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**AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES AND
TRANSLATION READABILITY OF SATIRICAL
EXPRESSION IN THE SUBTITLE OF *HOUSE OF CARDS*
ON NETFLIX**

BACHELOR'S THESIS

Proposed as a Compulsory Prerequisite
For bachelor's degree in applied Linguistics (S.Tr.Li)

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PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT
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2026



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PREFACE

The researcher would like to express his deepest gratitude to Allah SWT for all the blessings bestowed upon him, which have enabled the completion of this thesis entitled *AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES AND TRANSLATION READABILITY OF SATIRICAL EXPRESSION IN THE SUBTITLE OF HOUSE OF CARDS ON NETFLIX*.

This thesis is submitted as a compulsory requirement for obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Linguistics under the Study Program of English for Business and Professional Communication, Department of Business Administration, Politeknik Negeri Jakarta.

On this occasion, the writer would like to express her sincere gratitude to:

1. Farizka Humolungo, M.A., as the Head of the English for Business and Professional Communication Study Program and as the writer's thesis supervisor, for her generous time, guidance, and invaluable support throughout the completion of this thesis.
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ABSTRACT

Satire is one of the most challenging forms of language to translate because it conveys meaning through irony, humor, cultural references, and implicit criticism rather than literal expressions. These challenges become more complex in audiovisual translation, where subtitle translators must preserve both meaning and communicative effect within linguistic and technical constraints. This study aims to identify the types of satirical expressions found in the English-Indonesian subtitles of House of Cards on Netflix, analyze the translation techniques employed, and evaluate the readability of the translated satirical expressions. This research adopted a qualitative case study approach using document analysis. The data consisted of 50 satirical expressions collected through purposive sampling from the official English and Indonesian subtitles of House of Cards Season 1. The analysis was based on Abrams and Harpham's (2012) classification of satire, Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, and Nababan et al.'s (2012) readability assessment model. The findings show that Horatian satire is the most dominant type (44%), followed by Juvenalian (42%) and Menippean satire (14%). Literal Translation is the most frequently applied technique (72%), followed by Established Equivalent (12%), Adaptation and Modulation (6% each), and Discursive Creation and Reduction (2% each). The results also indicate that most translated satirical expressions achieve a high level of readability, although several culturally bound expressions experience semantic shifts that weaken their original satirical effect. Overall, the study concludes that Literal Translation effectively preserves the political criticism, irony, and rhetorical style of the source text, while selective use of other translation techniques helps improve cultural comprehensibility and subtitle readability for Indonesian audiences.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, satire, translation techniques, readability, House of Cards, subtitles.



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ABSTRAK

Satire merupakan salah satu bentuk bahasa yang paling menantang untuk diterjemahkan karena menyampaikan makna melalui ironi, humor, referensi budaya, dan kritik implisit, bukan melalui ungkapan yang bersifat harfiah. Tantangan tersebut menjadi semakin kompleks dalam penerjemahan audiovisual, di mana penerjemah subtitle harus mempertahankan baik makna maupun efek komunikatif di tengah keterbatasan linguistik dan teknis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis ungkapan satir yang terdapat dalam subtitle bahasa Inggris-Indonesia serial *House of Cards* di Netflix, menganalisis teknik penerjemahan yang digunakan, serta mengevaluasi tingkat keterbacaan hasil terjemahan ungkapan satir tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan metode analisis dokumen. Data penelitian terdiri atas 50 ungkapan satir yang dikumpulkan melalui teknik purposive sampling dari subtitle resmi bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia *House of Cards* musim pertama. Analisis dilakukan berdasarkan klasifikasi satire dari Abrams dan Harpham (2012), teknik penerjemahan Molina dan Albir (2002), serta model penilaian keterbacaan dari Nababan dkk. (2012). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa satire Horatian merupakan jenis yang paling dominan (44%), diikuti oleh satire Juvenalian (42%) dan satire Menippean (14%). Teknik Literal Translation merupakan teknik yang paling sering digunakan (72%), diikuti oleh Established Equivalent (12%), Adaptation dan Modulation (masing-masing 6%), serta Discursive Creation dan Reduction (masing-masing 2%). Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar terjemahan ungkapan satir memiliki tingkat keterbacaan yang tinggi, meskipun beberapa ungkapan yang mengandung unsur budaya mengalami pergeseran makna semantik yang mengurangi efek satir dalam teks asli. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa teknik Literal Translation mampu mempertahankan kritik politik, ironi, dan gaya retorik pada teks sumber secara efektif, sementara penggunaan teknik penerjemahan lainnya secara selektif membantu meningkatkan keterpahaman budaya dan keterbacaan subtitle bagi penonton Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: penerjemahan audiovisual, satire, teknik penerjemahan, keterbacaan, *House of Cards*, subtitle.



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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Television series distributed through digital platforms have become significant cultural texts that reflect and critique social and political realities. One prominent example is *House of Cards*, a political drama series produced and distributed by Netflix, which portrays the rise of Frank Underwood, a politician who strategically manipulates power within the United States government. Rather than relying solely on direct narration, the series conveys its political critique through satire, employing irony, exaggeration, and implicit meaning to reveal discrepancies between political ideals and actual practices.

Although set in the United States, the themes presented in *House of Cards* are not limited to its original context. Basuki (2024), in his analysis of Indonesian politics during the presidency of Joko Widodo, identifies patterns such as the consolidation of power through elite coalitions, strategic political appointments, and the use of legal mechanisms to maintain influence. These patterns reflect broader political practices that align with the satirical representation found in the series. This correspondence suggests that the satire in *House of Cards* depicts political behaviors that are also recognizable in other national contexts, including Indonesia.

Given this relevance, the accurate transfer of satirical meaning becomes important for audiences who rely on a site to access, particularly through subtitles provided by streaming platforms. However, satire presents significant challenges in translation. Unlike literal language, satire depends on implicit meaning, cultural references, and the contrast between what is said and what is intended. These elements are often difficult to transfer accurately into another language, especially in audiovisual translation. Consequently, there is a risk that the intended satirical meaning may be reduced or lost in the Indonesian subtitles.

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Translating satire presents significant challenges between the presence of satire in the source text and its potential reception in the target language. Subtitling becomes more complex when applied to texts containing satire. In translating satirical dialogue, translators face a dual challenge: transferring the literal meaning while also preserving the intended critical, ironic, or evaluative effect embedded in the utterance. According to Abrams and Harpham (2012), satire is a literary mode that uses irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to criticize human behavior or social conditions. Therefore, the meaning of satire often goes beyond the surface level, requiring the audience to interpret implicit messages. This makes satire particularly sensitive to translation, as both meaning and effect must be maintained.

However, in the process of translating from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), differences in grammatical systems, syntactic structures, and especially cultural contexts often make literal translation inadequate. This difficulty is exacerbated in subtitling, because the translator's capacity to accurately convey the original expression is restricted by time and geographical limitations. Consequently, the satirical impact of a statement may be diminished or eliminated after translation.

For example :

- **SL:** “Nobody’s a boy scout. Not even boy scouts.”
- **TL:** “*Tak ada yang senang membantu, bahkan pramuka sekalipun.*”

At a surface level, the translation appears readable. However, the phrase “boy scout” in the SL does not primarily refer to someone who enjoys helping others, but carries a cultural connotation of moral innocence, naivety, or idealized purity, often used ironically in satirical contexts. The TL shifts this meaning to “*senang membantu*” (helpfulness), which alters the original implication and removes the ironic and critical tone. Consequently, while part of the semantic meaning is transferred, the satirical effect is not successfully conveyed.

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This example illustrates that translation problems in satire are not only semantic but also pragmatic and cultural. As stated by Newmark (1988), a successful translation should aim to reproduce the same effect on the target audience as the original does on its audience. In the context of audiovisual translation, however, the success of subtitle translation is ultimately determined by how viewers receive and understand the translated message. Unlike professional translators or linguists, ordinary viewers watch subtitles in real time without the opportunity to pause and analyze linguistic or cultural references. As a result, readability becomes the most relevant aspect of translation quality, as it reflects whether subtitles can be easily understood within the temporal and spatial constraints of subtitling. Even when a translation is linguistically accurate, viewers may fail to grasp the intended satirical meaning if the subtitle is difficult to process or contains unfamiliar cultural references. Expressions such as "Nobody's a boy scout. Not even boy scouts." demonstrate how a subtitle may appear natural while failing to communicate the intended satirical implication, causing viewers to miss the political criticism embedded in the dialogue.

For this reason, this study focuses on readability as the primary indicator of translation quality. The readability assessment is conducted using ordinary Indonesian viewers as raters because they represent the actual target audience of Netflix subtitles. Their judgments reflect whether the translated satirical expressions can be understood naturally during viewing without requiring repeated reading or additional contextual explanation. This approach is particularly relevant because subtitle users experience practical constraints such as limited reading time, simultaneous processing of visual and verbal information, and unfamiliarity with source-language political or cultural references.

Several previous studies have investigated satire and its translation from different perspectives. Rahma (2023), Jaya (2022), Sasmita (2016), and Suryadi (2024) examine the forms and functions of satirical expressions, while Hamdiah (2018), Sukmaningrum (2018), Wisudawanto et al. (2022), Syahrani and Souty (2024), and Alharthi (2015) focus on translation strategies and techniques used to translate satire. Studies by Rahma (2023), Jaya (2022), and Sukmaningrum (2018)



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also evaluate translation quality using Nababan et al.'s (2012) framework. However, previous research has primarily examined novels, stand-up comedy, films, or television programs, with little attention given to the readability of satirical expressions in audiovisual subtitles. Moreover, no study has specifically analyzed the readability of satirical expressions in the Indonesian subtitles of House of Cards. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the types of satirical expressions, the translation techniques employed, and, most importantly, the readability of the translated satirical expressions in the Indonesian subtitles of House of Cards.





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1.2 Questions of the Research

In accordance to the study outlined above, this research is guided by the following questions:

1. What satirical expressions and what types of satire are found in the subtitles of the *House of Cards* on Netflix?
2. What techniques of translation are applied in translating satirical expressions in the English-to-Indonesian translation of the subtitle of the *House of Cards* on Netflix?
3. How is the readability of the satirical expression translations in the English-to-Indonesian translation of the subtitle of the *House of Cards* on Netflix?

1.3 Scope of Problems

To keep this study focused, the researcher limits both the object and the theoretical scope. The object of this research is limited to the English audio (Source Text) and the official Indonesia subtitles (Target Text) of the *House of Card* series on Netflix.

The identification of translation techniques is based on the theory of Molina and Albir (2002), while the assessment of translation quality, which focuses on the aspect of readability, is based on the assessment model of Nababan et al. (2012). This study does not discuss other aspects of translation quality, such as accuracy and acceptability in depth. This study also only discusses the satirical expression found in the subtitles and does not cover the entire series script. In addition, this study does not discuss other elements in audiovisual translation, such as the technical aspects of subtitling, subtitle display duration, subtitle synchronization, or audio elements in films. Therefore, this study specifically focuses on the type of satire, their translation techniques, and their level of readability in Indonesian subtitles.



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1.4 Objectives

In accordance with the research questions formulated above, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify satirical expression and types found in the subtitle of the show *House of Cards* on Netflix using Abrams and Harpham (2012) theory.
2. To evaluate the translation techniques used in the subtitle translation of the show *House of Cards*, using the theory of Molina and Albir (20020
3. To evaluate the readability of the translation of the show *House of Cards* on Netflix., based on the assessment model proposed by Nababan et al. (2012).

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significances

Theoretically, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of translation techniques used in translating satirical elements in foreign films and series. This research is expected to provide a contribution to translation studies.

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1.5.2 Practical Significances

Practically, the study can be used as a future reference for translators, students, and the general public by providing insights on how to effectively translate satirical elements in films and series.





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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the translation of satirical expressions in *House of Cards* is not determined solely by the type of satire but also by the translation techniques employed, which ultimately influence the readability of the Indonesian subtitles. Each type of satire, Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean, contains implicit meanings, cultural references, and political criticism that require translators to balance semantic accuracy with readability.

The findings indicate that translation techniques play a crucial mediating role between the source text and the target audience. Techniques that preserve the original meaning and rhetorical function tend to maintain the satirical effect while producing translations that are easier for viewers to understand. Conversely, techniques that shift, simplify, or adapt culturally specific expressions may improve immediate comprehension but can reduce or alter the intended satirical meaning. As a result, a translation may be highly readable while conveying a weaker satirical effect than the source text.

Therefore, the relationship among satirical expressions, translation techniques, and readability is interdependent. The characteristics of a satirical expression influence the translator's choice of technique, and that choice subsequently affects how successfully the satire is conveyed and understood by the target audience. This finding highlights that achieving readable subtitles alone is insufficient; translators must also preserve the pragmatic and critical functions of satire to maintain its communicative impact.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following suggestions are offered for different audiences:

5.2.1 For Translators and Subtitlers

Translators should pay greater attention to the satirical function and rhetorical force of the source text when translating audiovisual materials, particularly political dramas such as *House of Cards*. Satirical expressions often contain irony, sarcasm, metaphor, exaggeration, and cultural references that carry implicit criticism of political institutions, social practices, or individuals. Ergo, translators should not only focus on transferring the literal meaning of an expression but also consider how its satirical effect can be preserved in the target language. Although Literal Translation was found to be the dominant technique in this study and generally resulted in high readability, certain expressions involving political allusions or culture-specific references may require alternative techniques such as Modulation, Adaptation, or Discursive Creation to ensure that the intended criticism and rhetorical impact remain accessible to the target audience.

5.2.2 For Students of the English Department

This study will be a useful reference for students of Translation Studies, Linguistics, Literature, and English for Communication who are interested in audiovisual translation, political discourse, and satire studies. The findings demonstrate how theoretical



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frameworks such as Abrams and Harpham's (2012) classification of satire, Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, and Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment can be applied to authentic subtitle data. Furthermore, this study illustrates the challenges involved in translating satirical expressions across languages and cultures, particularly when dealing with political criticism and culturally embedded meanings. Students are encouraged to explore similar issues in other audiovisual texts to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and translation.

5.2.3 For Future Researchers

This study focused on the analysis of satirical expressions in *House of Cards* Season 1. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of investigation by examining additional episodes, seasons, or other political dramas and satirical television series. Comparative studies between official subtitles and fan-generated subtitles may also provide valuable insights into different translation approaches in rendering satire. In addition, future studies may incorporate other aspects of translation quality, such as accuracy and acceptability, in addition to readability. Researchers may also employ different theoretical frameworks, such as irony theory, relevance theory, critical discourse analysis, or multimodal analysis, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how satirical meaning is constructed and translated in audiovisual media. Furthermore, audience-based studies involving subtitle viewers may offer useful perspectives on how effectively translated satirical expressions convey political criticism and humor in the target culture.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Muhammad Ariobimo Sukmono was born in Jakarta, 7 March 2004. He is currently pursuing his undergraduate studies in English for Business and Professional Communications (BISPRO) at Politeknik Negeri Jakarta. He is currently a Public Relations officer at the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia where handles all the communication with the public, including through social media, communication with the press, to a communication with foreign parties.

He will continue to excel at the field that he's an expert in. Communication, social media, and translation.

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APPENDIXES

English Subtitle	Indonesian Subtitle	Type of Satire	Translation Technique	Readability
Former Governor of Pennsylvania. He did his duty in delivering the keystone state, bless his heart, and now they're about to put him out to pasture.	Mantan Gubernur Pennsylvania. Dia memimpin Pennsylvania dengan baik, terbekatilah dia. Dan sekarang mereka meng pensiunkannya sebagai gubernur.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
For some, it's simply the size of the chair.	Bagi sebagian orang, itu karena besar jabatannya.	Horatian	Adaptation	3
She's a woman, check, and a latina, check.	Dia wanita, ya. Latina, ya.	Horatian	Reduction	2
I keep things moving in a Congress choked by pettiness and lassitude.	Aku membuat segalanya berjalan di Kongres. Berkutat dengan kepicikan dan keletihan.	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	2
My job is to clear the pipes and keep the sludge moving.	Tugasku adalah membersihkan pipa dan membuat kotoran mengalir.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
I've done my time. I backed the right man. Happy New Year! Give and take. Welcome to Washington.	Sudah cukup lama aku melakukannya. Aku mendukung orang yang tepat. Selamat Tahun Baru! Memberi dan menerima. Selamat datang di Washington.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
This is the Washington Herald, Zoe. It's not TMZ.	Ini The Washington Herald, Zoe, bukan TMZ. Kau tahu berapa orang yang	Horatian	Literal Translation	3



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Do you know how many people watch TMZ? I couldn't care less. Which is why print journalism is dying.	menonton TMZ? Aku tak peduli. Karena itulah berita cetak sekarang sedang sekarat.			
You are stuck in the 20th century, Lucas. You lack imagination.	Kau terjebak di abad 20, Lucas. Kau kurang imajinasi.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
You can't? Because that's not what you led us to believe when you begged for 50 grand in donations.	Kau tak bisa? Karena bukan itu yang kau janjikan saat kau meminta donasi 50 ribu dollar.	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3
I'd like to coin the phrase "trickle-down diplomacy."	Aku ingin memasukkan kalimat "Mengalirkan Diplomasi."	Horatian	Discursive Creation	2
The nature of promises.	Hukum alami janji.	Horatian	Established Equivalent	2
It's a chicken-shit move.	Itu tindakan pengecut.	Juvenalian	Adaptation	3
You wouldn't have won without me.	Kalian takkan menang tanpa aku.	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3
I got you hired.	Aku yang membuatmu diterima kerja.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
I love her more than sharks love blood.	Aku mencintainya. Lebih dari hiu mencintai darah.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
We are no longer bound by allegiances.	Kita tak lagi terikat oleh kesetiaan.	Horatian	Established Equivalent	3
How do you devour a whale? One bite at a time.	Itulah cara menghabiskan paus, Doug. Segigit demi segigit.	Horatian	Amplification	3
When I carve him up and toss him to	Saat aku mencabiknya dan	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3



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the dogs.	melemparnya ke anjing...			
Church Speech on humility.	Pidato gereja tentang kerendahan hati.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
A gesture of respect, or desperation.	Pidato gereja tentang kerendahan hati.	Horatian	Discursive Creation	1
We have Donald Blythe drafting the legislation.	Donald Blythe. Jesus. I know.	Horatian	Discursive Creation	2
Did you smell that? The smugness, the false deference.	Kau menciumnya? Kesombongan? Rasa hormat palsu?	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3
She thinks I can be bought with a pair of tickets. What am I, a whore in post-war Berlin?	Pelacur pasca perang di Berlin yang tergiur oleh stocking gratis dan coklat?	Juvenalian	Reduction	2
Too old. Too stupid. Too queer.	Terlalu tua. Terlalu bodoh. Terlalu homo	Juvenalian	Established Equivalent	3
You know what I like about people? They stack so well.	Kau tahu apa yang kusukai dari manusia? Mereka mudah ditumpuk.	Menippean	Literal Translation	3
Don't make them throw money at you.	Jangan buat mereka melempar uang kepadamu.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
He chose money over power.	Dia memilih uang dibanding kekuasaan.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
Money is the McMansion in Sarasota...	Uang itu seperti rumah mewah di Sarasota...	Horatian	Adaptation	3
Power is the old stone building that stands for centuries.	Kekuasaan adalah bangunan batu tua yang kokoh selama berabad-abad.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
Spent the past 2½ getting reamed by	...dan menghabiskan dua	Horatian	Adaptation	3



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the president.	setengah jam diocehi oleh Presiden.			
Why he lied to the American people.	Kenapa dia berbohong kepada rakyat Amerika.	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3
The truth is my heart is not in this fight.	Sebenarnya hatiku tidak ada dalam pertarungan ini.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
I'm no good at this brand of politics.	...tapi aku tak ahli dalam berpolitik.	Horatian	Reduction	3
Congress will survive without you.	Kongres akan tetap berjalan tanpamu.	Horatian	Modulation	3
All I want for that money is your silence.	Yang kuinginkan dari uang itu hanyalah diammu.	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3
There was no congressman. There was no arrest.	Tidak ada Anggota Kongres. Tak ada penangkapan. Semua hal itu tak pernah ada.	Juvenalian	Amplification	3
You want me to lie to the people.	Kau ingin aku berbohong pada rakyat.	Juvenalian	Literal Translation	3
The president should stop this pageant and simply make the call.	Presiden harus menghentikan sandiwara ini dan langsung mengambil keputusan.	Horatian	Adaptation	3
You'd show yourself above party politics.	Kau akan terlihat berada di atas politik partai.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
Politics.	Politik.		Established Equivalent	3
Every single vote has been in defense of Israel.	Setiap suara diberikan demi membela Israel.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
This brand of politics.	Politik semacam ini.	Horatian	Modulation	3



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A congressman, you say?	Seorang anggota kongres, katamu?	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
Quoting a source close to the president.	Mengutip sumber yang dekat dengan presiden.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3
After Michael Kern's withdrawal earlier this week.	Setelah Michael Kern mengundurkan diri minggu ini.	Horatian	Reduction	3
You heard the congressman.	Kalian dengar anggota kongres itu.	Horatian	Literal Translation	3

2. The Subtitle Sheets

Indonesian Sub

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cU6BleCJmyVoUvxLYf9OG-8u0VcA24f2a589YoEheiw/edit?usp=sharing>

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1T2WTqJklag7m46OZgFCoi_ZZMsLaVoy-wW4Y8eRhiog/edit?gid=1512948437#gid=1512948437

English Sub

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XFoC_9D5Q13fdpXfMYAyJCs7tetXliFAYQlnpHAO3Vg/edit?usp=sharing

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XFoC_9D5Q13fdpXfMYAyJCs7tetXliFAYQlnpHAO3Vg/edit?gid=1885979888#gid=1885979888