



A comparison of Disney+ subtitles and ChatGPT-generated Indonesian translations of swear and taboo expressions

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ABSTRACT

Although generative artificial intelligence translation (GenAIT) has increasingly become popular in the field of translation, earlier studies have not yet specifically explored GenAI's translation performance in rendering taboo language. To address this gap, this study evaluated the translation strategies of ChatGPT-generated translations with professional human translation-produced subtitles obtained from Disney+ in rendering English swear words and taboo expressions into Indonesian. Drawing upon a comparative qualitative research design, this study examined two movies based on four main categories: Taboo to Taboo, Euphemism, Taboo to Non-Taboo, and Deletion. The findings revealed that Disney+ displayed greater cultural sensitivity to cultural norms, while ChatGPT favored retaining the offensive tone of taboo expressions through direct and literal translations. The most commonly used strategy by Disney+ was Deletion, whereas ChatGPT most frequently employed Taboo to Taboo. These results highlight the limitations of GenAIT in handling highly culturally bound expressions. Finally, the iterative prompting analysis had limited influence on ChatGPT's translation strategies in handling of taboo expressions. This suggested that prompt refinement alone remained largely insufficient, underscoring the crucial role of human interventions in translation workflows. This study, therefore, proposed a human-in-the-loop workflow. Following the findings, pedagogical implications are also proposed for translation education.

KEYWORDS

AI-assisted translation, ChatGPT, Disney+, swear and taboo words, video streaming platform

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INTRODUCTION

GenAI has increasingly permeated various fields, notably healthcare, entertainment, education, and translation. It has significantly impacted the translation field, ushering it into a new realm of research and development (Ssemugabi, 2025). It has been integrated into machine translation (MT), considerably boosting MT's performance compared to its predecessors (Fu & Liu, 2024). With GenAIT, translation products can be translated and further modified automatically by inputting prompts into an AI system (Fu & Liu, 2024). GenAIT system, like ChatGPT, becomes so advanced that it is capable of producing translations better than a popular MT platform like Google Translate (AlAfnan, 2024). Specifically, AlAfnan (2024) compared translation performance between ChatGPT and Google Translate in translating political speeches from Arabic to English and English to

Arabic. It was revealed that ChatGPT's translation performance exhibit better translation outputs by producing more natural, contextually appropriate, and higher accuracy with fewer errors. ChatGPT's translation performance has been increasingly evaluated in various fields (e.g., Fu & Liu, 2024; Garcia Valencia et al., 2025; Koh, 2023).

Despite the rapid advancement in MT, human translation (HT) still holds a prominent role in the translation field. HT is considered more capable of translating texts that are linguistically and culturally sensitive, producing a more appropriate translation for the target audience (Al Rousan et al., 2025; Calvo-Ferrer, 2023). HT, on the other hand, lacks speed and consistency, resulting in less efficiency in translating large amounts of text (Koh, 2023). Although there has been a societal concern about sustainability of translation industry due to the growing incorporation of GenAIT (Moreau, 2025), existing research shows that AI-generated translation outputs still lack in cultural accuracy and pragmatic nuances (Abdelaal, 2025; Calvo-Ferrer, 2023; Ssemugabi, 2025).

Given the vast quantity of audiovisual content available and accessible across media and entertainment platforms, audiovisual translation (AVT) has become increasingly important in our contemporary life (Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023). AVT has become a discipline concerned with the translation of both verbal and non-verbal elements in audiovisual content (Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023). Two modes in AVT include dubbing and subtitling. As the most popular form of AVT, subtitling entails rendering spoken language into written language displayed on a screen, making audiovisual content comprehensible to audiences across different cultures and languages (Al Sawi & Allam, 2024). Subtitled audiovisual contents are frequently broadcast on television and streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Disney+, YouTube, Prime Video, and many more (Al Sawi & Allam, 2024).

As a result of the internet, audiovisual streaming platforms like Netflix and Disney+ have made audiovisual content more accessible than ever. This also makes AVT more significant in today's media. Streaming services have increasingly caught scholarly attention in recent years (see, for example, Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023; Al Sawi & Allam, 2024; Dumrongchart et al., 2025). Translations produced by major streaming services like Netflix and Disney+ are considered high-quality translations because their subtitles involve skilled and professional translators (Al Sawi & Allam, 2024), making them a compelling area of study for translation research.

In AVT, translators have long dealt with complex challenges in translating audiovisual content across different languages and cultures (Sholihah & Prihantoro, 2024), particularly involving highly culture-specific references, language-specific features, and overlapping areas between culture and language (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014). Oftentimes, translators must deal with culturally embedded concepts that may not have direct equivalents in the target culture. Among the most complex aspects of AVT is the translation of swear words and taboo expressions, which are deeply rooted in cultural norms and have emotional and social meanings (Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022). Swear words are expressions generally regarded as inappropriate, offensive, and frowned upon in society, involving terms rooted in blasphemy, homophobia, racism, and sexism (McEnery, 2004). Wardhaugh (2006) explain-

ed that taboo words refer to prohibited terms since they have strong and negative meanings in many societies.

Another challenge in translating swear words is that translators must carefully take into account the cultural norms, values, and sensitivities of the target audience. As suggested by the Skopos theory, the goals of translations must be adhered to the intended functions and target audience (Reiß & Vermeer, 1984). Given that Indonesia is broadly characterized as a culturally and religiously conservative society, translating taboo expressions into Indonesian language in audiovisual media may present another challenge to translators. Rohmawati (2021) argued that subtitle translators, in Indonesian contexts, should treat taboo expressions carefully and avoid explicit profanity.

Translators must have strategies when dealing with swear words in AVT to meet the cultural expectations of the target audience. Translators commonly employ at least four strategies in rendering swear words and taboo expressions into a target language: Taboo to Taboo, Deletion, Taboo to Non-taboo, and Euphemism (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014). Studies in the literature showed that translators tended to opt for strategies like Deletion and Euphemism in AVT when rendering swear words and taboo expressions, particularly in conservative societies like Arab and Indonesia (Abdelaal & Al Sarhani, 2021; Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023; Al-Jabri et al., 2021; Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022; Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014; Rohmawati, 2021).

As GenAI becomes increasingly more influential and integrated into the translation field, researchers have now begun to explore the capabilities of GenAIT. Most studies used a comparative design to contrast the translation products between GenAIT and HT (Abdelaal, 2025; Al Rousan et al., 2025; Al Sawi & Allam, 2024; Calvo-Ferrer, 2023; Fu & Liu, 2024; Koh, 2023; Sahari et al., 2024). HT is still considered the benchmark to evaluate MT's performance (Calvo-Ferrer, 2023). It is thus that MT is often compared with HT in studies.

The results of the comparative studies between GenAIT and HT revealed diverse outcomes. For example, Al Rousan et al. (2025) compared the GenAIT tool, i.e., ChatGPT, with HT in translating Arabic literature. The finding showed that ChatGPT is not dependable for translating Arabic literary texts, which require high accuracy and cultural sensitivity. Similarly, Calvo-Ferrer (2023) compared ChatGPT's translation performance with HT. The result indicated that while the translation generated by ChatGPT is comparable to HT. Nevertheless, ChatGPT still lagged behind HT in terms of quality, struggling to render nuanced elements such as humor, irony, and culturally embedded references. Moreover, a study by Abdelaal (2025) compared the translation quality produced by ChatGPT in subtitling movies from English to Arabic with human translators. They reported that ChatGPT displayed a comparable translation quality in terms of the quantitative and qualitative assessments. Yet, human translators still produced slightly better translations, particularly in culturally bound expressions.

Likewise, other studies (i.e., Al Sawi & Allam, 2024; Sahari et al., 2024) acknowledged the limitations of ChatGPT in accurately rendering culturally nuanced texts. Al Sawi and Allam (2024) evaluated ChatGPT's translation performance in generating Arabic subtitles

that contain culturally embedded references (i.e., allusions) compared to professional human translators. The finding suggested that ChatGPT fell short when required to translate culturally rich content. In contrast, human translators excelled at cultural sensitivity, consistency, and strategic adaptation. Sahari et al. (2024) examined ChatGPT's translation performances in figurative language between Arabic and English by contrasting its translations with HT. The findings revealed that ChatGPT succeeded in producing comprehensible translations. However, it struggled to translate cultural and figurative content. In comparison, human translators displayed better accuracy and naturalness in rendering metaphorical language.

In addition to the earlier studies, a study by Fu and Liu (2024) evaluated the performance of GenAIT and HT in rendering scientific texts. The finding indicated that ChatGPT and HT display complementary functions in rendering academic texts. It suggests that translators may consider leveraging GenAI systems like ChatGPT to complement the limitations of HT. Similarly, Koh (2023) evaluated the translation performance of ChatGPT and HT in translating a Korean movie into English. The result showed that ChatGPT demonstrated excellent performance and was comparable to HT. However, this result may also be affected by the target language of the translation, i.e., English. The system may have performed better when requested to translate into English as the AI system are primarily trained on English-language data. Despite this, both studies proposed the collaborative potential of human translators and GenAIT, which could produce better translation products in terms of quality and efficiency (AlAfnan, 2024; Sahari et al., 2024).

Although the literature has acknowledged the strengths and limitations of both GenAIT and HT, there appears to be limited attention dedicated to how these two methods compare in subtitling swear words and taboo expressions. Prior comparative studies have primarily focused on exploring GenAI translation performance across different genres and aspects, such as academic text translation (Fu & Liu, 2024), literary texts (Al Rousan et al., 2025), legal translation (Badah et al., 2026), figurative language (Sahari et al., 2024), allusions in movie subtitles (Al Sawi & Allam, 2024), and general accuracy and fluency of GenAI in subtitling (Abdelaal, 2025; Koh, 2023). Few studies, if any have closely investigated how GenAI translates culturally sensitive expressions that requires careful cultural adaptation in subtitle translation. Given the context of Indonesia, this gap is pertinent since translators must balance linguistic accuracy, cultural appropriateness, as well as target audience expectations.

Motivated by this gap in the literature, this present study aims to identify and compare translation strategies of taboo language between Disney+ and ChatGPT in English movie subtitles. By addressing this gap, this study contributes to the translation research by providing insights into the strengths and limitations of both GenAIT and HT in rendering taboo expressions. Ultimately, this study aims to advance our understanding on how GenAI can be best incorporated in translation workflows and propose implications to the field of translation and translation education based on its findings. To achieve these objectives, two primary research questions were formulated:

1. How do Disney+ and ChatGPT translate swear words and taboo expressions in English-to-Indonesian subtitles?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the translation strategies employed by Disney+ and ChatGPT for swear words and taboo expressions?

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a comparative design to compare translation strategies used by Disney+ and ChatGPT in translating swear words. It used a descriptive qualitative method to systematically examine, interpret, and describe the patterns found in the collected qualitative data through textual analysis. As pointed out by Nassaji (2015), descriptive qualitative research aims to describe a phenomenon and its patterns. It deals with what rather than why and how a phenomenon occurred. While the data are collected qualitatively, the analysis often integrates quantitative elements such as averages, frequencies, and percentages to reveal patterns or characteristics of the observed phenomenon (Nassaji, 2015). In this study, quantitative elements were limited to descriptive frequency of the identified categories to illustrate patterns found in the translation strategies employed by Disney+ and ChatGPT.

To determine the corpus for this study, a criterion sampling was applied. The researcher established predetermined criteria to ensure the data collected in this study aligned with the research objectives. A set of predetermined criteria is essential to best serve the research aims (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014). The process of selecting the movies adhered to the following criteria: (1) the movies must contain a high frequency of swear words in the English language (2) the movies are available and accessible on Disney+ Hotstar, a movie streaming platform from Disney, (3) the movies must have Indonesian subtitles, (4) the movies are released within the past five years.

Based on the predetermined criteria, the researcher selected two American movies for inclusion in the data collection. The two movies are *The Menu* (Mylod, 2022), released in 2022, and *Deadpool & Wolverine* (Levy, 2024), released in 2024. These movies are American movies and contain a lot of profanity. They were available and accessible on the Disney+ Hotstar streaming platform in March 2025. The genre of *The Menu* movie is comedy horror. This movie has three main characters, namely Chef Julian Slowik portrayed by Ralph Fiennes, Margot portrayed by Anya Taylor-Joy, and Tyler Ledford starred by Nicolas Hoult. The movie begins with a young couple and a group of wealthy people visiting a private island for a fancy dinner. The famous chef, Chef Julian Slowik, begins serving strange and scary meals that put everyone's lives in danger. As the meals continue to serve, the guest realize they are participating in a meticulously planned game. An unexpected guest, Margot, must find a way to outsmart the chef before the final meal is served. Meanwhile, *Deadpool & Wolverine* is a superhero action and comedy film. The four main characters of this film are Deadpool starred by Ryan Reynolds, Wolverine starred by Hugh Jackman, Cassandra Nova played by Emma Corrin, and Mr. Paradox played by Matthew Macfadyen. The movie is about Deadpool who discovers that his universe is in danger from destruction. He then needs

a hero's help to save it. He travels across different universes to find a grumpy Wolverine to team up with him against Mr. Paradox and Cassandra Nova from destroying their universe. Both movies target for adult audience aged 18 above, with an R-rating, indicating the presence of strong language, frequent use of profanity, and intense violence in both movies.

Regarding the research procedure, the following steps were undertaken in this study to collect and analyze the data. After selecting the movies for data collection, the researcher began watching the movies through the Disney+ Hotstar platform. The researcher recorded and extracted swear words found in the movies, as well as the translations of utterances that contained swear words. To identify taboo expressions in the movies, the researcher employed the classifications of taboo expressions based on Wardhaugh (2006), who classified taboo expressions into sex, death, excretion, bodily functions, religious matters, and politics. The researcher tabulated all the swear words and their Indonesian translation obtained from Disney's subtitles into Microsoft Excel, in two different columns named English subtitles and Indonesian Disney subtitles.

Thereafter, the researcher began prompting ChatGPT to generate Indonesian translations that contained profanity from both movies. The machine translations were produced in March 2025 using ChatGPT version GPT-4o. To ensure ChatGPT understands the instruction, the following prompt was used to provide the context and minimize bias. The prompt used was "This is an English subtitle obtained from a movie. I want you to generate the Indonesian translation. Do not add explanations, just provide the translation". Once ChatGPT generated all the translations, they were then extracted and input into Microsoft Excel in a special column dedicated to ChatGPT-generated translations.

Furthermore, the researcher began analyzing the translation strategies employed by Disney and ChatGPT in translating swear words. In analyzing the types of strategies, the researcher used a content analysis technique guided by a set of predetermined categories from Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2014). The categories consist of four strategies, including Taboo to Taboo, Deletion, Taboo to Non-taboo, and Euphemism. This categorization was chosen because it aligned directly with this study's main objective, that is, to examine and compare how taboo expressions were handled in translations by both GenAI and human. Besides that, the four categories are considered comprehensive enough to be an analytical framework of this study in identifying translation strategies of taboo expressions.

Taboo to Taboo refers to a translation strategy that aims to preserve the offensiveness or vulgarity of the source expression in the target language. Deletion is a strategy that removes taboo words altogether. Euphemism refers to the substitution of a taboo expression with a milder or indirect expressions that still carry negative evaluation. Taboo to Non-Taboo, meanwhile, refers to the neutralization of taboo element into non-offensive expressions in which the negative evaluative meaning does not exist anymore.

To illustrate the analytical procedure, consider the following example from the dataset. The source text contains the insult "Oh, my God! Motherfucker!". In the Indonesian translation, this expression was rendered as "*Astaga! Kurang ajar!*" (Oh my God! So ill-mannered!). Although the explicit taboo term in the source text, motherfucker, was replaced with *kurang ajar*, the negative evaluation towards the interlocutor is still maintained.

However, the taboo word was changed with a milder or less offensive term. Therefore, this translation fell under the category of Euphemism.

Meanwhile, translations were classified as Taboo to Non-Taboo when the offensive or evaluative meaning of the taboo expression was neutralized and replaced with non-offensive expressions. For instance, the source text “fuck off!”, which was translated into “*tidak mungkin!*” (not possible!), was categorized as Taboo to Non-Taboo. It was because the taboo element was replaced with a neutral expression that removes the insulting evaluation towards the interlocutor.

The data analysis process began by assigning each subtitle from Disney+ and each translation from ChatGPT into the four categories. Each strategy identified in both translations was recorded in two different columns, named Disney Strategy and ChatGPT Strategy, and counted to find out its frequencies, sums, and percentages. Then, the translation strategies employed by Disney+ and ChatGPT were compared, interpreted, and presented in the form of tables in the results section of this study.

The researcher also conducted an additional exploratory analysis. It was intended to examine if prompt refinement could influence translation outputs generated by ChatGPT. This was also motivated by earlier studies. The literature suggested that prompt engineering could improve GenAIT’s translation outputs. Twelve utterances containing swear words were purposively selected from the dataset, with three cases representing each translation category. These twelve cases were, in turn, re-translated using the revised prompt. The revised prompt was “This is an English movie subtitle containing emotionally charged and potentially taboo language. Translate into natural Indonesian subtitle style. Preserve pragmatic force and character tone while respecting appropriateness and subtitle brevity.” This iterative prompt aimed to provide a contextual awareness. It also tried to provide explicit instructions to maintain cultural appropriateness to Indonesian context as well as to introduce functional translation criteria and subtitle limitations.

Lastly, this study adopted a product-oriented descriptive translation study (Toury, 1995), which focuses on the analysis of existing translations. It refers to the analysis of translations as products. In this study, the translation products are the Indonesian subtitles provided by Disney+ and the Indonesian translations generated through ChatGPT. This study focused on the comparison of translation strategies based on translation products produced by Disney+ and ChatGPT.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The section presents the results of the two research questions and discusses them in light of existing literature. The findings of each research question are presented and discussed in turn, followed by the iterative prompting analysis. A sum of 301 instances of swear words and taboo expressions obtained from two popular American English movies. Table 1 displays the frequency and percentage of these occurrences for each of the two movies.

Table 1. Distribution of Swear Words and Taboo Expressions Identified in Each Movie

No.	Movie Title	Frequency	Percentage
1.	The Menu (2022)	109	36.21%
2.	Deadpool & Wolverine (2024)	192	63.79%
Total		301	100%

As shown in Table 1, there are 301 occurrences of swear and taboo utterances recorded in the two movies. *The Menu* movie has 109 instances of swear words and taboo expressions, making up 32.21 percent of the total occurrences. Meanwhile, the *Deadpool & Wolverine* movie contains 192 examples of swear and taboo utterances, comprising 63.79 percent of the total sample. The highest number of swear word occurrences in the dataset originated from the *Deadpool & Wolverine* movie.

The higher frequency of swear words in the two movies suggested a common feature in contemporary movie dialogue, particularly in films aimed at adult audiences. This finding aligned with earlier studies (e.g., Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023; Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022; Rohmawati, 2021; Wu, 2021), which also identified higher occurrences of swear words in many Western contemporary movies. Nurliana et al. (2021) found swearing words to be a growing trend in today's movies, which may be related to freedom of expression in Western culture (Nurliana et al., 2021). In movies, characters use taboo language to express emotion, frustration, anger, surprise, pleasure, and disbelief (Abdelaal & Al Sarhani, 2021). Thus, movies may contain more swear words as a way for characters to express their feelings and depict the natural realities.

Another possible reason for the growing inclusion of profanities in movies is the rise of video streaming platforms. Netflix, for example, have little to no censorship policy, suggesting minimal alternations given to its videos, including translations (Al-Jabri et al., 2021; Tair et al., 2024). Consequently, video streaming platforms are often criticized for not aligning with local values (Ibharim, 2024). In addition, Moreau (2025) explained that video streaming platforms like Netflix often conflicted with national subtitling practices as it attempts to create a homogenization system, thus overlooking local subtitling expectations.

From the translators' standpoint, rendering a higher number of swear words and taboo expressions in audiovisual materials may present some challenges (Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022; Haider et al., 2023). Translators need to take into account the target culture and censorship regulations. Simultaneously, translators must maintain the meanings and keep the emotions of the characters (Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022). Otherwise, the audience may misinterpret the meanings and affect the true portrayal of the characters. It is therefore that rendering such culturally bound expressions needs special translation strategies in AVT (Haider et al., 2023).

Translation strategies Employed by Disney+ and ChatGPT

The analysis of research question one focused on examining translation strategies employed by Disney+ and ChatGPT in rendering swear words and taboo expressions in the two movies. The following table outlines the frequency and percentage of Disney+ translation strategies in translating swear words across the two movies.

Table 2. Distribution of Translation Strategies Used by Disney+ in the Two Movies

No.	Disney+ Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Taboo to Taboo	1	0.33%
2.	Taboo to Non-Taboo	64	21.26%
3.	Euphemism	65	21.59%
4.	Deletion	171	56.81%
Total		301	100%

As highlighted in Table 2, there are four translation strategies used by Disney+ in translating swear words and taboo expressions. The most frequently used strategy is Deletion, with 171 instances (56.81%). The second most common is the Taboo to Non-Taboo strategy, with 64 instances (21.26%). Euphemism is the third most used translation strategy with 65 instances (21.59%). Finally, Taboo to Taboo is the least used strategy by Disney+, accounting for only one instance (0.33%).

An example of the strategy of Deletion identified in Disney+ subtitles is “the worst part is I’m still fucking hungry,” which was translated into “*bagian terburuknya adalah aku masih lapar*”, with the literal gloss (the worst part is I still hungry). Disney+ deletes the swear word, possibly to maintain cultural appropriateness. An instance of the Taboo to Non-Taboo strategy in Disney+ subtitles is “put your greasy tits away,” which was translated into “*tutup badanmu yang berkeringat*”, with the literal gloss (cover your body that sweaty). Disney+ neutralizes the vulgar word with a more neutral term, “*badan*,” which means “body” in English, to align with cultural norms.

In addition, an example of the Euphemism strategy employed by Disney+ is “no, was a monster and a whore” which was rendered into “*tidak, dahulu monster dan egois*”, with the literal English translation (no, in the past a monster and selfish). Disney+ softens the swear word with a less offensive equivalent, “*egois*,” which means selfish. The taboo expression in the source text was replaced with a milder evaluative expression that still conveyed negative judgment of the interlocutor. Lastly, one example of the Taboo-to-Taboo strategy used in Disney+ subtitles is “Oh, you dirty bitch” which was rendered as “*dasar jalang*”, with literal English (such a whore). Disney+ maintained the vulgarity of the term “bitch” with “*jalang*”, which is also considered an offensive term to refer to a prostitute in the Indonesian context. Disney+ translator’s decision to keep the offensive term could be linked to their attempt to preserve the character’s personality and relationship with the interlocutor.

The scrutiny of Disney+ translation strategies in their subtitles indicated a tendency to tone down the swear words through strategies like Deletion, Euphemism, and Taboo to Non-Taboo. Disney+ tended to avoid directly translating taboo words. As indicated by the result, the Taboo-to-Taboo strategy was only employed once. This finding may be attributable to the broader sociocultural norms in Indonesia, which is generally characterized as religious societies. This, in turn, influenced on the translation strategies of taboo expressions in Indonesian audiovisual content. Another possible explanation of this finding

is because of the local censorship policy imposed to Disney+ translators, suggesting Disney's attempt to respect the local norms. Netflix, despite its inconsistent localization practices, has also attempted to conform with local norms (Moreau, 2025). However, these softening techniques may alter the representations of the characters and authenticity of the dialogues (Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023).

Compared to earlier studies, this finding is in line with Abu-Rayyash et al. (2023), which found that Netflix, one of the prominent movie streaming platforms, shows a similar approach to translating swear words through strategies like Omission, Euphemism, and Swear Words to Non-Swear Words. Interestingly, this contrasts with an earlier study by Haider et al. (2023), who examined swear words translation strategies in a Jordanian Arabic series into English. They reported that Netflix commonly toned up taboo expressions by intensifying mild expressions into stronger taboo language. Netflix's tendency to tone up swear words in a Jordanian Arabic series might be linked to the target audiences of the series, that is, Western viewers. Thus, Netflix attempted to conform to cultural adaptation, audience expectations, and Western viewing norms (Haider et al., 2023).

It is concluded that professional translators working for mainstream streaming platforms tend to be more flexible in translation strategies of swear words by aligning translations with target audience expectations, cultural norms, and platform policies. Their decisions are in line with the Skopos theory, where translation strategies must follow the intended functions, target audience, and context (Reiß & Vermeer, 1984). Next, the following table presents the distribution of translation strategies employed by ChatGPT in rendering the Indonesian translations.

Table 3. Distribution of Translation Strategies Used by ChatGPT in the Two Movies

No.	ChatGPT Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Taboo to Taboo	163	54.15%
2.	Taboo to Non-Taboo	34	11.30%
3.	Euphemism	60	19.93%
4.	Deletion	44	14.62%
Total		301	100%

As indicated by Table 3, the four categories of translation strategies were identified in ChatGPT's generated Indonesian translations. ChatGPT used Taboo to Taboo strategy the most in translating swear words, with 162 instances (53.82%), followed by Euphemism as the second most used strategy, making up 59 instances (19.60%). Deletion and Taboo to Non-Taboo strategies account for 44 instances (14.62%) and 36 instances (11.96%), respectively.

An example of the Taboo-to-Taboo strategy employed by ChatGPT is "give me the fucking dog," which was translated into "*kasih aku anjingnya, sialan*", with the literal English (give me the dog, damn). It is obvious that ChatGPT tried to retain the original offensiveness

of the utterance. Next, an example of the Euphemism strategy used by ChatGPT is “and to the artist whose work turns to shit inside your gut,” which was translated into *"dan untuk seniman yang karyanya berubah jadi sampah di perutmu"*, with the literal English (and for the artist whose work becomes trash in your stomach). ChatGPT replaces the swear word “shit” with a softer and more socially acceptable equivalent, *"sampah,"* which means trash or waste in English. Despite that, the negative evaluation of the source taboo word (i.e., shit) remained in the translation through the word “trash”. It is, therefore, classified as a euphemism strategy.

Furthermore, an instance of the Deletion strategy employed by ChatGPT is “like you fucking promised!” which was rendered into *"seperti yang sudah kau janjikan!"*, with the literal English (like that already you promised). ChatGPT entirely removed the swear word as seen in the translation. Finally, an example of the Taboo to Non-Taboo strategy identified in ChatGPT-generated translation is “she's gonna fuck you in the face now,” which was translated into *"dia bakal menghajar mukamu sekarang"*, with the literal gloss (she will beat your face now). ChatGPT replaces the term “fuck” with a neutral alternative, *"menghajar,"* which means “to beat” in English.

The analysis of ChatGPT-generated translations revealed a consistent tendency to employ the Taboo-to-Taboo strategy, often retaining the intensity and offensive force of the original expressions. ChatGPT tended to use a literal translation by directly translating taboo words into equally strong terms in Indonesian. This finding corroborates the previous studies (see, for example, Al Rousan et al., 2025; Al Sawi & Allam, 2024; Calvo-Ferrer, 2023; Sahari et al., 2024). These studies reported that GenAIT, like ChatGPT, may lack the nuanced sensitivity and cultural judgment, thus affecting its translation outputs when it is required to translate culturally complex texts.

A concrete example that could illustrate this problem is the case of Netflix in 2021. Netflix faced strong criticism because it failed to produce accurate Spanish subtitles for its Korean original Squid Game, likely due to the use of MT (Moreau, 2025). In addition, Al Sawi and Allam (2024) examined ChatGPT’s performance in translating culturally nuanced subtitles into Arabic. They found that ChatGPT lacks accuracy in accurately translating culturally rich content. ChatGPT largely resorted to a literal translation strategy despite dealing with culturally sensitive texts.

Similarly, Alsharif et al. (2025) revealed that ChatGPT’s translation performance in handling highly cultural texts tended to be more literal and less natural. Alhakimi et al. (2026) added that AI-powered machine translation tools like ChatGPT may have substantially enhanced in the aspect of linguistic accuracy. However, they may still have difficulty understanding context and cultural nuances. Therefore, it could be concluded that GenAI systems, like ChatGPT, still have limitations in producing culturally sensitive translation outputs.

Comparative analysis of translation strategies in Disney+ and ChatGPT-generated translations

The results of the comparative analysis of translation strategies in Disney+ subtitles and ChatGPT-generated translations reveal clear and noteworthy differences between the two. To illustrate these distinctions more clearly, the figure below presents a side-by-side comparison of the translation strategies identified in each dataset.

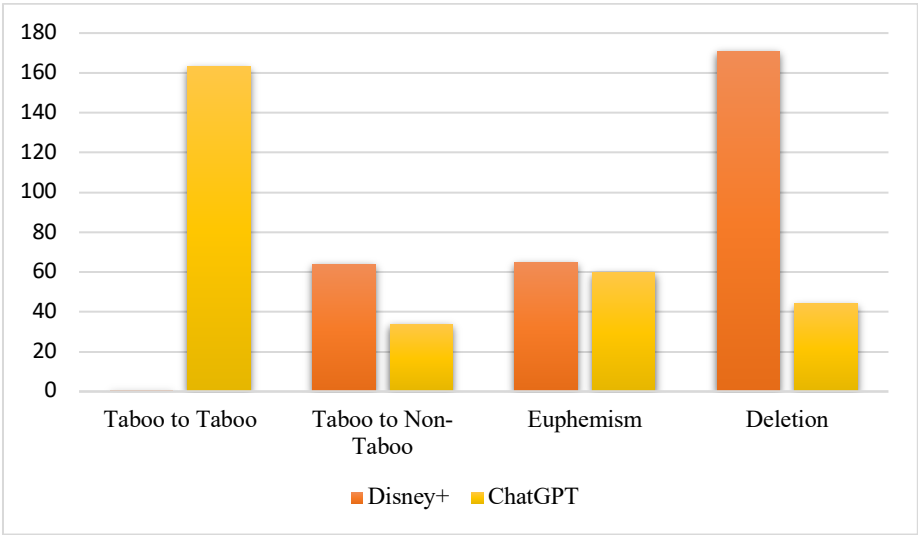


Figure 1. Comparison of Translation Strategies Used by Disney+ and ChatGPT across the Two Movies

As in Figure 1, Disney+ prefers using the Deletion strategy, accounting for over half of the strategies used by Disney+. It avoids using Taboo to Taboo strategy. On the contrary, ChatGPT tends to prefer Taboo to Taboo strategy, making up more than half of the total strategies used by ChatGPT. Despite their contrasting tendencies, both Disney+ and ChatGPT still employed Euphemism strategies, with a relatively similar frequency. However, Disney used the Taboo to Non-Taboo strategy more often than ChatGPT.

Table 4 further reinforces the earlier findings of translation strategy comparison as shown in Figure 1. The following comparative table presents a few examples of translations taken from Disney+ subtitles and ChatGPT-generated translations, highlighting how the same taboo expressions were approached differently by Disney+ and ChatGPT. This table presents the types of translation strategies employed, the source texts, the Disney+ subtitles, the ChatGPT-generated translations, their literal English translations, and the interpretation of the strategies used.

Table 4. Comparative Examples of Translation Strategies Employed by Disney+ and ChatGPT

Source Text	Disney+ Subtitles and Their Literal English	ChatGPT Translations and Their Literal English	Disney+ Strategy	ChatGPT Strategy
You shouldn't be so fucking rude.	Jangan kasar! (Don't rude!)	Kau seharusnya ngak sekasar itu, sialan. (You should not that rough, damn)	Deletion: Disney removes the swear word "fucking".	Taboo to Taboo: ChatGPT maintains the offensiveness with "damn".
You're tryin' to kill me, motherfucker?	Kau ingin membunuhku? (You want kill me?)	Kau mau bunuh aku, bajingan? (You want kill me, bastard?)	Deletion: Disney omits the swear word "motherfucker".	Taboo to Taboo: ChatGPT keeps the offensiveness with "bastard".
Retarded?	Terbelakang? (Left behind)	Tolol? (idiotic)	Euphemism: Disney softens the swear word with "left behind".	Taboo to Taboo: ChatGPT preserves the intensity with "idiotic".
Well, fuck those bitches.	Lupakan para wanita bodoh itu. (Forget those stupid women)	Yah, persetan sama jalang-jalang itu. (Yeah, fuck with those sluts)	Euphemism: Disney uses a softer equivalent.	Taboo to Taboo: ChatGPT retains the offensiveness.
I'm sick of this shit. I'm sick of hiding.	Aku muak dengan ini. Aku muak bersembunyi. (I disgust with this. I disgust hiding)	Aku muak dengan omong kosong ini. Aku muak bersembunyi. (I disgust with this nonsense. I disgust to hide.)	Deletion: Disney deletes the swear word "shit".	Taboo to Non-Taboo: ChatGPT neutralizes it with "nonsense".
Shutting the fuck up is also free.	Diam juga tidak ada ruginya. (Being silent also has no disadvantage)	Diam itu juga gratis, tahu! (being silent that also free, know!)	Deletion: Disney omits the swear word.	Euphemism: ChatGPT tones down the swear word with "know!".

As highlighted in Table 4, this comparative analysis between Disney+ and ChatGPT revealed distinct tendencies in their overall approach to translating swear words from English into Indonesian. While Disney+ persistently preferred softening strategies, namely Euphemism, Taboo to Non-Taboo, and Deletion, denoting an attempt to align with the values of the target culture, i.e., Indonesian culture, ChatGPT favored a direct and literal translation strategy, like Taboo to Taboo, keeping the emotional force of the swear words authentic from the source texts.

This aligns with Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2014). They argued that although the translation strategies of taboo language consist of four different categories, these four categories, in the general sense, can be broadly categorized into a binary classification of (1) maintaining the original force of taboo expressions and (2) softening the intensity of taboo expressions. Euphemism, Taboo to Non-Taboo, and Deletion belong to the second classification, whereas Taboo to Taboo falls into the first classification.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are in line with some prior studies (i.e., Abdelaal, 2025; Al Rousan et al., 2025; Al Sawi & Allam, 2024; Alsharif et al., 2025; Calvo-Ferrer, 2023; El-Saadany, 2024; Farghal & Haider, 2024; Sahari et al., 2024), which also reported that professional human translators are more capable of producing translations that fulfil cultural expectations of the target audience. Conversely, ChatGPT struggles to translate culturally rich texts and meet the target culture norms. El-Saadany (2024) found that ChatGPT failed to accurately translate the cultural aspects of English proverbs into Arabic. ChatGPT frequently used a literal translation strategy, thereby failing to convey the intended cultural significance. Similarly, Farghal and Haider (2024) compared professional human translators and GenAIT systems, namely Gemini and ChatGPT, in rendering Arabic poetic verses. The findings suggested that human translators still outperformed GenAIT systems in translating Arabic poetic verses. Nevertheless, GenAIT produced comparable translation outputs, which could be a strong competitor for human translators.

In other prior studies, Abdelaal (2025) compared the translation quality between human translators and ChatGPT 3.5 in subtitling movies from English to Arabic. They reported that human translators performed slightly better than ChatGPT translation. They found that human translators exhibited superior accuracy in rendering culturally bound terms, idioms, political satire, humor, and sarcasm. In another recent study, Alsharif et al. (2025) evaluated ChatGPT's translation performance in rendering Arabic metaphors. The findings revealed that human translators successfully conveyed Arabic metaphors and cultural meanings. In contrast, ChatGPT's translation outputs tended to be more literal and less natural in translating Arabic metaphors.

Despite those limitations, earlier studies argued that GenAI systems may produce better translation outputs through prompt engineering and refinement (Calvo-Ferrer, 2023; H. Jiao et al., 2024; W. Jiao et al., 2023). Koh (2023), for instance, found that ChatGPT's translation can be significantly improved by modifying prompts. In another study, it is reported that ChatGPT's translation performance improved significantly by using different prompts (H. Jiao et al., 2024). Besides prompt engineering, GenAI translation performance may also be affected by the source and target languages, perhaps due to differences in training data (Javaid et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023).

Exploratory analysis of iterative prompting effects

Given the prior studies suggesting that the prompt refinement could lead to better translation quality (i.e., Calvo-Ferrer, 2023; H. Jiao et al., 2024; W. Jiao et al., 2023; Koh, 2023), an additional exploratory analysis using an iterative prompting on a limited number of cases was administered. It was to explore whether the distribution of translation strategies analyz-

ed in the primary analysis was affected by the minimal prompting condition. The following table shows twelve cases of utterances that were re-translated using the iterative prompt.

Table 5. Effects of Iterative Prompting on Translation Strategies

Source Text	Disney+	Single Prompt	Iterative Prompt	Strategy Shifting
You want the address for Mom's trailer park, you asshole?	Kau ingin alamat taman trailer ibuku? (You want address trailer park my mother?)	Mau alamat tempat tinggal ibumu di trailer park, hah, brengsek? (Want the address of your mother's place in the trailer park, huh, asshole?)	Mau alamat taman trailer ibu gue, brengsek? (Want the address of my mom's trailer park, asshole?)	(Single: Taboo to Taboo) (Iterative: Taboo to Taboo)
Yeah. Jesus fucking Christ. That's a disaster.	Astaga. Itu jelek (Oh my god. That is ugly)	Ya. Astaga sialan. Ini bencana. (Yeah, oh my god. Damn. This is disaster.)	Ya Tuhan. Astaga sialan. Ini kacau total. (Yeah, oh my god. Damn. This is total chaos)	(Single: Taboo to Taboo) (Iterative: Taboo to Taboo)
Well, technically, you were chest-fucked by a tree, but,	Secara teknis, dadamu tertusuk pohon, tetapi... (Technically, your chest was pierced by a tree, but..)	Secara teknis, kau memang dihajar di dada oleh pohon, tapi... (Technically, you indeed were hit in the chest by a tree, but..)	Secara teknis, dadamu ditusuk pohon sih, tapii.. (Technically, your chest was stabbed by a tree though, but..)	(Single: Deletion) (Iterative: Deletion)
You backstabbing son of a bitch!	Dasar penikam dari belakang! (such a back stabber)	Dasar pengkhianat sialan! (such a damn traitor!)	Dasar pengkhianat, bangsat! (such a traitor, bastard!)	(Single: Taboo to Taboo) (Iterative: Taboo to Taboo)
Fuck!	-	Sial! (Damn!)	Sial! (Damn!)	(Single: Euphemism) (Iterative: Euphemism)
With the shit shovelers.	Buruh kasar (Rough laborer)	Dengan para penggali sampah. (with the trash diggers)	Sama tukang-tukang pengangkut kotoran itu. (with those carriers of waste)	(Single: Euphemism) (Iterative: Euphemism)
Holy shit.	Astaga (Gosh)	Astaga (Gosh)	Astaga (Gosh)	(Single: Euphemism) (Iterative: Euphemism)

Source Text	Disney+	Single Prompt	Iterative Prompt	Strategy Shifting
Oh! My own fucking arm!	Aduh! Tanganku sendiri! (Ouch! My own hand)	Oh! Lenganku sendiri! (Oh! My own arm!)	Oh! Tanganku sendiri, sialan! (Oh! My own hand, damn!)	(Single: Deletion) (Iterative: Taboo to Taboo)
You'll never fucking matter. Fucking matter	Kau tidak akan punya arti. Punya arti. (You will not have meaning. Have meaning)	Kau nggak akan pernah berarti apa-apa. Nggak akan pernah. (You will never mean anything. Never will)	Kau nggak akan pernah berarti apa-apa. Nggak akan pernah berarti. (You will never mean anything. Never will)	(Single: Deletion) (Iterative: Deletion)
She's gonna fuck you in the face now.	Dia akan merusak wajahmu. (She will damage your face)	Dia bakal menghajar mukamu sekarang. (she will beat your face now)	Sekarang dia bakal habisin kamu. (Now she will finish you.)	(Single: Taboo to Non-Taboo) (Iterative: Taboo to Non-Taboo)
Piss off! You're too late.	Pergilah! Kau terlambat. (Go! You are late)	Minggat! Kau telat. (Go away! You are late)	Pergi sana! Kau terlambat. (Go there! You are late)	(Single: Taboo to Non-Taboo) (Iterative: Taboo to Non-Taboo)
They play with inflatable balls and ukuleles and shit.	Mereka bermain dengan bola karet dan ukulele. (They play with rubber ball and ukelele)	Mereka main bola tiup dan ukulele segala. (They play inflatable ball and ukelele everything)	Mereka main bola tiup, ukulele, dan segala macam. (They play inflatable ball, ukelele, and all kinds.	(Single: Taboo to Non-Taboo) (Iterative: Taboo to Non-Taboo)

Across the twelve purposively selected instances, strategy classification, as in Table 5, remained stable in eleven cases. Only one instance shifted from Deletion to Taboo to Taboo following the iterative prompt. It can be inferred that the translation strategies produced by iterative prompting remained mainly unchanged with those generated with the initial prompting. One case even showed a shift towards a more literal rendering. It can be seen by this case: “Oh! My own fucking arm!”, which was initially rendered in the single prompting with “*Oh! Lenganku sendiri!*”. It is clearly seen that the swear word “fucking” was omitted. Yet, in the iterative prompting, it was, in turn, translated into “*Oh! Tanganku sendiri, sialan!*”, with the literal translation (Oh! My own hand, damn!). ChatGPT added the word “sialan” to translate the swear word. The word “sialan” is deemed offensive in Indonesian language. It is often used as an exclamation of anger or frustration.

Based on this case, it can be concluded that despite prompt refinement, ChatGPT tended to maintain its semantic fidelity to the source text. Prompt refinement alone may be insufficient for improved pragmatic sensitivity, though the iterative prompt clearly instructed ChatGPT to preserve pragmatic force and cultural appropriateness. It is, however, important to note that the analysis was confined to only twelve cases. This may explain why this finding differs with the prior findings (H. Jiao et al., 2024; Koh, 2023), who also experimented with

additional prompts. Another possible explanation is that the prior studies did not specifically focus on the translations of taboo expressions, which are difficult to enhance through prompt instructions alone.

This underscores the importance of human intervention in subtitle translation workflows, especially when it comes to culturally sensitive language. Chatzitheodorou et al. (2023) proposed a human-in-the-loop workflow. They suggested that with human intervention in post-editing, the quality of final translation could significantly be enhanced. In their study, the framework of human-in-the-loop was designed to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of translating medical records using MT.

In a similar manner, the idea of human-in-the-loop workflow could also be adapted and integrated in the process of subtitle translation workflows. It is to leverage the strength of both MT and HT. For example, in the initial step, an English subtitle file is fed into GenAI systems to generate a first-draft translation. Next, a professional human translator adjusts and refines the prompt to improve areas where the initial translation still lacks, such as cultural appropriateness to the target audience, brevity, and tone preservation. Then, GenAI systems will regenerate the translation following the revised prompt. Afterwards, the post-editing process comes in. A professional human translator meticulously reviews all the GenAI-translated outputs. They may need to revise mistranslations, less natural phrasing, terminology consistency, readability, and alignment with target audience and culture. In this manner, final translation outputs can be produced more effectively and efficiently.

The limitations of GenAI in rendering highly sensitive cultural expressions were also echoed by Abdelaal (2025). He noted at least four limitations of GenAIT in subtitling movies. The most obvious limitation is cultural sensitivity. GenAIT is still considered inadequate in handling culturally bound expressions. Next, it struggles with translating political satire, humor, and sarcasm. This suggests its limitations in deep contextual understanding of such texts. Along with that, it lacks in consistency terminology, potentially leading to confusion among viewers. Finally, the readability issue, it may produce translation outputs that are too lengthy or brief. This could affect the readability of subtitle, and thus leading to comprehension issues.

Aligned with the given limitations and human-in-the-loop workflows, Sahari et al. (2024) proposed a hybrid translation model in which AI is employed to assist human translators in simpler translation tasks. Human translators with their in-depth cultural understanding can handle more complex translations. The use of automated translation tools like ChatGPT potentially accelerates the translation process (Calvo-Ferrer, 2023), making it a potential assistant tool for human translators. The emergence of GenAIT should not be seen as a threat to the existence of human translators. It should be a collaborative synergy of human insight and GenAIT's efficiency (Fu & Liu, 2024). Meticulous post-editing becomes necessary to ensure the translation quality produced by GenAIT meets the existing translation standards (Abdelaal, 2025; Alsharif et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This research has contributed to AVT research by comparing GenAI translation outputs and professional human translation-produced subtitles in handling swear words and taboo expressions. The findings revealed substantial differences in how Disney+ and ChatGPT approached the translation of swear words. Disney+ demonstrated a more culturally sensitive approach, ChatGPT, in contrast, showed a more direct and literal translation. Next, the iterative prompting analysis revealed that prompt refinement alone may have limited effects on ChatGPT's translation strategies of culturally sensitive expressions.

Following the findings, this study proposed a practical implication for the translation field, particularly AVT. GenAI systems, like ChatGPT, may lack the nuanced decision-making and cultural awareness required in translating culturally embedded content. But it may offer speed, fluency, and accessibility, which potentially boost the translation process. This study, therefore, support the important role of a human-in-the-loop approach in AVT, in which human translators ensure cultural appropriateness and pragmatic accuracy. GenAI systems can be harnessed to generate initial drafts of translations, which are, in turn, refined by professional translators through careful post-editing process. Through this approach, translations could be produced efficiently and culturally appropriate to target audience.

Besides that, the findings of this study also have pedagogical implications to translation education in higher education contexts. Translation pedagogy should focus more on developing students' cultural competence, pragmatic awareness, and critical evaluation skills. These skills are unique to humans and needed to effectively integrate GenAI in translation workflows. Teachers can use GenAI as a pedagogical tool to develop learners' evaluative skills. Students can critically evaluate GenAI-generated translation outputs, identify problematic renderings, and eventually improve the quality of the translations. Translation curriculums may also need to emphasize on AI literacy, prompt engineering, and post-editing skills amidst the increasing integration of AI in the field of translation.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider the limitations of this study. The most obvious limitation is the analysis was based on a relatively small sample of data, thus restricting the generalizability of the findings. It is also important to keep in mind that the evaluation of translations in this study, was merely based on the identification of translation strategies employed by a single coder, which could lead to potential bias and subjectivity. As GenAI continues to develop, the findings may not reflect the future GenAI translation performance. Finally, the findings do not represent GenAI translation performance in other language pairs because of differences in training data and linguistic structures.

Based on the limitations, future research could expand the dataset, involve multiple raters, expert judgements, as well as audience perceptions. Future researchers are also encouraged to explore more systematic prompt engineering techniques and conduct experiments on how GenAI tool can be best incorporated into translation workflows.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author declares the use of a generative artificial intelligence tool, ChatGPT. The tool was used as a part of the research objective to analyze and compare AI-generated translations. Aside from generating translations, the author also utilized it for language refinement to improve readability of this manuscript. The author has critically reviewed and revised all AI-generated outputs, and thus accepts full responsibility of the accuracy and integrity of this work.

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