CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In today's digital era, social media has become a vital part of everyday life. Its inseparability with the life dynamics has shaped the way people connect, communicate, access information, and engage with global communities. At the beginning of the era, social media was designed mainly for personal networking, such as Friendster and MySpace, they were basically made to ease communication despite the distance and time. However today, platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are not just tools for social interactions, rather, they have evolved beyond their core purposes and have transformed into powerful dynamic ecosystems where languages, expressions, trends, and communities constantly make shifts and progress. Throughout the years, social media has made it possible for people around the globe to interact and connect without having to feel limited by distances and different time zones.

Humans, the users, set new trends continuously and all the contents they produce can influence the growth of social media platforms. This is confirmed by Jebalsevi, Mohanraj, Thangamani, and Kumar (2023), who stated that the way individuals communicate has changed, as a result of the expansion of social media platforms on the past two decades. Whereas these platforms have given people new ways to interact and exchange knowledge across cultural and geographical borders. As a result, humans and social media function in a dynamic, mutually influential way, driving rapid shifts in communication styles, languages, and cultural expressions.

One of the most significant changes about the evolution of social media is in the use of language itself. On social media, especially short-form platforms like X, language becomes a tool not only to convey

information, but also to build humor, understanding, and communities. As the dominant language on social media due to its global reach, English becomes an important *lingua franca* in X with diverse populations, otherwise people of X may not be able to communicate. Nowadays, the English language on X is highly adapted into informal expression forms or phenomena in creative ways. These continuous phenomena have led the researcher's interest in narrowing the focus on social media X.

There are various types of informal English expressions among the developed English expressions phenomena that have emerged on X, such as slang, abbreviations, memes, emojis, and hashtags. These expressions contribute to how users creatively and effectively communicate on digital platforms. Among these, three stand out for their visibility and complexity in communication: slang, abbreviations, and memes. Unlike emojis and hashtags, which are more visual and symbolic in nature, these three tend to rely heavily on language manipulation, making them challenging for analysis in the study of informal English language.

Slang is a very informal and non-standard language that is often used by people to express themselves in a casual and humorous way. It is a phenomenon of using language variations that arise out of language developments. This idea is supported by Budiasa, Savitri, and Dewi (2021), who stated that slang is a phenomenon of using language variations that arise due to language development and social dynamic. According to Mattiello (2008), slang is described as unconventional vocabulary characterized primarily by connotations of informality and novelty. Slang is typically playful and constantly adjusting to trends, social groups, and generational identities. On social media platforms like X, slang can spread rapidly due to the platform's fast pace and nature. For instance, here are some commonly found slang vocabulary on X: *stan* which means an excessively enthusiastic and devoted fan or a superfan of something, *flex* which means to show off or to brag, and *sus* as the shortened version of suspicious.

Another online phenomenon that emerges alongside slang is abbreviations. Abbreviations are a common feature of language that serve to condense longer words or phrases into shorter forms (Khamidovna & Akmaljonovna, 2024). They are the shortened expressions that users create and use to enhance speed, to save time and space. Due to the character limits for unverified users, abbreviations are heavily used on X. Abbreviations can range from common internet acronyms like *LOL* (laughing out loud) and *NGL (not gonna lie),* to more niche abbreviations used in a specific circle like *SZN (season) and OOMF* (one of my followers).

Unlike slang or abbreviations that mainly focus on words and phrases, memes are often delivered in images, videos, texts, or a combination of all. Memes were first introduced by the biologist, Dawkins (1972), in his book The Selfish Gene. He originally described a meme as an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. In today's world, the term has evolved to internet memes, repeatable pieces of media that carry social jokes or relatable situations. Memes typically convey humor, satire, and irony in creative ways. Memes present information (content) attractively and effectively, and the best thing about them is that they are easy to share with unlimited audiences with different media (Dwivedi, 2023). For instance, the popular *Distracted Boyfriend* meme. This meme originated from a stock photo where a man, referred to as the "boyfriend," is turning his back to stare at another woman while holding hands with his visibly upset girlfriend. In the meme version provided, the characters are labeled as follows: "Boyfriend = Me," "Girlfriend = Scientific evidence supporting the dangers of staring at the sun," "Other Woman = Solar eclipse," capturing the moment when a person knowingly ignores serious scientific warnings because of their fascination with a solar eclipse.

Figure 1. 1 Distracted Boyfriend Meme
(https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/distracted-boyfriend)

The emergence of informal English expressions on X impacts greatly more than the formal English typically taught in classrooms and textbooks. While the common English education typically emphasizes structured grammar and standardized vocabulary, the informal expressions on X are notably different. They tend to be context-heavy, fluid, and rapidly evolving. For non-native learners, particularly those attempting to translate the contents into other languages, such as Indonesian, faces a significant challenge. As a long-time user of the X platform, the researcher found that engaging with posts and trends offers exposure to spontaneous real-life English. This is supported by Ibrahim and Al-Muqaisib (2025), who highlight that social media has emerged as a powerful enabler of informal learning; extends the original purpose of entertainment and communication. In which, social media has become an important tool in language education, offering diverse resources for learners to collaborate and engage with peers beyond the traditional methods. Through this interaction, learners can develop a deeper awareness of language nuances, humor, and cultural subtleties that are often difficult to be translated directly into Indonesian.

Based on the discussion above, translation is basically a change of form. Larson (1984) described that translation is transferring the source

language and replacing it with the form of the receptor (target) language. However, translating X contents often challenge this principle due to their rapid evolution and creative language use found in online spaces. These informal expressions are highly context-dependent and frequently change, making them difficult to interpret accurately into Indonesian using conventional approaches. For non-native speakers, especially English learners, understanding such informal language on social media can be even more challenging without external support. In this case, translation aids such as traditional dictionaries or machine translation tools become essential in helping them grasp the intended meaning behind informal expressions.

In recent years, machine translation (MT) tools like DeepL have gained popularity due to its high accuracy and performance to produce natural sounding results. This is confirmed by Reber (2019), Cambedda, Nunzio, Nosilia (2021), and Kamaluddin, Rasyid, Abqoriyyah, and Saehu (2024) that DeepL has high precision rate than other MT tools and has shown notable improvements in accuracy and fluency. However, when it comes to translating informal language, DeepL often falls short in capturing the intended meaning of the source text. To evaluate this, the translation quality of DeepL's output is assessed by using Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) model which includes three aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The assessment is carried out not by the researcher alone, but instead by a professional translator practitioner, ensuring that the assessment reflects translation competence rather than subjective personal judgment.

Additionally, this research explored the analysis of translation strategies from the underlying translations generated by DeepL by applying Newmark (1988) framework which consists of 8 translation methods and 13 translation procedures. The methods, such as idiomatic translation, communicative translation, adaptation, and the rest, can help in determining the overall approach used taken in translating a text.

Meanwhile, the procedures, such as modulation, transposition, transference, and the rest, can be used in handling specific challenges in smaller scale.

In conclusion, this research aims to explore the complexities involved in translating informal English expressions found on X using machine translation. By evaluating DeepL's output using Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) translation quality assessment model, the research emphasizes how machine translation often fails to fully capture the intended meaning, especially in the case of informal language such as slang, abbreviations, and memes. Furthermore, by identifying the translation strategies from DeepL-generated translations, this research provided insights into the methods and procedures used in translating informal content. These findings are expected to be beneficial for translators, students, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in understanding the limitations of machine translation and the importance of cultural sensitivity and contextual awareness in handling informal contents in digital space.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

This study focuses on the occurrence and translation of informal English expressions on social media platform X. Based on this focus, the research is guided by the following questions:

1. What types of informal English expressions are found on Social Media X?

2. How is the translation quality of DeepL's generated in translating informal English expressions assessed using Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) model?

3. What translation strategies are applied in DeepL's generated translation?

1.3. Aim of the Study

As aligned with the statements of the problem, this study is conducted with the intention to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify and categorize the types of informal English expressions found on social media X.

2. To evaluate the translation quality of DeepL's output in translating these informal expressions using Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) model, which includes accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

3. To examine and analyze the translation strategies patterns of translating informal English expressions generated by DeepL.

1.4. Advantages of the Study

This study offers various advantages that can be applied to both the researcher and the readers as follows:

1. The findings of this study support cross-cultural understanding across languages to deliver more accurate translations.

2. This study can aid English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and translation students to increase their awareness of informal English usage.

3. This study aims to provide practical references into the limitations of machine translations tool in translating evolving language of social media.

1.5. Output of the Study

This study's output is intended for journal publication in Santhet: Jurnal Sejarah, Pendidikan, dan Humaniora within the field of translation studies. The findings are expected to be a good use for translators, educators, and learners, providing insights into the translation of informal English expressions and the strategies needed to preserve the context's relevance across languages.