
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Interjections Used in the Novel "The Midnight Library": Types, Functions, and Translation Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Communication, a fundamental part of human existence, enables interaction among individuals through the conception of meaningful information conveyed by language, which represents ideas and emotions. This study seeks to analyze the types and functions of interjection found in the novel "The Midnight Library" along with translation strategies employed in its Indonesian translation "Perpustakaan Tengah Malam". It employed a descriptive qualitative method, collecting data from both novels as data sources, calculating and categorizing the identified interjections, followed by in-depth elaboration. There were 359 interjections found in the novel. Employing the theory proposed by Ameka in identifying the types of interjections, the novel had 112 Primary Interjections (31%) and 247 Secondary interjections (69%). As for the functions, there were 58 expressive functions, 17 conative functions, and 284 phatic functions. Referring to the Cuenca's translation strategies, this study identified the translator employed literal translation (56%), translation with dissimilar form but identical meaning (16%), non-interjective structure with similar meaning (6%), translation with different meaning (10%), omission (6%), and addition (6%). The findings indicated that secondary types and phatic functions are predominantly used interjection in the novel, whereas the literal translation strategy is the most dominant strategy used by the translator for translating interjections in its Indonesian translation.

KEYWORDS

Conative, expressive, interjection, phatic, translation strategies.

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1. Introduction

Communication, a fundamental part of human existence, enables interaction among individuals through the conception of meaningful information conveyed by language, which represents ideas and emotions. Language can be expressed through body language (gesture), speech (sound), written text (code), or symbols (sign) utilizing established systematic tools and principles (Tseng, 2018; Zadeh, 1971). Language, as a communicative instrument, has variable elements and principles that establish connections through meaningful combinations, applicable as per context and communicative intent. The early hypothesis posits that language originated from individuals producing nonsensical sounds and gestures for communication. This includes the expression of emotion known as interjection, regarded as the most ancient form of language (Keraf in Yatno *et al.*, 2018). The utterances such as *oh*, *hmm*, *aw*, *ugh*, and *jeez* predominantly arise in informal settings, typically interpreted through common sense and tone due to their non-semantic nature. Sapir, an anthropologist-linguist, asserts that interjections are trivial components of language due to their small and functionally insignificant contribution, serving merely as decorative parts that mostly overlooked in grammar (Ameka, 2006). Many linguists, however, have acknowledged interjection as a universal component of language, highlighting their significance in social interaction. Dingemanse (2024), in his annual review titled "Interjection at the Heart of Language," examines interjections and their significance in human communication, revealing that their frequent use facilitates interaction and maintains linguistic equilibrium. The seminal definition of interjection by Ameka (2006) perceives interjection as

"words which conventionally constitute utterances by themselves and express a speaker's current mental state or attitude towards an element in linguistic or extra-linguistic context."

Ameka (1992) categorizes interjections into two classes based on their distinct use and meaning in human interactions, viz. types and functions. Types of interjection are categorized into two, namely primary interjections and secondary interjections. The onomatopoeic words or non-lexical utterances that predominantly occur in dialogues, whether spoken or written, are referred to as primary interjections. Expressions, such as *yuck! wow! ouch! ugh!* or any other produced sound that lacks a distinct meaning and serves solely as interjections, are categorized into this type. Conversely, secondary interjections, such as *help! shit! God! damn! hell!*, are lexemes with semantic significance, indicating they serve additional functions beyond those of interjections. Furthermore, functions of interjection are categorized according to their communicative aim and the sort of meaning they convey. There are three functions of interjections: the expressive function, which reflects the speaker's emotional state (e.g., *wow! ouch!*), the conative function, emphasizing the speaker's desires (e.g., *shh!*), and the phatic function, which facilitates interaction in communication (e.g., *yeah, hmm, huh*) (Ameka, 1992, 2006). This study opts to employ the established theory from Ameka, which has been widely used among other scholars, to identify and analyze interjections.

Translation is a process that entails at least two distinct languages, involving the reconfiguration of the source language into the target language (Watson, 2023). The sudden sensation or outburst of interjections can manifest variably across different languages. Consequently, Goddard (2014) stated that interjections pose significant challenges in translation, particularly primary interjections, which convey instinctive vocal expressions of emotion. In his research, he undergoes an analytical procedure by drafting an explication and deriving intuitive substitution. The process proceeded with the assistance of a native speaker and media data. Therefore, this study opts to adapt the translation strategies proposed by both Baker (2018) and Cuenca (2006), as many scholars have employed these two models to examine the translation of interjections, which is specifically tailored for such elements. Cuenca (2006) asserts that interjections, as a category of words, are "idiomatic units or routines syntactically equivalent to a sentence". Cuenca (2006) further proposed six translation strategies for translating interjections in the publication "Interjection and Pragmatic Errors in Dubbing", which include: 1) literal translation, 2) translation with dissimilar form but identical meaning, 3) non-interjective structure with similar meaning, 4) translation with different meaning, 5) omission, and 6) addition, while adjusting four of Baker's translation strategies on idioms and incorporating two additional strategies. These translation strategies are Cuenca's attempt to address cultural disparities and achieve translational equivalence for interjections.

Written and spoken language are essential communication instruments, each possessing unique attributes and uses (Alsaawi, 2019). Although spoken language is frequently regarded as more instinctive and immediate, written writing facilitates more intricate expression and indirect communication (Alijanian & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2012). Written language functions as a manifestation of cognitive processes, embodying personal and intellectual growth while interlinking diverse facets of human experience (Vereshchagina, 2024). Hence, written language encompasses a greater variety of studies due to its characteristics, structure, and purposes. The expression of emotion through Interjection in text is widely found in writing discourses, such as novel, comic, blog, message, and post, particularly in dialogues to enhance engagement and authenticity. "The Midnight Library" had received Goodreads Choice Awards 2020 for Best Fiction, encompassing the genres of fantasy fiction, philosophical fiction, and science fiction. It explores themes of regret, second chances, and the pursuit of happiness from a third-person perspective. The study of interjections predominantly occurs within the genres of drama, fantasy, comedy, and adventure. For instance, "Interjections in the English Comic Book Scooby-Doo Where are You" by Nana *et al.* (2013) delineates interjections through their types, classification, historical context, and semiotic and pragmatic theories. Another analysis of the novel "Looking for Alaska" by Wahid & Basari (2020) examines the functions, meaning, and categories of interjections. Their interest in analyzing interjections was found in the novel concerning mental health, in which the main protagonist suffers depression, anxiety, and suicidal thought. This study further identified the predominant form of interjections and their capacity to convey emotion to the readers. Therefore, "The Midnight Library," an evocative novel replete with emotional dilemmas, was selected as the focus of the investigation in this current study.

2. Methods

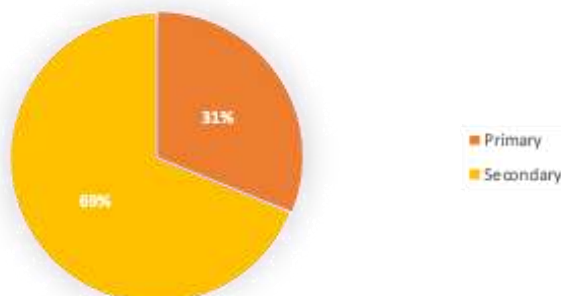
This study scrutinized interjections extracted from the novel "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig and its Indonesian translation, "Perpustakaan Tengah Malam," translated by Dharmawati and published by Gramedia Pustaka. It employed qualitative data analysis to gain knowledge, identify, and explore the variant types of interjections used in the novel, classifying them according to the theoretical frameworks, particularly Ameka's (1992, 2006) theories regarding the types and functions of interjections, and Cuenca's (2006) for the translation strategies for interjections. Creswell (2018) noted that the qualitative approach entails interpretation through several procedures, including summarization, comparison with existing literature, discussion of findings, and articulation of limitations and future directions. The collected data were analyzed and classified according to their characteristics and significance to determine the overall quantity and its variations. The next stage was to provide a detailed descriptive explanation to provide in-depth insight into the information in understanding the interjections employed within the novel genre. The presented data represent interjections found in the novel through a sampling technique.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings in this section are presented in three parts, namely the identification of interjection types, the elaboration on their functions and significance, and the scrutiny of translation strategies used for translating interjections. The first and second parts encompass types and functions of interjection according to the theoretical identification by Ameka (1992, 2006), viz., primary and secondary interjections along with their three functions: expressive, conative, and phatic. Meanwhile, the third part elaborates the translation strategies used for translating interjections through the Cuenca's model (2006).

3.1 Types of Interjections

The novel has a total of 359 interjections, consisting of various forms to express the characters' emotions. The distribution of interjections categorized by type is presented as follows:



Typology	Interjections
Primary	Oh, um, aw, mm-hm, er, ha! Uh, ah, yoo-hoo! Wow! Jeez, ssh
Secondary	Well, Yeah, God, what?! No! Crap, Man, really? Jesus, Fuck, damn, Cool, Right, Hey! Oh my god, God Morgen, bloody hell, that brilliant! Okey-dokey, come on.

Table 1. Types of interjections found in the novel

The primary interjections characterized as “noise-like,” as noted by Goddard (2014), occurred 112 times (31%) in the novel, predominantly featuring the interjection *oh* expressing surprise (*oh wow, oh my*), sympathy (*oh no, poor Mrs. Elm*), defeated (*oh God, no*), agreement (*oh yeah*) or annoyance (*oh crap*). Meanwhile, the “word-like” secondary interjections were the predominant interjections identified in the novel, totaling 247 (69%), with *well* being the most commonly used. The utterance of *well* predominantly occurred at the beginning of statements, serving to introduce remarks, recognize responses, convey hesitation or uncertainty, and provide a moment for contemplation.

Dan: *Thought I saw you go out.*

Nora: **Yes, well, I did.** *I had to.* (interjection serving to introduce remarks and recognize responses) (Haig, 2020)

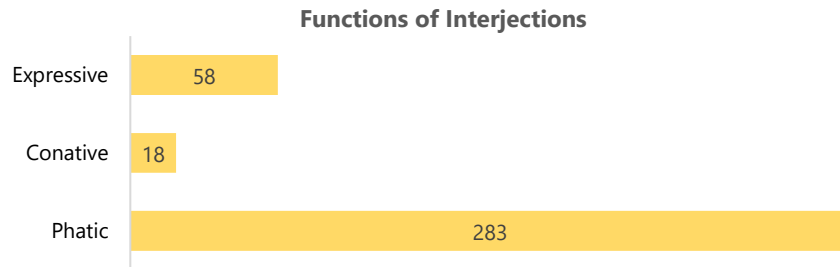
Nora: *I want to die.*

Mrs. Elm: **Well, maybe.** *Maybe not.* (interjection serving as the clue for conveying hesitation or uncertainty) (Haig, 2020)

The majority of interjections *well* in the novel convey a nonchalant tone and a light ambiance, contrasting with the genre of the novel per se. Nora's attitude towards her predicament is demonstrated through her frequent use of interjections as the main protagonist.

3.2 Functions and Significance of Interjections

The bar chart below illustrates the frequency of interjection functions categorized by their communicative meaning, with phatic function at the highest frequency (284), followed by expressive (58) and conative (17), totaling 359 data.



The expressive function includes utterances such as *uh* indicating uncertainty, *wow* conveying amazement and surprise, *jeez* expressing annoyance, and *ha!* denoting shock. All these elucidate the speaker's cognitive processes, emotions, and sensations they experience. For instance, "*Uh, oh. Crap, I have totally forgotten*" as Nora Seed initially exhibits confusion (*uh*), subsequently realizes (*oh*)—referring to the gist of experiencing an awareness—and ultimately concedes her messed up (*crap*). Another instance is an outburst expression or exclamatory utterance of *Ha!* in "*Ha! God no*" as the character expresses simultaneous offense and shock. The interjection of *fuck* is the most frequently uttered word, functioning as the expressive node by the main character Nora, who experiences frustration and panic as she confronts a white bear alone. The remaining interjections identified in the novel include *aw*, *ah*, *er*, *damn*, *bloody hell*, *crap*, *oh my God*, *oh my Lord*, *Jesus*, *um*, and *man*.

The conative function serves as an interjection intended to capture attention or elicit a response from the interlocutor. There are four interjections found in the novel, namely *Hey!* that occurs most frequently (ten times) in the novel, such as "*Hey Nora! Hope Oz is treating you well.*" and "*But hey, I have been thinking a lot lately.*" It is intended to capture the interlocutor's attention. The interjection *ssh!* aims to instruct someone to be silent. Another interjection from the novel includes *come on* serving to encourage someone to act or disclose information, as in "*Come on, don't let us down*" or "*Come on. Please. Help me out*". The last instance of interjection with conative function in the novel is *Yoo-hoo!* as in "*Hello? Yoo-hoo! Can you see me?*" uttered by Nora to capture Mrs. Elm's attention to notice her.

The phatic function comprises utterances or interjections such as *well*, *yeah*, *mm-hm*, and *oh*, serving as the speaker's acknowledgment and response to the listener during discourse. The interjections included in this category are *yeah*, *hmm*, *mm-hm*, *oh*, *cool*, *okey-dokey*, *right*, *what!* and *really?*. The interjection *well* occurs as the highest among all interjections, followed by *yeah* and *oh*. Another illustration of the interjection is presented in the following excerpt.

Ravi shrugged. "*Same as always.*"

"**Hmm. Yeah. Right.**" Nora tried to think. (Haig, 2020)

The interjection *hmm* indicates a response signifying Nora's contemplation over her agreement with Ravi's statement, subsequently followed by the affirmations *yeah* and *right* to express her concurrence. The three interjections illustrated in the excerpt suggest that Nora acquiesced to Ravi's statement due to her uncertainty. Other instances of interjections include *what!* and *really?* acting as a response for confirmation in disbelief or incredulity.

"*These books are portals to all the lives you could be living.*"

"**What?**"

"*You have as many lives as you have possibilities.*" (Haig, 2020)

"*He says hi,*" Nora guessed. *Dan's eyes popped wide with surprise.*

"**Really?**" (Haig, 2020)

Both interjections, albeit different forms, convey the identical meaning, indicating the speaker's emotions of astonishment and disbelief at the unexpected information.

3.3 Translation Strategies for Interjections

This part elaborates the six translation strategies identified in the Indonesian translation of the novel, viz. 1) literal translation, 2) translation with dissimilar form but identical meaning, 3) translation by using non-interjective structure with similar meaning, 4) translation with different meaning, 5) omission, and 6) addition. These strategies are adopted from Cuenca (2006) who adjusted four of Baker's translation strategies on idioms and incorporated two additional strategies. The distribution of each translation strategy is presented in the following table.

NO.	TRANSLATION STRATEGIES	INTERJECTIONS	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	Literal translation	18	56%
2.	Translation with dissimilar form but identical meaning	5	16%
3.	Translation by using non-interjective structure with similar meaning	2	6%
4.	Translation with different meaning	3	10%
5.	Omission	2	6%
6.	Addition	2	6%
Total		32	100%

Table 2. Translation Strategies for Interjections

Referring to Table 1, which presents the types of interjections, Table 2 indicates the number of interjections along with its translation identified in both texts, i.e., the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), comprising 32 interjections. Upon comparing the interjections in English with their Indonesia translations, this study found that the predominant translation strategies employed by the translator is literal translation, primarily derived from secondary types.

Literal Translation

This strategy involves the process of direct translation in converting the source language into the target language with its corresponding equivalence.

ST: "**Come on**, you are still with Ella, right?"

TT: "**Ayolah**, kamu masih sama Ella, kan?" (Haig, 2020)

The interjection of *come on*, as per the Oxford Dictionary, is intended to encourage someone to act sensibly or reasonably. The same applies to the Indonesian definition and the use of *ayolah*. Both interjections have the identical meaning and function in both English and Indonesia. The literal translation applied in this case represents the full equivalence in both meaning and function, i.e., conative node aiming to prompt the interlocutor as to whether he or she remains with Ella. This strategy appears to be the most dominant strategy used in the Indonesian translation of the novel potentially due to the nature of genre and dialogue in the novel, i.e., the frequent use of conversational tone and emotional expressiveness allowing more easily translatable without altering both the form and the meaning through a direction or literal translation (Goddard, 2014).

Translation with Dissimilar Form but Identical Meaning

This strategy addresses the difficulties in translating interjections that have no equal form in the target text (TT) by figuring out the different lexical forms available in the target language (TL) which signifies the identical meaning (Abu Faraj, 2024). It strives to compensate for the translation by focusing more on the meaning than the form; therefore, despite different lexical element used in the TT, the function of interjection produced in the TT remains the same.

ST: "**Well?**" Mrs. Elm had her arms folded.

"**Well** what?" Nora said.

TT: "**Nah?**" Mrs. Elm melipat lengannya.

"**Nah** apa?" kata Nora. (Haig, 2020)

The interjection of *well* mostly acts as a remark response, and the predominant translation in the TT is *yah*. However, in this instance, the translator alters the form into *nah* when addressing a form of question. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), the word *nah* lacks a definitive meaning; however, it is mostly used to point out a fact or conclude a statement. The aforementioned excerpt illustrates Mrs. Elm soliciting Nora's perspective regarding her prior statement. This translation strategy seeks to maintain the function of interjection, i.e., to induce a response from the counterpart, despite altering the form of interjection from the secondary interjection in the ST into the primary one in the TT. The translator, in another possibility, can render the interjection into *Jadi* so that it maintains both the meaning and the form in the TT; however, it will slightly reduce the subtle informal nuance of the dialogue. Therefore, her maneuver to use *nah* in lieu of *jadi* in the TT is presumably motivated by her intention to maintain such nuance.

Translation by Using Non-interjective Structure with Similar Meaning

This strategy aims to identify the appropriate equivalent in the context alongside the decision to alter the form. It differs from the previous strategy in that not only does it alter the form of interjection, but it also, further, converses it into an equivalence with

non-interjective structure. Nevertheless, likewise the previous strategy, it still highlights the importance of finding out the identical or similar meaning of the interjection in the TT.

ST: "**Oh no**," she said. "Oh Joe Oh Joe Oh."

TT: "**Ya ampun**," katanya. "Oh Joe Oh Joe.... Oh." (Haig, 2020)

The translator chose to modify the form of the interjection to align with the context and the acceptability in the TL. The interjection *oh no* signifies sorrow and disappointment. The literal translation may be *oh tidak*; nevertheless, the translator chose to alter the form to emphasize the character's expressed emotion. This strategy aims to create a communicative equivalence, which pinpoints the overall contextual elements and naturality of the TT so as to enhance the TT reader's readability and familiarity. The modification from interjective structure to non-interjective one is presumably acceptable insofar as the meaning from the ST to the TT can be fully transferred. It also considers the better emotional context and stylistic forms norms of the Indonesian language. Although the Indonesian counterpart *Oh tidak*—as the potentially correct direct translation of the interjection—has the equal rendering in terms of both form and meaning, the translator's equivalence *Ya ampun* can capture a more profound sense of dismay and aligns more closely with colloquial Indonesian, hence improving the TT's naturalness.

Translation with Different Meaning

This strategy attempts to compensate the acceptance of different meaning for the appropriate equivalence due to the unavailability of any potentially equal form for the interjection in the ST. Therefore, the translator opts for an alternative solution of expressing interjections. Different from the second and third translation strategies, it compensates both form and meaning for the sake of communicative and pragmatic aspects of the equivalence in the TT.

ST: "Ha! **God**, no."

TT: "Ha! **Astaga**, tidak." (Haig, 2020)

The direct or literal translation of *God* in Indonesian is *Tuhan*. In this context, however, the translator chose a different form and meaning. The interjection of *God* serves to underscore the assertion of *no*, signifying the character's profound disagreement. In the Indonesia language, the term *astaga* is used to convey astonishment or disbelief. In the given context, the translation somehow remains acceptable and comprehensible for the intended readers. This strategy involves the modulation of perspectives from a spiritually religious-related nuance into a neutral one—without involving lexemes related to any religion. Nevertheless, despite meaning disparity between the ST and the TT, the communicative and pragmatic aspect of the interjection remains unaltered, i.e., intended to amplify the assertion succeeding interjection *no* and demonstrate the interlocutor's profound disagreement.

Omission

This strategy of deletion involves removing elements partially or entirely in an attempt to enhance the acceptability and accuracy of the TT for the intended readers. It is an acceptable option that can be selected insofar as the elements removed are deemed insignificant or inevitable due to the absence of appropriate equivalence in the TT.

ST: "**Okey-dokey**," said Mrs. Elm. "Now, time for a book, I reckon. What do you say?"

TT: "**Oke**," kata Mrs. Elm. "Sekarang, waktunya untuk sebuah buku, menurutku. Bagaimana menurutmu?" (Haig, 2020)

The interjection of *okey-dokey* sounds playful and whimsical—due to its inferred wordplay or pun—and synonymous with *okay*. The translator omitted *dokey* in favor of *oke* in the Indonesian translation due to cultural differences regarding this interjection in the ST and TT as well as the unavailability of any wordplay or pun in the TL that can be used as its equivalence. However, both interjections, albeit the omission of the wordplay and pun in the TT, still convey the interlocutor's agreement and do not violate the emotion expressed. According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), omission is justifiable when the meaning is either redundant or fails to add significant communicative value in the target text.

Addition

This strategy involves incorporating elements to achieve equivalent and natural expression in the TT, generally aiming for the improvement of the TT reader's contextual comprehension. It is often used to explicate any inferred or implied meaning embedded in the ST.

ST: "It is what country landlords do. Be jovial and merry and willing to partake in the many and manifold beverages we sell. **Jeez**."

TT: "Itulah yang dilakukan pemilik pub di desa. Bersenang-senang dan bergembira ria dan bersedia ikut serta menikmati aneka ragam minuman yang kita jual. **Demi Tuhan**." (Haig, 2020)

The interjection of *jeez* expresses emotions of annoyance, surprise, anger, or frustration. Nevertheless, the translator opts to alter the form entirely, along with its meaning and function. The phrase *Demi Tuhan* serves as an expression of swearing or making a

commitment. In this case, the translator added a culturally resonant expression to intensify the emotional weight of the interlocutor's utterance. While *Jeez* in English is a mild expression of frustration or disbelief, *Demi Tuhan* carries a stronger emotional load, often associated with swearing or solemn emphasis in Indonesian. This strategy aligns with the theory of communicative equivalence (Baker, 2018), ensuring that the effect of the original utterance is not diluted in translation.

3.4 Meaning Beyond Words: Interjections and Their Translation in Context

The findings reveal distinct patterns in the use, function, and translation of interjections in literary discourse. It demonstrates a predominance of secondary interjections (69%), which are lexicalized expressions with pragmatic roles beyond emotional outbursts (Ameka, 1992). These interjections, such as *well*, *yeah*, and *God*, contribute to shaping character interaction and establishing tone. The high frequency of phatic functions (79.1%) also reflects the novel's narrative style, which often focuses on maintaining interpersonal dynamics and conversational flow. As supported by Ameka (2006), phatic interjections play a crucial role in discourse management, signaling acknowledgement, hesitation, or engagement. This distribution suggests that interjections in the novel serve not only expressive purposes but also pragmatic and discourse-structuring functions, particularly in emotionally nuanced conversations.

The dominance of literal translation (56%) among the six identified strategies indicates a strong preference for preserving the form and function of interjections. This approach aligns with Newmark's (1988) claim that literal translation is often the first strategy used when structural and cultural parallels exist between languages. Moreover, Cuenca (2006) asserts that literal translation is particularly effective for interjections when the pragmatic function remains unchanged. In literary texts, especially those with rich dialogue, maintaining form through literal translation preserves character voice and emotional consistency, provided the TL has an equivalent that is culturally and stylistically appropriate.

In contrast, the use of non-interjective structures (6%) reflects the translator's effort to maintain emotional depth when direct interjections are unavailable or unsuitable in the TL. This pragmatic adaptation aligns with House's (2008) view that translation often involves compensatory mechanisms to ensure communicative intent is preserved, even at the cost of formal equivalence. Such a strategy supports the principle of dynamic equivalence proposed by Nida (1964), where translators are encouraged to prioritize reader reception and emotional fidelity over strict structural correspondence. Less frequent but equally significant are the omission and addition strategies (each 6%), which underscore the translator's interpretive role. Omissions help avoid awkwardness in the TL, especially when the stylistic nuance of the SL lacks an equivalent in Indonesian culture. According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), omissions are justified when elements do not contribute meaningfully or would disrupt naturalness in the TL. Conversely, additions illustrate a deliberate intensification of emotional content to preserve or enhance pragmatic force. This strategy aligns with the theory of communicative equivalence (Baker, 2018), ensuring that the effect of the original utterance is not diluted in translation.

4. Closing Remarks

This study has examined the types, functions, and translation strategies of interjections in *The Midnight Library* and its Indonesian translation *Perpustakaan Tengah Malam*. The findings reveal that interjections, particularly secondary types with phatic functions, play a pivotal role in shaping the emotional tone and dialogic flow of the narrative. Among the six identified translation strategies, literal translation emerged as the most frequently applied, while strategies such as addition and non-interjective restructuring were used to preserve emotional nuance and communicative intent when direct equivalence was not possible. These results underscore the importance of interjections as pragmatic markers that require careful handling in translation to maintain narrative authenticity and emotional depth. Translators must navigate the interplay between linguistic form, cultural resonance, and contextual appropriateness, often balancing fidelity with adaptation. Future research may expand this analysis across genres or languages, or further explore how interjections affect reader engagement and character perception in translated fiction. Ultimately, this study reaffirms the significance of interjections in literary texts and the nuanced strategies required to render them effectively across languages.

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