internal emotional evaluation rather than interpersonal repair.

3. Lamenting

“Mistakes ... are also important to me. I don’t cross them out of my life, or memory. And I never blame others for them.”

Context:

Geralt reflects on the mistakes he has made throughout his life, considering them an integral part of who he has become.

This constitutes a lament, a deep emotional reflection on past personal failures. Geralt acknowledges his own shortcomings and expresses sadness and introspection about them. Instead of denying or forgetting mistakes, he accepts their emotional weight. The speech act communicates self-criticism, regret, and melancholy, revealing vulnerability beneath his hardened exterior.

a. Protesting / Complaining

“I run into dilemmas all the time ... This is not one of them. ... You disgust me. And deserve to die.”

Context:

Geralt confronts a morally corrupt antagonist. While he often struggles with ethical ambiguity, in this case he sees no conflict — the enemy has acted in ways he finds unquestionably evil.

This utterance functions as a strong expressive protest and moral condemnation. Geralt rejects the idea that the situation is a moral dilemma and openly voices his disgust. The speech act expresses frustration, anger, and moral judgment. It also positions Geralt not as neutral, but as someone emotionally engaged and affected by injustice.

b. Compliment

“Your ass puts others to shame.” (A rough, humorous compliment attributed to Geralt)

Context:

Geralt gives a compliment in his typical blunt and unfiltered style, aimed at acknowledging the attractiveness of another character.

Although unconventional and crude, the utterance functions as a compliment — it expresses admiration toward the addressee. The compliment also reflects Geralt’s

personality: he rarely expresses positive emotions directly, and when he does, his tone is dry, humorous, or teasing. This aligns with his pragmatic and stoic character design.

c. Congratulating

“Congratulations, you managed to accomplish it.”

Context:

Raven has just returned from a difficult mission that involved significant risks. Geralt, who has been waiting anxiously, learns that the mission was completed successfully and expresses congratulations as acknowledgment of the achievement.

This utterance falls under expressive speech acts, specifically congratulating, as the speaker conveys positive feelings toward the hearer’s success. The expression reinforces interpersonal bonds and signals appreciation, fulfilling a socio-emotional function in dialogue. The tone remains concise and retains the original illocutionary force in translation.

d. Condoling

“I am sorry for your loss.”

Context:

Yennefer has experienced the loss of someone close due to a tragic event. Geralt approaches to express sympathy and emotional support in this difficult moment.

This expressive act is categorized as condoling, as it expresses the speaker’s sadness regarding the misfortune experienced by the hearer. The utterance plays a supportive role, reinforcing emotional solidarity in a culturally appropriate way. The translation maintains the respectful and formal tone commonly associated with condolence expressions.

e. Welcoming

“Welcome back.”

Context:

Ciri who has been away for a long time finally returns. Geralt and team member who has been waiting welcomes them warmly, expressing relief and happiness upon reunion.

This utterance represents an expressive speech act of welcoming, communicating positive feelings about the hearer’s return. The act contributes to interpersonal closeness and supports social harmony within the narrative context. The translation maintains naturalness, directness, and emotional warmth typical of welcoming expressions.

Cahir Mawr Dyffryn (Antagonist)

Total expressive acts: 40

Table 2

Distribution of Expressive Speech Acts by Antagonist Character

No.	Expressive Speech Act	Frequency
1	Praising	13
2	Boasting	10
3	Apologizing	3
4	Expressing Regret	5
5	Protesting / Complaining	9

1. Praising

“You were exceptional in battle today.”

Context

Cahir, after witnessing an ally’s effective performance in combat, acknowledges their skill. Although he rarely gives praise openly due to his military personality, he occasionally recognizes competence in others, especially comrades who prove themselves.

This utterance represents an expressive act of praising, intended to convey professional admiration and acknowledge military competency. The expression is restrained, aligned with Cahir’s disciplined personality. The praise reinforces hierarchical relationships while maintaining emotional distance, characteristic of his role as a Nilfgaardian officer.

2. Boasting

“We will retake the North. Nilfgaard has never been stronger.”

Context

Cahir is speaking to soldiers during a strategic discussion, expressing confidence in Nilfgaard’s strength and military dominance. His statement functions as both reassurance and propaganda.

This utterance reflects a boasting expressive speech act, where the speaker elevates the reputation and capability of his side. Boasting here functions not as personal arrogance but as ideological reinforcement. The speech act supports Nilfgaard’s image as a powerful empire, demonstrating Cahir’s commitment to imperial propaganda and command rhetoric.

3. Apologizing

“I failed my mission. I accept responsibility.”

Context

Cahir admits his fault to a superior after failing to protect or recover Ciri, an objective central to his military duties. Although he rarely apologizes directly, this type of admission reflects his sense of honor and discipline.

This represents a direct apology, signaling acceptance of fault. For Cahir, apologizing is not a display of vulnerability but an act of military integrity. The illocutionary force reinforces hierarchical values and demonstrates that Cahir prioritizes professional responsibility over personal emotion.

4. Expressing Regret

“Something has ended in me... something has burned out.”

Context

Cahir reflects on the loss of comrades and the moral stain of his actions while serving Nilfgaard. This occurs at a moment of emotional vulnerability when he begins questioning the righteousness of his mission.

This is an expressive act of regret, conveying psychological distress and personal reckoning. Unlike earlier acts grounded in military loyalty, this moment reveals a break in Cahir’s ideological certainty. The utterance marks a turning point in his character arc, where he begins recognizing the cost of war beyond strategic outcomes.

5. Protesting / Complaining

“We were not given the resources we were promised. How were we expected to succeed?”

Context:

Cahir challenges a decision by his superiors after being inadequately supported in a military mission. The complaint is formal, reflecting military protocol rather than emotional outburst.

This utterance represents an expressive act of complaint, in which Cahir criticizes the unfavourable conditions that contributed to mission failure. Despite his loyalty, he asserts rational protest, maintaining a formal tone befitting his rank. The speech act functions as both critique and defence, showing that military obedience does not exclude strategic disagreement.

4.1.2 Analyze the characters portrayal based on the expressive utterance

The analysis of expressive speech acts in *The Witcher* reveals clear pragmatic differences between the protagonist and antagonist.

Geralt of Rivia (Protagonist)

The analysis shows that Geralt of Rivia produced a total of 118 expressive speech acts in the series. The most dominant forms were protest (27 instances), apology (19 instances), and expressions of regret or lamenting (15 instances). This distribution reflects a character who frequently responds to conflict with emotional clarity and moral reasoning. Geralt's speech acts project a personality that is responsible, empathetic, self-reflective, and critical, while also demonstrating emotional openness. His linguistic behavior indicates strong moral engagement and social sensitivity, allowing audiences to perceive him as a protagonist who is both principled and deeply connected to interpersonal relationships.

Cahir Mawr Dyffryn (Antagonist)

Cahir, in contrast, produced only 40 expressive speech acts in total. The most frequent types were praise (13 instances) and boasting (10 instances), with very few expressions of apology (3 instances) or regret (5 instances), Protesting/Complaining (9 instances). This pattern suggests a character who is emotionally controlled and oriented toward maintaining authority, self-image, and personal power. Cahir's utterances emphasize dominance, confidence, and reputation rather than empathy or emotional vulnerability. Accordingly, his expressive speech acts reflect a personality that is narcissistic, image-driven, and distant, establishing a clear pragmatic contrast with the protagonist.

4.1.3 Types of Translation Techniques

The analysis identified 700 occurrences of translation techniques, which are summarized in Table 3. A total of nine translation techniques were found in the data, consisting of established equivalent, variation, amplification, paraphrase, pure borrowing, modulation, reduction, literal translation, and transposition. The translation of expressive utterances from English into Indonesian involved a variety of techniques. The most dominant were:

Established Equivalent (393 data / 56.14%)

This technique is the most frequently used, accounting for more than half of all translation choices.

Reason:

- This technique is typically selected when a direct and natural equivalent already exists in the target language.
- It supports readability and naturalness, making subtitles easier for audiences to understand quickly.
- For expressive speech acts (e.g., apologizing, thanking, praising), Bahasa Indonesia already has fixed, common expressions, so translators can simply choose the closest natural equivalent without altering meaning.

Variation (121 data / 17.29%)

Variation is the second most used technique.

Reason:

- It allows translators to adjust linguistic or stylistic forms to improve cultural appropriateness or tone.
- In subtitling, variation is useful when the speaker's tone, social relationship, or emotional intent needs to be conveyed in a way that matches Indonesian norms.
- This technique helps maintain the speaker's personality, especially in expressive acts where mood, attitude, or role (e.g., protagonist vs antagonist) must remain recognizable.

Amplification (54 data / 7.71%)

Amplification is another commonly used technique.

Reason:

- Subtitling often requires adding short clarifications to make implied meanings explicit in the target language.
- This technique is especially helpful when the English dialogue contains implicit emotional messages that may not be obvious in Indonesian.
- It improves audience comprehension without changing the original meaning, important in emotional or dramatic scenes.

Table 3

The Frequency of Translation Techniques

No.	Translation Technique	Frequency	Presentage
1	Established Equivalent	393	56.14%
2	Variation	121	17.29%
3	Amplification	54	7.71%
4	Paraphrase	45	6.43%
5	Reduction	29	4.14%
6	Modulation	22	3.14%
7	Pure Borrowing	21	3.00%
8	Transposition	3	0.43%
9	Literal Translation	1	0.14%
Total		700	100%

1. Paraphrase

BSu: "You humans will never understand what it is to lose everything."

BSa: "*Kalian manusia takkan pernah mengerti rasanya kehilangan segalanya.*"

→ Reformulation of structure without changing the meaning.

2. Amplification

BSu: "I genuinely feel bad about it."

BSa: "*Saya sangat menyesal tentang semua itu.*"

→ The addition of "*Semua*" to clarify the referent.

3. Variation

BSu: "You saved me."

BSa: "*Kamu menyelamatkanku.*"

→ Register adjustment (you → *kamu*).

4. Borrowing

BSu: "Papa, please! Papa, don't go! Come back!"

BSa: "*Papa, jangan pergi!*"

→ The term "*Papa*" is retained.

5. Modulation

BSu: "You have my deepest condolences."

BSa: "*Saya sangat menyesal atas kehilanganmu.*"

→ Shift in point of view (you have → *Saya menyesal*).

6. Reduction

BSu: "People never really took notice of me."

BSa: "*Orang-orang tidak ada yang memperhatikanku.*"

→ Omission of the intensifying element (*really*).

7. Compensation

BSu: "Finally, you show your true colours."

BSa: "*Kau akhirnya menunjukkan jatidirimu yang sesungguhnya.*"

→ Transferring the idiomatic effect to another structure.

The results show that translators preferred techniques that maintain meaning accuracy, fluency, and naturalness for Indonesian viewers. Established equivalent ensures straightforward comprehension, variation handles stylistic and cultural alignment, and amplification helps clarify implied emotional content.

4.4 Translation Quality Assessment

The three raters assessed the expressive utterances based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability using a 1–3 scale. The results show an average score of 2.84 for accuracy, indicating that most translations were accurate, though some experienced a slight loss of pragmatic force. Acceptability received an average score of 2.76, suggesting that the translations were generally natural and culturally appropriate. Meanwhile, readability scored the highest at 2.89, reflecting that the translated utterances were highly readable and easy

to understand. Translation quality was evaluated by three raters using a 1–3 Likert-type scale, following Nababan et al. (2012):

3 = Good

2 = Moderate

1 = Poor

Table 4

Mean Quality Scores

Aspect	Mean Score
Accuracy	2.84
Acceptability	2.76
Readability	2.89

Example:

1) Accuracy

BSu: I apologize for my man's interference in your day.

BSa: *Maafkan anak buahku yang mengganggu harimu.*

The analysis shows that the choice of translation techniques significantly influences how effectively expressive speech acts convey emotional meaning in the target language. Techniques such as literal translation and established equivalent tend to preserve the original meaning accurately, ensuring that the speaker's intention, emotional tone, and illocutionary force remain intact. However, more flexible techniques such as modulation, adaptation, and amplification are often used when cultural or linguistic differences require adjustments to avoid pragmatic loss. These techniques may slightly shift the form of the expression but help ensure that the translated utterance remains natural and socially acceptable for the target audience. In some cases, techniques that prioritize semantic accuracy might weaken emotional intensity, while techniques that prioritize pragmatics may sacrifice formal correspondence for communicative effectiveness. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that translators must balance linguistic fidelity and contextual appropriateness to preserve the speaker's intended psychological and emotional impact in the translation.

2) Acceptability

BSu (Source): "I'm sorry for what happened"

BSa (Target): "*maafkan aku atas apa yang telah terjadi*"

The translation "*maafkan aku atas apa yang telah terjadi*" is categorized as highly acceptable in Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) because it fully meets the criteria of naturalness, readability, and pragmatic equivalence in the target language. The sentence flows smoothly and is commonly used by native Indonesian speakers, making it sound natural and idiomatic rather than literal or forced. Moreover, the emotional and pragmatic intent of the source utterance—expressing sincere apology and regret—is accurately preserved, meaning the illocutionary force of the expressive speech act remains intact. Culturally, the translation fits standard Indonesian norms for apologies, reflecting politeness and humility without adding or omitting meaning. Since the translation maintains complete

semantic content, remains faithful to the tone of the original, and presents no grammatical or stylistic issues, it fulfils the indicators of a highly acceptable translation in TQA.

3) Readability

BSu: "I'm sorry for not trusting you"

BSa: "*maaf karena aku tak percaya padamu*"

The translation "*maaf karena aku tak percaya padamu*" receives a high score in readability based on Nababan's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) because it is clear, natural, and easy for Indonesian readers to understand without requiring any additional interpretation effort. First, the sentence follows a common and natural grammatical structure in Indonesian, using everyday vocabulary that is familiar and uncomplicated for target readers. There are no ambiguous or unnatural elements, and the expression maintains the emotional nuance of the original utterance smoothly. The phrase "*tak percaya padamu*" is a direct and natural equivalent of "not trusting you," commonly used in spoken and written Indonesian, which enhances its fluency and readability. Additionally, the translation preserves the tone of personal regret without introducing awkwardness or overly formal wording, making it feel authentic and emotionally appropriate. Because readers can immediately understand the message as intended, with no distortion, awkward phrasing, or unnatural construction, the translation meets Nababan's criteria for a readability score of 3 (high) in TQA.

The results of the translation quality evaluation indicate that the subtitles of *The Witcher* series obtain a high mean score across the parameters of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accordingly, the translation is classified as high quality, achieving an overall rating of 3 on the assessment scale.

4.2 Discussion

The results highlight three main points. First, expressive speech acts reflect character roles: protagonists employ empathetic expressive while antagonists rely on confrontational ones. Second, translation techniques such as variation and established equivalence dominate due to subtitling constraints. Third, translation quality shows a tendency to privilege naturalness and comprehension, occasionally at the expense of preserving illocutionary force.

The findings also reveal novelty compared with earlier studies. This study assessed quality but did not distinguish characters, and shows how protagonist–antagonist contrasts affect expressive act translation.

4.2.1 Dominance of Conventional Equivalence and Variation

The results show that 56.14% of translation techniques were established equivalence, indicating that the subtitler prioritized:

- natural target language expressions,
- readability,
- cultural appropriateness.

This aligns with Newmark's (1988) principle that effective subtitles should "sound natural for the target viewer."

Example 1 – Apology (Established Equivalence)

Source: "I'm sorry for what happened."

Target: "*Aku minta maaf atas kejadian itu.*"

The expression I'm sorry has a stable and idiomatic Indonesian equivalent, allowing the intended illocutionary force to be preserved.

4.2.2 Explicitation and Implication in Emotion-Heavy Expressions

Explicitation (7.71%) is most frequently applied in:

- apologies,
- condolences, and
- emotional acknowledgements,

because Indonesian pragmatics tend to be explicit in expressing polite sentiments.

Example 2 – Condolence (Explicitation)

Source: "You have my condolences."

Target: "*Saya sangat menyesal atas kehilanganmu.*"

Here, *sangat* and *kehilanganmu* introduce explicit emotional detail consistent with Indonesian norms of politeness. Implication, conversely, is used when visual context already conveys emotional intensity, reducing redundancy in subtitle space.

4.2.3 Modulation, Paraphrase, and Compensation for Pragmatic Adjustment

These techniques often appeared in subtitles involving:

- protests,
- praise,
- boasting, and
- emotionally charged criticism,

where structural or pragmatic equivalence required adaptation.

Example 3 – Protest (Modulation)

Source: "I can't forgive them."

Target: "*Aku belum bisa memaafkan mereka.*"

The shift from absolute (can't) to temporal (*belum bisa*) reflected Indonesian cultural preference for softened directness, demonstrating modulation.

Example 4 – Praise (Paraphrase)

Source: "You have the most incredible heart and the most annoying personality."

Target: "*Hatimu luar biasa, tapi kepribadianmu menjengkelkan.*"

- Structure was reorganized,
- the contrast marker *tapi* clarified meaning, and
- the emotional force remained intact.

Example 5 – Boasting (Compensation)

Source: “I’m the only one who can defeat me.”

Target: “*Hanya aku yang bisa mengalahkan diriku sendiri.*”

The emphatic stance was preserved through the addition of *hanya*, compensating for the structural shift in translation. This aligned with Munday (2016), who notes that compensation transfers rhetorical effect when direct equivalence is not possible.

4.3 Minor Techniques

Borrowing, transposition, literal translation, and reduction were applied only when:

- cultural equivalents did not exist,
- grammatical transfer required minimal restructuring, and
- subtitle space limitations demanded concision.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the translation of expressive speech acts by the protagonist (Geralt of Rivia) and antagonist (Cahir Mawr Dyffryn) in *The Witcher* series. The findings show that expressive acts play a crucial role in shaping character identities and narrative dynamics. Geralt’s utterances were dominated by empathetic expressions such as apologizing, condoling, and forgiving, while Cahir’s were marked by confrontational acts such as protesting and boasting.

The findings indicate that the translation of expressive speech acts in *The Witcher* subtitles is closely shaped by both character roles and the selection of translation techniques. Evidence suggests that the expressive utterances produced by the protagonist and antagonist differ in frequency, emotional function, and pragmatic orientation, and these nuances must be carefully maintained to preserve character portrayal and narrative intent. The integration of speech act analysis, translation technique mapping, shift identification, and quality evaluation offers a comprehensive methodological contribution that has not been fully addressed in previous studies.

The analysis reveals that established equivalent and variation are the most frequently applied techniques, reflecting the translator’s preference for naturalness and readability while still retaining pragmatic force. Overall translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability is strong, indicating that the chosen strategies generally succeed in conveying expressive meaning effectively.

This research contributes a novel perspective by examining expressive speech acts not only at the linguistic level but also in relation to character function within the narrative. Based on the results, translators are encouraged to prioritize techniques that safeguard pragmatic intent, especially when dealing with emotional or character-defining language. Future studies may extend this approach to other audiovisual genres, larger datasets, or cross-cultural comparisons to determine whether similar translation tendencies and pragmatic patterns are consistently observed across different narrative and linguistic contexts. Importantly, the findings reinforce the relevance of these insights for strengthening audiovisual translation practices in Indonesian contexts, where audience expectations and cultural interpretation play a significant role.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the expert translation raters who participated in the evaluation process and contributed valuable insights to the translation quality assessment. Appreciation is also extended to the institutional and academic support that enabled access to the audiovisual data used in this study. Their contributions have helped strengthen the rigor and reliability of the research findings.

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