



# Discovering the Identity of Pun in English and Indonesian Subtitles: A Study of Pun Translation Strategies in “The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run”

Ode Alleluia Pangaksami<sup>1</sup> and Raden Arief Nugroho<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Jalan Imam Bonjol No. 207 Semarang, 50131, Indonesia  
311202002264@mhs.dinus.ac.id  
arief.nugroho@dsn.dinus.ac.id

**Abstract.** Pun dominates the style of jokes in SpongeBob animation shows. The characters no doubt add a number of types of puns in several scenes. Pun is a humorous use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or sounds like another word. Translating pun is challenging for a translator, as it does not frequently have the equivalent words in a target language. This study examines six types of puns, namely, paronymy, homonymy, homography, homophony, polysemy, and idioms; as well as the use of translation strategies of this pun. This research is qualitative research. Qualitative research generally examines people's words and action in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by participants. Seven data are found in this study. As a result, the pun paronymy type is widely used in the SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run. Paronymy is a pun based on two expressions that have different meanings but have slightly different pronunciation and spelling. Meanwhile, the most translation strategy used is pun to non-pun. Pun to non-pun is a strategy where the original pun was changed into a phrase or word in TT, can be retaining all of the original meanings. The conclusion of this study is that the translator tends to change the pun to other words or phrases, in order to retain the meaning of the original puns.

**Keywords:** Pun, Strategies, Sponge on the Run Translation.

## 1 Introduction

Somehow, observers or linguists find unique things that must be examined or irregularities in the delivery of messages. We can consider that well-delivered messages are essential to target readers to understand the context of translation product [1]. Transferring the language by adjusting the message of the source language is called translation. The word translation comes from the basic word translate [2]. According to Cambridge Dictionary, translate (v) is to change words into a different language or to change something into a new form. One of subjects that can be researched is pun. The phenomenon of using puns in comedy shows is inseparable from puns, which were discovered in ancient

© The Author(s) 2023

U. Muttaqin et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Language, Linguistics, and Literature (COLALITE 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 792,

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-140-1\\_21](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-140-1_21)

Egypt. It also dominates the style of jokes in SpongeBob animation shows. Pun is a humorous use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or that sounds like another word [3]. Translating puns is challenging for a translator, as they do not have the equivalent words in a target language, such as idioms that are culturally. In addition, it employs certain structural features of the source language for its meaning and effect. Moreover, when the pun is translated into a target language, it also changes the sound not only the essential meaning of it [4]. That is why a pun translator must master the knowledge of how to put a pun in a target language, so that the readers understand the meaning of the joke.

There are some previous study that examined and became the benchmark for this study. *Strategies in Translating Wordplay in Perahu Kertas Novel from Indonesian to English* was conducted by Ari Bonita [5], *the Translation of Wordplay in the Amazing World of Gumball Cartoon Series* was conducted by Prihatini [6], and *Revealing Puns Used in SpongeBob Squarepants Animated Show*, was conducted by Primanda (2021) Primanda found four types of puns; homonymy, homophony, paronymy, and polysemy in SpongeBob Squarepants series. What distinguishes this study from the previous research are this study examines 6 types of puns, there are homonymy, homophony, paronymy, homography, polysemy, and idiom; and the translation techniques used in translating the puns that found in *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run*. Meanwhile, the previous study only examined 5 types of puns, that are homophony, homonymy, paronymy, polysemy, and homography and uses the data from SpongeBob Squarepants series. The aim of this study is to examine the types of pun found in the movie and the translation strategies used.

Based on the research introduction above, the research questions or statements of the problems of the “Translation Strategies of Puns Used in the SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run” are as follows:

1. What are types of puns found in the SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run?
2. What are strategies used in translating the SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run into Indonesian?
3. Why does the translator use the strategy to translate the puns?

The researcher is interested in examining types of puns (wordplays) and how the translator of this movie transferred the puns into Indonesian that can be found in SpongeBob Squarepants animated show, as the show is well known that the characters usually put some wordplays in order to make a joke. . This study categorizes the puns to the theory of Delabastita (1996) and the strategies used to transfer the puns into Indonesian.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Translation and Identity

Pun in English and Indonesian reflects the culture of its language. In Indonesian, pun or wordplay is mostly related to acronyms. Unlike English, where pun is often used from two words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings. This is because the pronunciation of words in Indonesian tends to be more consistent, whereas in English, it tends to change and can even have the same pronunciation even though the spelling is different. Besides that, pun also indicates a person's personality and feelings. For instance, the use of puns in Shakespears. The character, Cade has obsession of using puns in his speech that indicates a social unease, a slightly frantic, and undisciplined imitation and as the comic signature tune of the Shakespearean low-life character. [7]

### 2.2 Pun Types

Pun is a form of wordplay that are typically described as “planned communicative strategies, or their results, chosen with a specific semantic or pragmatic purpose in mind” in Primanda's [7]. There are four fundamental categories of puns according to Delabas-tita:

1. Structure of phonological
  - a. Homonymy pun is grounded on two expressions that are spelled and spoken similarly, but do not share the same meaning.
  - b. Homophony pun is grounded on two expressions that have the same pronunciation.
  - c. Homography pun is the written forms of two expressions are identical, except the pronunciation.
  - d. Paronymy pun is grounded on two expression that have different meanings, but have slightly similar pronunciation and spelling.
2. Lexical development
  - a. Polysemy pun is grounded on an expression or phrase that has multiple affiliated meanings, that might change depending on the usage.
  - b. Idiom
3. Syntactic structure
4. Morphological development

### 2.3 Pun Translation Strategies

In this study, the researcher only examines the types of puns from its phonological structures and lexical development. To analyze the translation strategies, this study uses the theory according to Delabastita [8] in Urbano [9] suggests eight strategies to translate puns:

1. Pun-to-pun, A TT pun is used to translate the ST pun.
2. Pun to non-pun: the original pun was changed into a phrase or word in TT, can be retaining all of the original meanings.
3. Pun to related rhetorical device: pun rendered with another rhetorical device, or punioid, which aims to recapture the effect of the ST pun.
4. Pun to zero: pun is omitted
5. Pun ST=Pun TT: the pun is directly copied into the TT.
6. No pun to pun: a pun is added in the TT where there is no pun present in the ST sentence.
7. Zero to pun: the TT contains wordplays that the ST does not have. The translator adds a new pun.
8. Editorial techniques: it refers to the metatextual elements of a text, like footnotes and the introduction.

## 3 Research Method

This study uses qualitative approach. Qualitative research generally examines people's words and action in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by participants [10]. Therefore, the data contains descriptive phrases and opinions. There are some steps the researcher did to collect the data, as follows:

1. First, determine the data the researcher collected.
2. Second, determine the data collection method will be used.
3. Third, cross-check the data whether or not the same data is used in other study. It aims to check the data used is the latest and has never been researched.
4. Fourth, collect the data by literature study method. Literature study method is collecting a certain data from literatures, such as book, film, articles, etc. A literature review involves researching, reading, analyzing, evaluating and summarizing scholarly literature (typically journals and articles) about a specific topic. [11]. The data that collected is the English transcripts of the SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run from [https://spongebob.fandom.com/wiki/The\\_SpongeBob\\_Movie:\\_Sponge\\_on\\_the\\_Run/transcript](https://spongebob.fandom.com/wiki/The_SpongeBob_Movie:_Sponge_on_the_Run/transcript) and the Indonesian transcripts from <https://www.subtitlist.com/subtitles/the-spongebob-movie-sponge-on-the-run/indonesian/2524673>. The data source is

obtained through the subtitle of the *SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run* which was translated into Indonesian by Nazaret Setia Budi.

5. The last one, analyze the data by categorizing and presenting them in the form of a description based on Delabastita’s theory. As this study is a qualitative research, which focuses on description and explanation and might lead to expansion of novel concepts or theory, or to an assessment of a structural process [12].

## 4 Result and Discussion

Based on Delabastita’ theory, there are seven findings of pun found in the *SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run*. In more detail, the types of puns are 4 paronymies, 1 polysemy, 1 homonymy, and 1 idiom. The types of puns are translated by using these strategies; pun to non-pun, pun to pun, pun to zero, and direct copy.

### 4.1 Paronymy

#### Paronymy Pun 1

ST	TT
<p><b>Karen</b> : It’s not Mr. Krabs, sweetheart. I’ve checked the data. It’s <b>SpongeBob</b> who’s the problem.</p> <p><b>SpongeBob</b> : Hello! [appears in Karen’s monitor]</p> <p><b>Plankton</b> : Oh, fishsticks. What could that <b>boob</b> have to do with it? Heh.</p> <p><b>Karen</b> : Boob savant, you mean. <b>SpongeBob</b> is the one who keeps foiling your plans.</p>	<p><b>Karen</b> : <i>Bukan, Tn. Krabs, sayang. Sudah kuperiksa datanya. Masalahnya adalah <b>SpongeBob</b>.</i></p> <p><b>SpongeBob</b> : <i>Halo!</i></p> <p><b>Plankton</b> : <i>Ya ampun. Apa urusannya dengan <b>si bodoh</b> itu?</i></p> <p><b>Karen</b> : <i>Si bodoh yang pintar, maksudmu?. <b>SpongeBob</b> yang selalu menggagalkan rencanamu, bukan Tn. Krabs</i></p>

This dialogue happens when Plankton wants to do his Evil Plan Number 3.087 for taking possession of the Krabby Patty formula. Meanwhile, Karen knows that every plan Plankton does, always ends in failure. That’s because of **SpongeBob**, as the data that Karen checks. Plankton responds her wife by saying “what could that **boob** have to do with it?” instead of saying **SpongeBob**. Here, Plankton replaces **SpongeBob** with “boob” to show that he is done with **SpongeBob**. In Oxford Language, the word “boob” is usually used by North Americans to say someone is foolish. The reason why the two expressions between Bob and boob is a paronymy, as Bob and boob have kind of close or similar pronunciation and spelling, and both have different meanings. The strategy used in translating this pun is pun to non-pun, as the translator translated the word boob

into “*bodoh*” which means he replaced the wordplay in the source text to a word or phrase in target text, in order to keep the actual meaning of the source text wordplay. The using of pun to non-pun in this datum made the expectation that the target audience to get the joke.

**Paronymy Pun 2**

ST	TT
<p><b>Squidward</b> : Nope, not talking to you [reading his <b>Kelpy G</b> magazine]</p> <p>....</p> <p><b>Squidward</b> : Old Gertrude? Who the <b>kelp</b> is that?</p>	<p><i><b>Squidward</b> : Aku tidak mau bicara denganmu.</i></p> <p><i>[membaca majalah <b>Kelpy G-nya</b>]</i></p> <p><i><b>Squidward</b> : Gertrude tua? Siapa itu?</i></p>

In this scene, paronymy happens when Squidward is reading his Kelpy G Magazine. Kelp is included in pun-paronymy, as it has a slightly different spelling and pronunciation with Kelpy. Squidward responds and is curious about Old Gertrude that SpongeBob is talking to. So, he questions, "Who the **kelp** is that?". It shows that Squidward is focusing on reading the magazine, therefore he adds "kelp", that refers to Kelpy G, to say what other kelp he is paying attention to now. The translator omitted the pun, the kelp, and only translated “who is that” into “*siapa itu?*” in the target text, so he used pun to zero strategy in translating this. As in this case, the word “kelp” has no equivalent meaning in Indonesian and the translator only focuses on the main meaning of the sentence, not word by word. The using pun to zero strategy affected the tense of humor. In addition, by omitting the pun in target text made the dialogue sounded ordinary.

**4.2 Polysemy**

**Polysemy Pun**

ST	TT
<p>SpongeBob : Our advice for those traveling here is...Don't. The King Poseidon sounds like a <b>tough</b> customer. [Patrick eats the litter]</p> <p>Patrick : Oh, yeah. <b>Tough</b></p>	<p><i>SpongeBob : Nasihat kami untuk pergi ke tempat ini adalah... Jangan. Kelihatannya Raja Poseidon orang yang sulit.</i></p> <p><i>Patrick : Ya. Sulit</i></p>

This dialogue happens when SpongeBob reads a book about The Palace of Poseidon. On the last page, written “*don't*” as a warning for travelers who want to visit the place. SpongeBob takes the warning that The King Poseidon described as a danger, so he says

"tough" to describe The King Poseidon. Meanwhile, the scene shows Patrick eating the litter and he says "tough" is to describe the litter he is eating. This expression tells us that "tough" meaning depends on what it is used in a sentence. According to Cambridge Dictionary, "tough" has these meanings; strong, not easily broken or made weaker. For example, these toys are made from tough plastic. In other words, the word "tough" in Patrick's dialogue refers to the component material that makes something hard. Tough also means, of a person, able to deal with difficult situations and not be easily defeated, frightened or upset. As SpongeBob says, he refers to this meaning. The strategy used in translating this pun is pun to pun, as we can see above the translator transferred the word "tough" into *sulit* which has the ambiguous meanings of the word "tough" Patrick said that means something strong or hard. The using of pun to pun in this datum didn't decrease the tense of the humor, it also made the pun understandable.

### 4.3 Homonymy

#### Homonymy Pun

ST	TT
Little SpongeBob : Juggling contest. Shrink-wrap soccer <b>and more!</b> [Display a board written "MORE"]	<i>SpongeBob Kecil : Kontes juggling. Sepak udang bungkus! Dan lainnya.</i>

This pun is included in homonymy, as in this scene, the word "more" is used in two contexts. The first one is in the flashback scene of Little SpongeBob explaining what the activities in the summer camp are. When he says "...and more", he means that the other activities are in the summer camp. However, the scene turns to a camp attendant holding a board, which is written "more" in uppercase. The word "more" has different meanings in this scene, but both in SpongeBob's utterance and on the board, the word "more" has the same spelling and pronunciation. For this pun expression, the translator translated it by using the pun to non-pun strategy, as it retained the original meaning of pun expression in the target language. The using of pun to non-pun strategy in this datum decreased the tense of the humor, yet it made the expectation that the target audience can understand the joke.

### 4.4 Idiom

#### Idiom Pun

ST	TT
Patrick : Just saying <b>there's two sides to every coin.</b>	<i>Patrick : Ada dua sisi pada setiap koin.</i>

SpongeBob : Oh, Patrick. What does a coin have to... Wait, did you say coin?	<i>SpongeBob : Patrick, apa kaitan koin dengan... Tunggu, katamu "koin"?</i>
--	--

In this scene, Patrick tries to comfort SpongeBob because he loses hope to free Gary after they are put in prison. Patrick says, "There's two sides to every coin" which is an idiom. According to the American Heritage Idiom Dictionary [13], the other side of the coin is defined as the opposite aspect. It means there is always the other way to free Gary from The King Poseidon's grasp. This pun is translated into the literal words in target text, *ada dua sisi pada setiap koin*. Therefore, it can be concluded that the translator used the pun-to-pun strategy, as he retained the original pun in the target text. The using of pun to non-pun strategy in this datum made the joke so mind-boggling, as the expression is the English proverb. Whereas in Indonesian, there is no proverb that says there are two sides to every coin.

## 5 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the findings above, it can be concluded that these types of puns; paronymy, polysemy, homonymy, and idiom are found in the The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run. Homophony and homography are not found in it. The translation strategies used to translate the puns are pun-to-pun, pun to non-pun, pun to zero, and pun ST=pun TT (direct copy). From the data, it also can be concluded that the most commonly appeared in the SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run is paronymy, a pun that based on two expressions that have slightly different in pronunciation and spelling. In addition, the most translation strategy used in translating the puns is pun to non-pun, as the translator retains the original pun into the target language, in order to help the readers understand the meaning of the characters' utterances.

## References

1. P. Newmark, A textbook of Translation, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988.
2. M. Nababan and A. & S. Nuraeni, "Pengembangan Model Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan," *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra*, p. 24(1), 2012.
3. "dictionary.cambridge.org," [Online]. Available: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pun>. [Accessed 15 January 2023].
4. F. Koochacki, "An Investigation of Pun Translatability in English Translations of Sa'di's Ghazals Based on Delabastita's Proposed Model," *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 2016.



5. R. A. Bonita, "Strategies in Translating Wordplay in Perahu Kertas Novel from Indonesian to English," *Journal of Language and Literature* , pp. 86-91, 2021.
6. N. Prihatini, "the Transaltion of Wordplay in the Amazing World of Gumball Cartoon Series," *Language Horizon*, pp. 42-47, 2022.
7. M. Cronin, *Translation and Identity*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 99.
8. K. R. Primanda, "Revealing Puns Used in SpongeBob Squarepants Animated Show," p. 64, 2021.
9. D. Delabastita, *Wordplay and Translation*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1996.
10. A. A. Urbano, "The Translation of Humour from Audiovisual Content: an Empirical Analysis," p. 5, 2015.
11. P. Maykut and R. Morehouse, *Beginning Qualitative Research: A Philosophic and Practical Guide*, London: The Falmer Press, 1994.
12. "guides.auraria.edu," [Online]. Available: <https://guides.auraria.edu/researchmethods/literaturereviews>. [Accessed 8 January 2023].
13. B. Hancock, E. Ockleford and K. Windridge, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, The NIHR RDS EM, 2007.
14. C. Ammer, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*, Second Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
15. N. A. Sari, "English Wordplay in SpongeBob Movies and Their Translated Expressions in Bahasa Indonesia Subtitle," p. 460, 2016.
16. D. C. Leonita, "Analysis of Idiom Translation Strategies in "Legend" Novel by Marie Lu," p. 2, 2020.
17. J. D. M. Huber-Okraïneç, "Idiom Comprehension in Childhood: An Assessment Tool and Age Norms," *Brain and Language*, pp. 188-191, 2003.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

