



## Translating Irony: The Impact of Translation Techniques on Translation Quality in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*

Sakut Anshori<sup>1</sup>, Arbain<sup>2</sup>, Diana Hardiyanti<sup>3</sup>, Abd. Rahman Zain<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, <sup>2</sup>Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam, <sup>3</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, <sup>4</sup>Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia  
 email: [sakutanshori@iaincurup.ac.id](mailto:sakutanshori@iaincurup.ac.id)

**Abstract:** *This study aims to examine how translation techniques influence the rendering of ironic expressions in Mark Manson's *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*. While research on irony translation is growing, there is a lack of empirical evidence linking specific techniques to quality outcomes in non-fiction literature, representing a significant gap in current translation studies. Using a qualitative approach, this research identifies patterns of irony classification (Muecke, 1982), translation techniques (Molina & Albir, 2002), and quality assessment (Nababan et al., 2012) through content analysis and Focus Group Discussions. Findings reveal that while situational and verbal irony dominate the text, the effectiveness of translation techniques varies significantly; established equivalents, modulation, and transposition emerge as the most reliable techniques for maintaining high accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Conversely, techniques involving semantic shifts—such as amplification, adaptation, reduction, and discursive creation—often compromise the contradictory nuances essential to irony. By providing a systematic evaluation of these techniques, this study offers critical pedagogical implications for translator training and EFL instruction, emphasizing the necessity of linguistic and cultural competence in rendering irony.*

**Keywords:** *Irony Translation, Translation Techniques, Translation Quality Assessment, The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*

### INTRODUCTION

Irony translation represents one of the most complex challenges in translation studies, as irony operates through the tension between literal meaning and implied intent. As a rhetorical device, irony relies on pragmatic context, shared knowledge, and implicit cues to convey meanings that often contradict the apparent utterance (Attardo, 2000; Muecke, 1982). This complexity renders irony particularly difficult to transfer across languages, as translators must recognize, reconstruct, and adapt ironic strategies in accordance with the cultural and linguistic norms of the target language (TL). Failure to identify these implicit elements frequently leads to semantic shifts, reduction of rhetorical effect, or loss of the contradiction that constitutes the essence of irony.

This challenge is further evidenced by previous research indicating a tendency among translators—especially EFL learners—to employ literal techniques when handling irony. Such literal translation often eliminates the pragmatic contrast and intentional ambiguity that are central to irony (Sukmaningrum, 2018; Sianipar et al., 2025). Factors contributing to this tendency include limited recognition of irony markers, source-language interference, low pragmatic sensitivity, and insufficient understanding of translation principles. However, as emphasized by Skorov (2009), irony is an element that should be preserved in translation, even if doing so occasionally requires sacrificing literal accuracy.

The complexity of irony translation is further intensified by cultural differences that influence the use and interpretation of humor and irony (Chakhachiro, 2009). Aini (2020) demonstrates that mistranslations often occur due to learners' inability to access culturally equivalent expressions, resulting in meanings that fail to represent the communicative intent of the source text (ST). Accordingly, translators must consider the principle of equivalence as a foundation for handling irony and its implicative effects (Żochowska, 2021). In line with this, Nababan et al. (2012) assert that translation quality should satisfy three principal parameters: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. These parameters are interdependent; a translation that is lexically accurate does not necessarily preserve ironic effects, whereas a socially acceptable translation may fail to convey the intended meaning of the source text (ST).

Several studies have examined irony translation across various text types. Żochowska (2021) shows that literal techniques in translating *Pride and Prejudice* result in the loss of ambiguity and register mismatch. Sukmaningrum (2018) and Sianipar et al. (2025) highlight that both student translators and AI systems tend to use literal translation, leading to the narrowing of ironic meaning. Similarly, Karama and Ali (2024) and Irodakhon (2025) demonstrate that irony in literary and audiovisual texts often requires modulation, amplification, and cultural adaptation to maintain humor, pragmatic tension, and acceptability in the TL. Although these findings have demonstrated that literal translation tends to reduce ironic expressions, existing studies have largely focused on identifying translation techniques rather than systematically examining their impact on translation quality.

In addition, studies on *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* indicate that the novel is rich in nonliteral pragmatic devices that demand flexible translation strategies. Riska (2025) found that euphemisms in the novel were often rendered through omission to maintain tonal consistency. Silalahi (2025) revealed that politeness strategies were frequently modified via cultural adaptation to align with Indonesian pragmatic norms. Elsaadany (2025) showed that translating taboo elements necessitated cultural substitution to balance the author's expressiveness with reader sensitivity. Collectively, these studies affirm the prevalence of nonliteral rhetorical strategies in the novel; However, no study has examined the impact of translation techniques on the quality of irony translation.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines the translation of irony in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* and its Indonesian version. Two main

objectives are formulated: (1) to identify irony translation techniques based on Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, and (2) to evaluate translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability, employing Nababan et al.'s (2012) TQA model. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on identifying irony types or translation techniques, this study investigates the relationship between translation techniques and translation quality outcomes. By doing so, it provides empirical evidence regarding which techniques are more effective and which are less suitable for preserving ironic expressions in translation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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### Concept and Typology of Irony

Irony is a complex communicative phenomenon characterized by a discrepancy between literal expression and intended meaning. While classical approaches view irony as a form of deliberate insincerity that relies on shared contextual knowledge and inferential interpretation (Attardo, 2000), contemporary perspectives emphasize its role as a pragmatic and evaluative device for expressing criticism, humor, attitudes, and social commentary beyond literal meaning (Garmendia, 2010; Griauslytė, 2021). Consequently, irony is increasingly understood as a context-dependent rhetorical strategy whose interpretation depends on the interaction between linguistic cues, communicative intentions, and audience expectations. This complexity presents significant challenges for translation, as translators must preserve not only semantic content but also pragmatic and rhetorical effects.

Among the various classifications of irony, Muecke's (1982) typology remains one of the most widely adopted, distinguishing three major forms: verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony. Verbal irony involves a contrast between literal and intended meanings, dramatic irony occurs when audiences possess knowledge unavailable to characters, and situational irony emerges from a discrepancy between expected and actual outcomes (Pettineo & Joseph, 2012). Despite their differences, these forms share a common underlying principle: irony fundamentally arises from a tension or incongruity between meaning, knowledge, or anticipated results and the reality that ultimately unfolds.

For translation studies, irony is particularly significant because it is directly realized through linguistic choices and requires translators to reconstruct implicit meanings, evaluative nuances, and rhetorical intentions across languages. This form is especially prominent in contemporary non-fiction texts such as Mark Manson's *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*, where irony is frequently employed through colloquial language, humor, and implicit criticism. Accordingly, the present study focuses on verbal irony as the primary unit of analysis to examine how its pragmatic and rhetorical effects are preserved in translation.

### Translation Techniques and Quality Assessment Frameworks

To investigate how translation decisions affect the preservation of irony, this study integrates Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques framework

with Nababan et al.'s (2012) Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model. While Molina and Albir's framework explains how translation decisions are realized at the micro-linguistic level, it does not adequately assess whether such decisions successfully preserve rhetorical and pragmatic effects in the target text. Conversely, Nababan et al.'s model provides a systematic evaluation of translation outcomes through measurable quality parameters but offers limited insight into the procedural choices underlying those outcomes. Integrating these frameworks therefore enables a process-product perspective that is particularly suitable for examining irony translation, where both translation strategies and their communicative consequences require systematic analysis.

Molina and Albir (2002) conceptualize translation techniques as context-dependent procedures identifiable through comparisons between the source text (ST) and target text (TT). This perspective is particularly relevant to irony translation because ironic meaning often emerges from localized linguistic choices whose interpretation depends heavily on contextual and pragmatic factors. In contemporary non-fiction, irony frequently operates through subtle lexical, phrasal, and clause-level manipulations that convey implicit evaluations, contradictions, and rhetorical intentions. Consequently, a micro-functional analysis is necessary to reveal how translators negotiate these meanings and reconstruct them for target-language readers.

However, identifying translation techniques alone is insufficient to determine whether ironic effects are effectively transferred. For this reason, the present study adopts Nababan et al.'s (2012) TQA model, which operationalizes translation quality through three interrelated dimensions: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Using a three-point scale, the model evaluates the extent to which a translation preserves source-text meaning, conforms to target-language norms, and remains accessible to readers. Unlike approaches that prioritize a single quality dimension, the TQA framework promotes a holistic assessment of translation performance, consistent with the view that translation quality should be evaluated through the interaction of multiple dimensions rather than isolated linguistic features (Williams, 2013; Sofyan & Tarigan, 2022).

Recent studies in irony, humor, and pragmatic translation further underscore the importance of such multidimensional evaluation. Previous research suggests that translators frequently encounter tensions between preserving semantic meaning and achieving cultural naturalness when rendering ironic expressions (Żochowska, 2021; Sianipar et al., 2025). Strategies that enhance acceptability and readability may simultaneously weaken the semantic incongruity and rhetorical tension that constitute the essence of irony. Despite growing scholarly attention to irony translation, existing studies have largely examined translation techniques and translation quality as separate analytical domains. As a result, limited attention has been devoted to understanding how specific translation techniques influence the preservation of ironic meaning while simultaneously affecting accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

This gap is particularly evident in studies of contemporary self-help discourse, where irony is frequently employed alongside humor, colloquial

language, vulgarity, and social criticism. Such texts present unique translational challenges because the communicative impact of irony depends not only on semantic transfer but also on the preservation of pragmatic and rhetorical effects. By integrating Molina and Albir's process-oriented framework with Nababan et al.'s product-oriented evaluation model, the present study addresses this gap through a systematic examination of the relationship between translation techniques and translation quality. Applied to Mark Manson's *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*, the integrated framework enables an analysis of how particular translation techniques contribute to the preservation, transformation, or loss of ironic meaning, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of irony translation quality in contemporary non-fiction.

## RESEARCH METHOD

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### Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the phenomenon of translation products, specifically the translation of irony in the novel *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* and its Indonesian version. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the data consist of linguistic elements requiring contextual, pragmatic, and interpretive analysis rather than numerical measurement (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Through this approach, the researcher observes, comprehends, organizes, classifies, and relates categories; identifies patterns; and interprets those patterns within broader linguistic and cultural contexts to uncover how irony is constructed and transferred across languages (Santosa, 2021; Sutopo, 2006).

This research focuses on two primary types of data. First, the linguistic data consist of ironic utterances identified in the English source text (ST). Second, the translation data include the techniques used to translate these ironic utterances and the quality of their Indonesian equivalents. The translation analyzed in this study is the officially published Indonesian version of the novel, which was produced by a professional translator with extensive experience in translating contemporary non-fiction works. This ensures that the dataset represents a realistic and professional translation practice. Consequently, the study aims to provide deep insights into the translation techniques that influence the success of irony transfer, while also contributing practical implications for improving translator competence in handling non-literal language.

### Data Collection Techniques

This study utilized two primary data sources: documents and expert raters. The documents consist of the English version of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* and its Indonesian translation. Data collection began with multiple close readings of the text to enhance comprehension of the author's rhetorical style, particularly his frequent use of irony. To ensure systematic recognition rather than subjective impression, these selection criteria included mismatches between literal wording and intended meaning, contrastive statements, deliberate understatement, and pragmatic reversal.

The second data source involves three expert raters who were recruited to evaluate the translation techniques and translation quality. These raters were

selected based on three criteria: (1) expertise in translation theory and pragmatics; (2) high proficiency in both English (source language) and Indonesian (target language); and (3) a formal education background in the field of linguistics and translation studies. These experts participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to confirm the identification of ironic utterances, evaluate the translation techniques applied, and assess the translation quality.

Data collection was carried out through document analysis and FGD. The initial stage involved identifying the ironic utterances in both the ST and the TT, followed by an initial mapping of translation techniques and quality. The FGD served as a verification instrument, allowing informants to provide justifications for the translator's lexical and pragmatic choices and to evaluate their implications. To ensure interrater reliability and validity, any disagreements among the FGD raters regarding the categorization or quality assessment were resolved through collaborative discussion until a mutual consensus was reached. The translation techniques were analyzed using the framework proposed by Molina & Albir (2002), while translation quality was assessed using the evaluation rubric developed by Nababan et al. (2012), which evaluates three main aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Meeting all three criteria is essential for determining whether the pragmatic effect of irony is adequately maintained in the TT.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study followed the six-stage model proposed by Miles et al. (2014). The first stage involved data collection, comprising utterances containing irony in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* and their translations. In the second stage, the data were prepared by segmenting the text into smaller units at the clause level to isolate portions containing ironic expressions. The third stage entailed coding, which involved identifying types of irony and annotating the translation techniques employed according to Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, as well as marking translation quality with reference to accuracy, acceptability, and readability, following Nababan et al. (2012).

The fourth stage consisted of data presentation and reduction through matrices that organized the impact of translation techniques to translation quality. In the fifth stage, analysis and interpretation were conducted to evaluate the extent to which specific techniques effectively preserved the meaning and naturalness of irony in the target language. The final stage summarized the main findings, highlighting the techniques that consistently maintained irony, identifying the types of shifts that occurred, and providing recommendations for future research and the practice of translating irony more accurately, acceptably, and intelligibly.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

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### **Findings**

#### **Ironic Expressions and Their Translation Techniques**

This section presents the distribution of ironic expressions identified in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* and the translation techniques applied to render

these expressions into Indonesian. The identification of ironic expressions was conducted through document analysis based on Muecke's (1982) framework, while translation techniques were examined using Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy. All data were further validated through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to ensure analytical reliability. The distribution of ironic expressions is provided below:

Table 1. Distribution of Ironic Expressions

| Classification    | Frequency |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Situational Irony | 120       |
| Verbal Irony      | 10        |

Table 1 shows that situational irony constitutes the overwhelmingly dominant category, accounting for 120 instances. This predominance indicates that Manson relies heavily on incongruities between expectation and reality to construct his rhetorical critique of self-help culture. Verbal irony appears less frequently (10 instances), yet remains essential in shaping the book's satirical tone and persuasive stance. Notably, no instances of dramatic irony were identified. This absence aligns with the nonfictional and expository nature of the text, which does not provide the narrative structure or informational asymmetry typically required for dramatic irony to emerge.

Following the identification of ironic expressions, the analysis proceeds by systematically mapping the translation techniques operative in the rendering of both irony categories. This procedural step aims to delineate the translator's techniques orientation and to assess the degree to which each technique sustains, attenuates, or reconfigures the nuanced ironic effect embedded in the source text. The quantitative distribution of these techniques is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Translation Techniques Distribution for Ironic Expressions

| No           | Translation Techniques | Frequency  | Percentage  |
|--------------|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1.           | Established Equivalent | 116        | 41.28%      |
| 2.           | Modulation             | 62         | 22.06%      |
| 3.           | Amplification          | 55         | 19.57%      |
| 4.           | Transposition          | 15         | 5.34%       |
| 5.           | Adaptation             | 10         | 3.56%       |
| 6.           | Reduction              | 10         | 3.56%       |
| 7.           | Borrowing              | 9          | 3.20%       |
| 8.           | Discursive Creation    | 4          | 1.42%       |
| <b>Total</b> |                        | <b>281</b> | <b>100%</b> |

### *Established Equivalent*

Molina and Albir (2002) explain that the established equivalent technique is applied when the target text (TT) has a conventional equivalent capable of representing the meaning or function of an element from the source text (ST). Due to its conventional nature, this technique is often used in translating ironic expressions. An example of its application is provided below.

### **Excerpt 1**

- SL:** You can't be an important and life-changing presence for some people without also being **a joke and an embarrassment to others**. (page 17)
- TL:** *Anda tidak akan bisa menjadi sosok yang penting dan mengubah hidup beberapa orang, tanpa menjadi **bahan candaan dan tertawaan** bagi orang lain terlebih dahulu. (page 19)*

In this instance, the ironic expression “a joke and an embarrassment” is translated into “bahan candaan dan tertawaan,” employing the established equivalence technique. This translation successfully conveys the ironic contrast between being admired and simultaneously being ridiculed, preserving the pragmatic function of the source text. The technique ensures consistency of meaning while utilizing familiar and conventional expressions in Indonesian, producing a natural and fluent rendering. As a result, the effect of irony remains intact, enhancing reader comprehension and engagement.

### *Modulation*

This technique shifts the perspective or focus of the translation to better align with TT. This technique allows for alternative word or expression choices without changing the original meaning of ST. In translating ironic expressions, modulation is important for preserving the ironic effect while ensuring the translation sounds natural and culturally appropriate. An example of its application is provided below.

### **Excerpt 2**

- SL:** The more you **desperately want to be rich**, the more poor and unworthy you feel, regardless of how much money you actually make. (page 9)
- TL:** *Semakin **mati-matian anda berusaha ingin kaya**, anda akan merasa semakin miskin dan tidak berharga, terlepas dari seberapa besar penghasilan anda sebelumnya. (page 11)*

In this instance, the phrase “desperately want to be rich” in ST conveys an intense desire, whereas it is translated as “mati-matian berusaha ingin kaya” in TT, emphasizing the effort rather than mere desire. Despite the lexical shift, the ironic meaning remains equivalent, preserving the paradox between striving for wealth and feeling inadequate. This technique enables the translator to maintain the function and effect of irony without being constrained by the ST structure, resulting in a more natural and culturally appropriate translation that resonates with the target readership.

### *Amplification*

Amplification is a translation technique in which the translator adds words or phrases not explicitly present in the source text (ST) but necessary in the target text (TT) to clarify meaning or context. In translating ironic expressions, this technique helps emphasize the contrast or paradox inherent in the irony. An example of its application is provided below.

### **Excerpt 3**

**SL:** Some people get saddled with worse problems than others. But as much as this may upset us or disturb us, it ultimately changes nothing about the responsibility equation of our individual situation. (Page 110)

**TL:** *Beberapa orang terbebani dengan masalah yang lebih parah ketimbang orang lain. dan beberapa orang ditimpa aneka bencana secara mengerikan. namun meskipun sedikit banyak ini mungkin buat kita jengkel atau terganggu, pada akhirnya ini tidak mengubah apapun mengenai tanggung jawab yang melekat pada situasi pribadi kita. (page 129)*

In this instance, the added phrase “*dan beberapa orang ditimpa aneka bencana secara mengerikan*” does not appear in the ST, showing the application of amplification through the introduction of additional detail. These additions enhance clarity and readability for Indonesian readers but also expand the original meaning beyond the ST. As a result, the TT becomes more explicit and dramatized, causing a slight reduction in semantic accuracy even though the ironic tone of the passage remains perceptible.

#### *Transposition*

This technique involves changing the grammatical class or structure of elements from the source text (ST) to align with the grammatical system of the target text (TT) without altering the original meaning. Here is an example of how this technique is applied.

#### **Excerpt 4**

**SL:** Charles Bukowski was an alcoholic, **a womanizer**, a chronic gambler, **a lout**, **a cheapskate**, a deadbeat, and on his worst days, a poet. He’s probably the last person on earth you would ever look to for life advice or expect to see in any sort of self-help book. Which is why he’s the perfect place to start. (page 1)

**TL:** *Charles Bukowski dulunya adalah seorang pecandu alkohol, senang bermain perempuan, pejudi kronis, kasar, kikir, tukang utang dan, dalam hari-hari terburuknya, seorang penyair. Dia barangkali adalah manusia terakhir di muka bumi yang bakal anda mintai nasehat tentang kehidupan, atau nama terakhir yang ingin anda. (page 1)*

In this instance, the noun phrases “a womanizer,” “a lout,” and “a cheapskate” in ST are translated as “senang bermain perempuan,” “kasar,” and “kikir” in TT, demonstrating a shift from nouns to verb and adjective. This application of the transposition technique adjusts the grammatical structure to align with Indonesian syntax while preserving the descriptive meaning of the source text. By changing the word class, the translation achieves greater naturalness and fluency without altering the original evaluative tone. Consequently, the target text maintains both the semantic content and stylistic effect of the ST.

### *Adaptation*

This technique adjusts linguistic or cultural elements to better fit the context of the target language. Adaptation is applied when an expression in ST lacks a direct equivalent in TT, requiring adjustments that convey the intended meaning in a culturally appropriate way. The following section presents an illustrative example of its application, particularly in translating ironic expressions.

#### **Excerpt 5**

**SL:** The key to a good life is **not giving a fuck** about more; it's giving a fuck about less, giving a fuck about only what is true and immediate and important. (page 5)

**TL:** *Kunci untuk kehidupan yang baik bukan tentang **memedulikan lebih banyak hal**; tapi tentang memedulikan hal yang sederhana saja, hanya peduli tentang apa yang benar dan mendesak dan penting.* (page 6).

In this instance, the vulgar expression “*not giving a fuck*” is adapted into the more neutral phrase “*memedulikan lebih banyak hal.*” This adjustment makes the expression culturally acceptable for Indonesian readers. However, the adaptation also reduces the emotional intensity and sharpness of the original ironic tone, since the strong vulgar emphasis in the ST is softened in the TT. Despite this shift in expressive force, the translator succeeds in preserving the core meaning and rendering it in a form that reads naturally in the target language.

### *Reduction*

Reduction involves eliminating elements present in the source text's expressions of irony. While this technique can result in a more concise translation of TT, it may also reduce or obscure some of the ironic nuance or emphasis from ST. The following provides an example of its application.

#### **Excerpt 6**

**SL:** This book doesn't give a fuck about alleviating your problems or your pain. **And that is precisely why you will know it's being honest.** (page 21)

**TL:** *buku ini tidak berbicara bagaimana cara meringankan masalah atau rasa sakit anda.* (page 24)

In this instance, the clause “*And that is precisely why you will know it's being honest*” in ST is omitted in TT, demonstrating the application of the reduction/deletion technique. The translator removes this part to streamline the sentence while maintaining the core meaning of the source text, focusing on the book's stance regarding readers' problems or pain. As a result, the emphasis on the book's ironic honesty is reduced, and the full ironic impact is not entirely conveyed in the target text.

### *Borrowing*

This technique involves directly transferring words or expressions from ST into TT. While this technique preserves the precise meaning of specialized or

culturally specific terms, it may pose challenges for readers unfamiliar with the borrowed terms. An example of its application in translating irony is provided below.

#### Excerpt 7

**SL:** Happiness is not a solvable equation. Dissatisfaction and unease are **inherent** parts of human nature and, as we'll see, necessary components to creating consistent happiness. (page 26)

**TL:** *Kebahagiaan bukanlah suatu persamaan yang dapat dipecahkan. Ketidakpuasan dan kegelisahan merupakan bagian yang **inheren** dari sifat manusia dan seperti yang akan kita lihat bersama, komponen yang penting untuk menciptakan kebahagiaan yang konsisten. (page 30)*

In this instance, terms “inherent” in ST are directly borrowed into TT as “inheren”. This application of the borrowing technique preserves the precise meaning of the original terms, which are common in academic and psychological discourse. However, readers who are not familiar with these loanwords may find it more difficult to fully grasp the meaning. While the conceptual clarity is maintained for specialized audiences, the accessibility of the text for general readers is somewhat reduced.

#### *Discursive Creation*

This technique involves introducing new words, phrases, or ideas in the target text (TT) that are not explicitly present in the source text (ST). While this technique can help convey implied meanings or adapt the text for clarity, it may also alter the original nuance or effect. An example of its application in translating irony is provided below.

#### Excerpt 8

**SL:** **You too are going to die**, and that's because you too were fortunate enough to have lived. (page 202)

**TL:** ***Anda terlalu mudah untuk mati**, dan itu karena anda juga cukup beruntung bisa hidup hingga sekarang ini. (page 241)*

In this instance, the phrase “*You too are going to die*” in ST is rendered as “*Anda terlalu mudah untuk mati*” in TT, which constitutes a discursive creation. The translator introduces an entirely new meaning—“terlalu mudah untuk mati”—that does not exist in the source text, altering the original existential tone into an unintended evaluative statement. As a result, the irony in the ST, which positions death as an inevitable counterpart to having lived, is not accurately conveyed. This shift produces a different semantic and pragmatic effect in the TT, demonstrating how discursive creation can lead to significant deviation from the source meaning.

### **The Impact of Translation Techniques on the Translation Quality**

Translation techniques exert a direct and substantive influence on the overall quality of a translated text (Molina & Albir, 2002), making the selection of

an appropriate technique for a given linguistic context a critical procedural decision. Consistent with this view, Nababan et al. (2012) argue that translation quality is operationalized through three core parameters—accuracy, acceptability, and readability. In the present study, these parameters are employed to evaluate the extent to which each technique preserves the propositional content, achieves stylistic and naturalness, and maintains the processability of ironic expressions in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*. The following discussion provides a detailed account of how each translation technique differentially shapes these dimensions of translation quality.

Table 3. The Impact of Translation Techniques on Translation Quality

| Translation Techniques | Frequency  | Average of Translation Quality |               |             |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
|                        |            | Accuracy                       | Acceptability | Readability |
| Established Equivalent | 116        | 3                              | 3             | 3           |
| Modulation             | 62         | 3                              | 3             | 3           |
| Amplification          | 55         | 2                              | 3             | 3           |
| Transposition          | 15         | 3                              | 3             | 3           |
| Adaptation             | 10         | 2                              | 3             | 3           |
| Reduction              | 10         | 1                              | 2             | 2           |
| Borrowing              | 9          | 3                              | 2             | 2           |
| Discursive Creation    | 4          | 1                              | 2             | 2           |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>281</b> | <b>2,7</b>                     | <b>2,9</b>    | <b>2,9</b>  |

Based on Table 3, it is evident that the selection of translation techniques directly impacts the quality of irony translation. Established Equivalent was the most dominant technique and consistently produced the highest quality, achieving a perfect score (3) across accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Similar results were demonstrated by Modulation and Transposition, which successfully maintained the original meaning while producing natural and easily comprehensible translations.

On the other hand, techniques involving the addition of information or cultural adjustments exhibited a trade-off among the quality aspects. Amplification and Adaptation achieved high scores in acceptability and readability (3) but scored lower in accuracy (2). This finding indicates that adding information or domesticating the text can enhance fluency, yet it potentially shifts the original meaning. Conversely, the Borrowing technique maintained high accuracy (3) but resulted in lower acceptability and readability (2), as the foreign lexical elements felt less natural to target-language readers.

Meanwhile, Reduction and Discursive Creation yielded the lowest translation quality. Both techniques received the lowest possible score for accuracy (1) and diminished both acceptability and readability (2). Overall, these findings demonstrate that the effective translation of irony requires a delicate balance between semantic precision and target-language naturalness, making Established Equivalent, Modulation, and Transposition the most capable techniques for preserving the pragmatic effect of irony.

## Discussion

This study uniquely highlights how irony operates and is translated within contemporary nonfiction, specifically in self-help literature like *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*. Unlike works of fiction, this text is predominantly driven by situational irony, followed by verbal irony, while dramatic irony is entirely absent due to structural constraints. This distribution reflects Manson's core discursive strategy: subverting readers' expectations to critique the overly optimistic paradigms typical of the self-help genre. This aligns with Puteri and Kristiana (2023), who view situational irony as an evaluative device for critiquing incongruent social realities. In this context, translating irony transcends mere linguistic transfer; it requires preserving the author's blunt, hyperbolic satire without losing the pragmatic incongruity that triggers the ironic effect.

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of translation technique selection in determining output quality. The predominance of Established Equivalent, Modulation, and Transposition—which achieved perfect scores in accuracy, acceptability, and readability—demonstrates that the successful translation of irony relies on the translator's competence to recognize ironic expressions in the TT. Established Equivalent enables the achievement of semantic equivalence while producing natural expressions (Żochowska, 2021), whereas Transposition adjusts grammatical structures without diminishing the intended rhetorical effect (Sianipar et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Modulation facilitates shifts in conceptual perspectives, enabling ironic expressions to be rendered more naturally and understood more easily by target readers (Silalahi, 2025; Kurniasari, 2025). These findings indicate that the successful translation of irony does not depend on strict fidelity to source-language forms, but rather on the ability to naturally reconstruct meaning and pragmatic effects in the target language.

Furthermore, this study extends the findings of Karama and Ali (2024) and Irodakhon (2025), who argue that Amplification and Adaptation are effective techniques for translating humor, ironic nuances, and acceptability in the target language. However, the present study expands on these findings by demonstrating that assessing the effectiveness of translation techniques solely on the basis of acceptability does not provide a comprehensive understanding. While both techniques may result in more natural and acceptable translations for target readers, they may also compromise semantic accuracy due to the addition of information or cultural adjustments. Conversely, the Borrowing technique preserves semantic accuracy but often results in expressions that feel foreign, less natural, and not fully integrated into the lexical system of the target language, thereby potentially hindering readers' comprehension (Sukmaningrum, 2018) and reducing acceptability and readability. These findings emphasize that the effectiveness of irony translation techniques must be evaluated multidimensionally by considering accuracy, acceptability, and readability simultaneously.

This study also reveals that the challenges in translating irony lies in the loss of pragmatic cues that construct implicit meaning. This is reflected in the lowest score of translation quality resulting from Reduction and Discursive Creation. As a pragmatic phenomenon, irony depends entirely on the reader's ability to infer meaning through the clash between literal statements and context (Kamyanyets, 2017). Omitting essential elements through Reduction (Scandura, 2004) or

introducing entirely new meanings via Discursive Creation has the potential to eliminate the contextual cues necessary to trigger an ironic effect. As noted by Puşnei (2021), altering meaning without considering the implicature structure can lead to the total loss of the irony. Therefore, these two techniques should be used highly selectively and with extreme caution when translating ironic utterances.

Overall, this study affirms that the successful translation of irony requires a multidimensional translational competence (Nababan, 2008; Gunawan et al., 2022; Anshori et al., 2024). Such competence encompasses not only bilingual proficiency but also a deep understanding of pragmatic meanings and cultural contexts, as well as the ability to reconstruct communicative effects in the target language (Masduqi et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). Thus, the selection of translation techniques cannot be based solely on lexical equivalence; translators must critically consider their impact on all three dimensions of translation quality. These findings offer a solid theoretical contribution by demonstrating that the successful translation of irony requires a delicate balance among accuracy, acceptability, and readability, and that quality evaluation must always be conducted comprehensively across all three parameters.

## CONCLUSION

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This study contributes a new perspective to translation studies by examining the preservation of irony in contemporary nonfiction, a genre in which irony functions not as a fictional narrative device but as a form of direct evaluative criticism. The findings indicate that the successful translation of texts in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck* depends not on strict literal fidelity but on the translator's ability to reconstruct pragmatic incongruity naturally in the target language. By utilizing target-language conventions and applying natural structural shifts, the translator was able to preserve both the core meaning and the rhetorical force of the source text. These findings suggest that translating irony requires a careful balance between semantic accuracy and naturalness in the target culture.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates a significant relationship between the choice of translation techniques and the preservation of ironic effects. Techniques involving conceptual and grammatical adjustments, namely Established Equivalent, Modulation, and Transposition, proved effective in maintaining accuracy, naturalness, and ironic effect of the ST. In contrast, techniques relying on excessive addition, cultural domestication, or omission, such as Amplification, Adaptation, Reduction, and Discursive Creation, tended to disrupt the inferential cues necessary for ironic interpretation. These findings highlight that irony is a fragile pragmatic phenomenon; attempts to simplify or overexplain the text may reduce its ironic effect and alter the author's intended tone.

Theoretically, this study emphasizes that translating irony requires multidimensional competence that integrates linguistic accuracy, pragmatic awareness, and cultural sensitivity. Practically, the findings offer valuable implications for translation pedagogy and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. By understanding how the choice of translation techniques influences the preservation of irony, educators can move beyond teaching lexical equivalence

alone and equip students with the analytical skills needed to address the cognitive and cultural challenges of translating conceptually rich and non-literal texts.

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