

Dialogue Translation Quality Analysis in Indonesian Version of *The Little Prince*Ellysabeth Sahasrara Excelsaputri¹✉, Deta Maria Sri Darti²^{1,2} Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History:</i> Received 26 April 2025 Approved 03 June 2025 Published 31 October 2025 Keywords: dialogue, translation accuracy, translation shift	Dialogue relates to the character's feelings and attitude, so delivering them the same way as the SL is important and it can be crucial. In translating dialogues, a shift may occur from SL to TL. Shifts that occur may affect the quality of the dialogue translation. It can lead to a misrepresentation of the character's feelings and attitudes. Therefore, this paper examines the shifts and the quality of translation. This research uses qualitative descriptive to categorize the shifts using Catford's (1965) category shift and analyze its quality with Nababan's (2021) accuracy assessment. There are 95 data found in total, where 87 data were considered accurate, 6 data were considered less accurate, and 2 data were considered inaccurate. The result shows a total range scale of 2,8 accurate points. It indicates when the shifts are applied correctly, they can deliver the feelings and attitudes of the characters naturally in the TL.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation shift is one of the unavoidable strategies that can be used in translation. Catford (1965) defines translation shift as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (p. 20) and divides shift into two kinds, level shift and category shift. Catford also divided category shift into four types: structure shift, class shift, intra-system shift, and unit shift. A translation needs to be delivered correctly. It's not easy and it can be crucial. This explains why translators are important in providing the message between languages. One challenge a translator faces when translating a translator faces when translating is that not all words have the translation in the TL. Every language has its own grammatical rules. A good translator must understand the context between SL and TL, dictions, and grammatical rules.

There were several studies under the topic of translation shifts. Research done by Saraswati and Damanhuri (2019) found all types of shifts and the quality of the shift. The research recognized that the equivalence of the message is important and believed that translation is assessed by calculating a formula and evaluated through the reader's prior

knowledge. Meanwhile, research by Bessie, et al (2024) implied that semantic cognition should be considered first when translating. Through the findings of intra-system shift, the research developed the concept of intra-system where it's not only to the concept of words, but to a sentence level and can be seen from the valence shift.

"The Little Prince" is an interesting story which also been conducted in journals. A research by Sakulpimolrat (2019) analyzed the quality of the translation to seek if the TL conveyed the same message to the SL. Using Molina and Albir translation techniques, the research found the quality of the novel is mostly accurate, acceptable, and readable except for the discursive creation technique, which results in a less accurate translation. Meanwhile, research by Haroon (2022) seek how TL conveyed the same with the SL by looking at the use of the mediating text. The research resulted that the use of the mediating text effect the target text.

Building upon the findings of previous studies, it showed how translation played an active role. While many studies have explored various frameworks to seek how the TL conveyed the same message as the SL, there remains limited research specially applying Catford's (1965) translation shift

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theory to the character's dialogue. Although previous research on "The Little Prince" had analyzed the shift and the impact, none have focused how category shift impact in the characters dialogues.

It is a serious matter since dialogue is one of the important parts of a story. Baker (2018) states that dialogue "relates to the speaker's feelings or attitude rather than to what words and utterances refer to" (p. 13). House (2015) as cited in Saputra et al (2020) also mentioned several interacting factors that need to be considered, the structural characteristics, the expressive potential, and the constraints of the two languages involved in translation. The expressive potential means that a translation process shouldn't only focus on the structure and the expressive meaning. It is expected that the message and emotion of the target text (TT) will be delivered the same as in the source text (ST).

Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by focusing on the characters dialogues. It seeks to evaluate how the changes affect the way the message in the SL to TL, contributing to a deeper understanding of how translation choices influence the text meaning and the readers response.

Translation has been an interesting topic. Many researches about translation have been conducted in journals. A research by Qassem, et al (2023) investigated about the effectiveness of machine translation. This research sought the quality through dialogue translations from English to Arabic and resulted that machine systems still need humans in reviewing and analyzed the output of the machine to perform more accurate translation. Another research by Pudjiati, et al (2024) investigated the quality of poetic translation between human translators and machine systems, which resulted that human translations outperform machine systems

A research by Metwally, et al (2024) also analyzed the translation quality of machine systems, focusing on ChatGPT using House's (2015) Translation Quality Assessment. The result showed that machine system (AI) have limitation and recommends a continual tuning and upgrading to improves the accuracy. From these previous studies, it can be concluded that although the three researches used different ways to see the quality of the machine system, it showed that human translators outperform a machine and how machine systems still need humans to improve and check the accuracy.

Another interesting topic had been done with the research by Hardiyanti, et al (2021), Ponton, et al (2023), Moindjie and Ramatullah (2024), and Lanlan, et al (2025) on developing the

research of translation. It showed that translation was not only about languages, but also cultures and ethnic. Vishwakarma (2023) as cited in Sukaesih, et al (2025) defined that "translation plays a vital role in preserving traditional knowledge, literature, and oral histories". In Hardiyanti, et al (2021) analyzed the accuracy of Javanese's culture's translation using Nababan's (2012)'s Translation Quality Assessment. A research by Ponton, et al (2023) focused on the developments of the notion of I-culture vs We-culture, where it is crucial to be aware of the most important components of its culture which can impact on identity. Meanwhile, Moindjie and Ramatullah (2024) analyzed the concept culture of gender. However, Lanlan, et al (2025) analyzed how the world has changed to a more gender-neutral style. These researches showed how culture and translation couldn't be separated. A translation worked to represent a culture and ethnics, meaning that to translate a culture it has to be done carefully. Through this, this research hoped to develop further research on translation.

METHODS

Kinds of research

This kind of research used a qualitative descriptive method to collected and analyzed all the data in "The Little Prince" novel, supported by relevant theoretical frameworks. The method aimed to describe the linguistic phenomenon in terms of the translation of shift.

Data collection

The data was collected from two novels, one is from the English novel (ST) and another was in the translated Indonesian version. The title of the novel is "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. The data collected were in words, phrases, clauses, or sentences from the characters' dialogues. This research process involved several steps to obtain the data. The first step was with close reading of two versions of the novel, the English version and the translated Indonesian version. Then, this research compared both of the novels and categorized the data that were found with Catford's (1965) category shift: structure shift, class shift, unit shift, and intra-system shift.

In the next step, questionnaires were distributed to check the quality of the translation. Therefore, the participants' requirements was needed to accessed the quality of the shift. The criteria for the participants were someone who understands both English and Bahasa Indonesia,

has knowledge of English grammar and likes to read fiction in English or Bahasa Indonesian. In this research, four participants were chosen through qualification review if they match the requirements by asking question if they match the requirements. Below were the quality assessment parameters that were used in the questionnaire.

Table 1. The Aspect of Accuracy

Translation category	Score	Qualitative Parameters
Accurate	3 (range: 2,5-3)	The meaning of the words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences, or text is accurately transferred to the TL, simply there is no meaning distortion.
Less accurate	2 (range:1,8-2)	Most of the meaning of the words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences, or text is accurately transferred to the TL but there is meaning distortion or double-meaning translation, or the meanings are deleted which can affect the integrity of the message.
Inaccurate	1 (range:1-1,7)	The meaning of the words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences, or ST are deleted

or inaccurately transferred to TL.

Data Analysis

This result used discourse analysis to analyze the data. Discourse analysis played an active role where it examined how language constructed and reflect identities. It revealed the characters through their intonation, tone, and gestures. With Catford's (1965) shift theory, it showed how shift impact the flow and character's relationships and how it might lead to different interpretation of the characters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Translation Shift

Catford (1965) as cited in Tarawneh and Al-Momani (2023) defined that formal correspondence as a connection between at least two linguistic categories which are close in structure to a specific language, while textual equivalents consists of two parts of the text. However, when the textual equivalents didn't directly refer to the source, it is referred as translation shift. Using Catford's (1965) category shift, this research found 95 data in the dialogue translation. The structure shift results in 19 data, the class shift results in 24 data, the unit shift results in 24 data, and in intra-system shift results in 28 data. Below is the explanation of each category shift.

Structure shift

Structure shift happened in phonological and graphological translation, as well as total translation. In grammar, it occurred when SL and TL contained the same class of elements but were arranged differently. This research found three patterns in the structure shift. Below were the patterns found in this category shift.

Table 1. Structure Shift

Source Text	Target Text	Kind of Shifts
"He should be able to give me a reasonable order " (page. 26)	"...dapat Tuanku memberiku sebuah perintah yang masuk akal. " (page. 48)	Modifier + head to head +modifier
"What does Why are you talking with mean?"	"Apa maksudnya ini? Kau bercakap-cakap dengan	Interrogative sentence to exclamatory sentence

snakes?” (page. 57)	ular sekarang!” (page. 104)	
“You think it’s not important!” (page. 18)	“Itu tidak penting?” (page. 34)	Exclamatory sentence to interrogative sentence

The first type of shift found how “reasonable order” had the structure of modifier + head. It was arranged differently to “perintah yang masuk akal” which has the structure of head (perintah) + modifier (masuk akal) with adding “yang” particle to connect the sentence.

The context of the second data was when the character saw the Little Prince was up on a wall and talked to a yellow snake below him. The SL was an interrogative that changed to an exclamatory in the TL. The language also portrayed the different reactions of the characters in SL and TL. In the TL, the character showed a surprised reaction that the Little Prince could talk to a snake. The third data, the SL changed to an interrogative. In this context, the Little Prince showed furious emotion and the SL delivered it with an exclamation mark. The dialogue translation in the TL changed the Little Prince’s feelings and attitudes toward the conflict. It changed the furious tone from the SL to asking in the TL. The data showed that in a language that has a different structure, a misrepresentation of the character could happen. The dialogue translation in the second data failed to deliver the furious emotion of the Little Prince towards the conflict.

Class Shift

A class shift happened when a structure’s class changed. The changed can be in nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. This research found a total of six patterns in this category.

Table 2. Class Shift

Source Text	Target Text	Kind of Shifts
“This sheep is already very sickly” (page. 7)	“Yang ini sudah sakit parah” (page. 13)	Common noun to pronoun
“Those are the orders” (page. 33)	“Itulah aturannya.” (page. 61)	Uncountable noun to personal pronoun
“...if the general did not obey me” (page. 24)	“...ia tidak menuruti perintahku” (page. 44)	Common noun to personal pronoun

“Oh, what a pretty house that is!” (page. 12)	“Aduh, betapa bagusnya!” (page. 21)	Adjective + noun to particle + adjective
“Oh, come, come!” (page. 13)	“Oh, ayolah!” (page. 25)	Verb to verb + interjection
“I’m very fond of sunsets” (page. 16)	“Aku suka matahari terbenam” (page. 29)	Noun to noun + verb
“Three and two make five...”	“Tiga tambah dua sam8a dengan lima...” (page. 54)	Conjunction to noun
“Every Thursday they dance with the village girls” (page. 47)	“Hari Kamis, mereka mempunyai satu ritual” (page. 86)	Distributive adjective to concrete noun
“...eat the little baobas?” (page. 13)	“...memakan anak-anak baobab?” (page. 25)	Descriptive adjective to common noun

The first until third data had similar pattern, a changed from noun to pronoun. The first data “sheep” was a common noun that referred to a generic animal that changed to “ini” which was a demonstrative pronoun. The change of the shift changed the generic animal to a pronoun that pointed to a specific things. In this context, “ini” pointed to a specific sheep. The second data, “orders” was an uncountable noun, which is a noun that can’t be counted. The shift changed to “aturannya” which was a personal pronoun, where “-nya” expressed ownership. Another similar pattern, on the third data “general” was a common noun, where it referred to a generic person. Then, it changed to “ia” which was a personal pronoun which the word replaced the noun, indicating a grammatical person.

The second pattern showed a changed from adjective + noun to particle + adjective. The SL “pretty house” had the class of descriptive adjective (pretty) and a singular noun (house) that changed to “betapa bagusnya”, which had the class of a particle “betapa” and “bagusnya” which was a descriptive adjective, where “-nya” could refer to the house. The third pattern was a change from verb to verb + interjection. The word “come” was an intransitive verb, where the verb didn’t require

a direct object that changed to “ayolah” which was part of an interjection.

The fourth pattern was a change from noun to noun + verb. “Sunsets” was a concrete noun that referred to something that can be experienced through the five senses. In this data, it showed that we could see sunsets with our own eyes. The SL changed to “matahari terbenam” where “matahari” was a concrete noun and “terbenam” was an action verb. The sentence described the action of the noun. The fifth data was a change from a conjunction to a noun. The word “and” was a part of a coordinating conjunction that changed to “tambah” which was an abstract noun that can’t be directly experienced with any five senses.

The sixth data, “every” was a distributive adjective, that was used to distribute a particular group as an individual that changed to “hari” which was a concrete noun that referred to a unit of time. The data lost meaning, where “hari Kamis” didn’t show the characters dancing with the village girls repeatedly. The class shift showed that both languages had different classes. Because of this, a shift could occur while translating. A data that had similar pattern, the SL “little” showed a descriptive adjective where it describes the noun “baobabs”. The SL changed it to “anak-anak”, where the word is counted as a common noun where it describes generic things.

Unit Shift

A unit shift happened if the translation equivalence of a unit being one rank in the source language (SL) belonged to another rank in the target language (TL). The rank could be a sentence, which was the highest rank followed by a clause, group, word, and morpheme, which is the lowest rank. This research found four downward rank patterns in the unit shift. Below were the patterns found in the novel.

Table 3. Unit Shift

Source Text	Target Text	Kind of Shifts
“The planet he came from is Asteroid B-612” (page. 12)	“Planet <i>asalnya</i> adalah Asteroid B-612” (page. 21)	Verb phrase to word
“Oh! That is funny!” (page. 9)	“Ai, <i>lucu...</i> ” (page. 15)	Sentence to word

“It is very disturbing” (page. 46)	“Sangat menyusahkan!” (page. 82)	Sentence to group phrase
“That this is not a sheep” (page. 7)	“Bukan domba” (page.13)	Sentence to clause

The first pattern showed a down rank shift where it changed the verb phrase to a word. The SL was a clause, with the structure of a subject and a predicator, consisting of one group. “He came” was a verb phrase consisting of two words. The clause changed to a word that consisted of two morphemes with the base “asal” and suffix “-nya”.

The second pattern showed a down rank shift where it changed a sentence to a word. The dialogue in SL was counted as a sentence consisted of one clause, with the structure of subject, predicator, and complement. The clause consisted of three groups. The first group was “that”, which was the head of the clause that consisted of one word. The second group was “is funny”, which was a verb phrase group consisted of two words. It was changed to “lucu”, which was an adjective word.

The third pattern showed a down rank shift where it changed from sentence to a group phrase. The dialogue in SL was counted as a sentence. The sentence consisted of one clause, with the structure of subject, predicator, and adjunct. The clauses consisted of two groups. The first group “it is” was the head of the sentence that consisted of two words and “very disturbing” was a verb phrase group consisted of two words. Changed to “sangat menyusahkan!” was an adjective phrase consisted of two words.

The last pattern showed a down rank shift where it changed the sentence to a clause. The dialogue in SL was counted as a sentence. The sentence consisted of one clause, that has the structure of a subject, predicator, and complement. The clause consisted of three groups. The first group “this” was a deictic consisted of one word, “is not” was an auxiliary consisted of two words, and “a sheep” was the head of the clause that consisted of two words. Changed to “bukan domba” consisted of one clause with the structure of a modifier and head that has two groups. The first group “bukan” was the modifier that consisted of one word and “domba” was the head of the clause that consisted of one word.

Intra-system Shift

An intra-system shift happened if the SL had a translation that corresponds to another non-corresponding system in TL and it differed from formal correspondence. It usually happened when the plural sentence form changed to a singular sentence form and vice versa or when a verb phrase in SL doesn't have an equivalent term in TL. This research found two patterns in intra-system shifts. Below were the patterns found in this category shift.

Table 4. Intra-system Shift

Source Text	Target Text	Kind of Shifts
"Flowers have the thorns just for spite!" (page. 17)	"Semata-mata sifat jahat bunga saja!" (page. 33)	Plural to singular
"He has never smelled a flower" (page. 18)	" Ia belum pernah menghirup bunga" (page. 34)	Gender references to gender neutral
Because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have put under the glass globe; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is she that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listed to, when she grumbled or boasted, or ever sometimes when she said nothing" (page. 48)	:"Karena dialah yang telah kusirami. Karena dialah yang kuletakkan di bawah sungkup. Karena dialah yang kulindungi dengan penyekat, karena dialah yang kubunuh ulat-ulatnya (kecuali dua-tiga untuk kupu-kupu). Karena dialah yang kudengarkan keluh-nya, bualannya, atau malah kadang-kadang kebiasuannya, karena dialah mawarku" (page. 88)	Gender references to gender neutral

The first pattern, "flowers" showed a plural form which indicated that it had more than one, but it changed to "bunga" which was a singular form that indicated it only had one. The intra-system shift showed an adaptation in the dialogue translation. In Bahasa Indonesia plural forms usually add words such as "banyak" and "semua" or adding a number before the noun instead of adding "-s".

The second pattern of the second and third data showed a change from gender pronoun to a generic pronoun. The data showed a change in subject, where "he" and "she" was part of gender references changed to "ia" and "dia". This was because there are no gender references to differentiate men and women in Bahasa Indonesia language. The words "ia" and "dia" can be used for both genders.

Translation Quality Assessment

After determining the shift from the novel, a translation quality assessment was conducted. Nababan (2012) as cited in Indriawati (2023) said that in actual translation practice, the technique is intended to clarify the SL concept didn't have a one-to-one correspondence in TL. Four people who matched the criteria were given the questionnaires. Below is the result of the dialogue translation accuracy.

Table 5. Result of the Dialogue Translation Shift Accuracy

TQA	Score (s)	Data (n)	Total (nxs)
Accurate	3	87	261
Less accurate	2	6	12
Inaccurate	1	2	2
Total		95	275

Average	Total
	(nxs)/total
	(n)
	=275/95
	=2,8

The research found 87 data were considered accurate, 6 data were considered less accurate, and 2 data were considered inaccurate. The score of 2,8 average points strengthened the accuracy of The Little Prince's translation novel. From here, it can be seen that shifts influenced the accuracy of the translation. When translated correctly, the TL conveyed the characters' feelings and attitudes, while if it didn't, it misrepresented them. In this research, the translator accurately translated most of the dialogue.

Discussion

From the results, it can be seen how shift could happen because of different grammar between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). From the structure shift, a change in the structure could affect the character. As it was said before, dialogue is an important matter as Baker (2018) stated that dialogue "relates to the speaker's feelings or attitude rather than to what words and utterances refer to" (p. 13). In the data of structure shift, it showed how the TL changed the Little Prince's feelings and attitudes towards the conflict. The data failed to deliver the furious emotion of the Little Prince.

From the class shift, it showed the languages in SL and TL have different classes and grammatical rules. Some words may not be translated to the exact word, so the translator needed to figure out other words that suit the SL. Since it was a dialogue, transforming the classes helped the reader to understand the story and the characters better because they were familiar with the wording. It should be done carefully because it may result on delivering ambiguity.

Similar to class shift, unit shift happened because of grammatical rules. The difference was the change was not in the class but the unit of the dialogue. Some languages may have compact sentences that require elaboration but some languages may have simple wording to explain the situation. In this case, the SL has more compacted

wording than the TL. The SL followed the grammatical structure of a sentence, but the TL could change the sentence to a simple word because it has the direct equivalent. It could be risky, the translator needed to make sure the changing unit didn't lose its meaning from the SL.

Intra-system shift showed how languages have gender pronoun differences. In the SL showed that the language had gender references to differentiate between men and women, but in the TL it changed the gender references to a neutral references, where it can be used by men or women.

Category shifts showed that translator needed to be careful in choosing the right word in the TL. This is why analyzing the accuracy of the translation is needed. With Nababan's (2021) translation quality assessment, it can be seen how accurate the translation with the source language.

This research resulted in 2,8 points means that the translation was accurate. This showed a translator need to be careful when choosing the right word because when a shift applied appropriately, it didn't change the message, especially feelings and attitudes that were found in the dialogues.

CONCLUSION

This research highlighted the relevance of Catford's (1965) translation shift theory in the context of literary translation, particularly in portraying dialogue that reflects character feelings and attitudes. This research resulted a total 95 data; 19 data of structure shift, 24 data of class shift, 24 data of unit shift, and 28 data of intra-system shift. It showed how structural changes between languages were commonly required for maintaining meaning and tone in the TL. The application of Nababan's (2021) accuracy assessment resulted in 2,8 points, indicated that the translation dialogue in The Little Prince's novel was accurate. This showed a good translation could happen because of the translator's attention to shifts and the word choices, meaning that shift when applied appropriately didn't change the message, especially feelings and attitudes that were found in the dialogues. However, this research only analyzed the accuracy of the category shift found in The Little Prince dialogues. For further research, it is suggested to analyze the accuracy of Catford's level shift in The Little Prince dialogues to see if the shift still resulted in an accurate points.

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