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Article

Engagement Resources and Personal Pronouns: Mediation in the Translation of English-Malay Self-help Books

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines how translators mediate Engagement resources when translating English self-help books into Malay, focusing on authorial positioning, dialogic stance, and the management of alternative viewpoints. Using Appraisal Theory, extended to include person deixis as an Engagement strategy, the research employs a qualitative approach to analyse three cognitive self-help books and their Malay translations to examine the distribution of Engagement resources, retention rates in translation, shift typology, person deixis patterns, and the factors motivating these strategies. A total of 245 textual segments containing critical points were identified as units of analysis. These units were manually coded and analysed for Engagement resources, with intra-rater reliability procedures to ensure consistency. Analysis reveals that translators maintain most Engagement resources at the category level with a modest shift towards monoglossic statements. Furthermore, substantial cultural mediation occurs through changes in person deixis. Translators systematically shift the second-person *you* to the first-person *kita* (inclusive 'we'), reshaping interpersonal relationships from hierarchical to egalitarian positioning. This mitigates the direct and individualistic tone characteristic of the English self-help discourse, aligning with Malay preferences for a more inclusive and collective perspective. The study contributes theoretically by demonstrating the need for diverse approaches to highlight cultural mediation in translation analysis. Practically, the findings benefit three key groups: translators can refine their strategies for conveying persuasive language in culturally appropriate ways; publishers can provide better guidance to translators through detailed and genre-specific briefs that emphasize interpersonal positioning; and translation training programs can incorporate Appraisal Theory and person deixis as analytical frameworks into their curriculum, helping students develop systematic approaches to managing interpersonal resources in accordance with cultural norms.

I. INTRODUCTION

The self-help genre has become one of the most popular and best-selling genres globally, appealing to readers through its promise of personal transformation delivered in a persuasive, motivational, and conversational style (McGee, 2005; Blum, 2021). In the United States, self-help titles nearly tripled from 30,897 in 2013 to 85,523 in 2019 (Anderson, 2020), with sales accelerating further during the COVID-19 pandemic, where self-help print books recorded their best sales since 2010 while audiobooks rose 20% to $541 million (LaRosa, 2021). In the Malaysian context, in recent years, a number of Western self-help books have been translated into the Malay language, catering to readers who are less proficient in English.

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PTS Publishing House is the major publisher that undertakes this effort, with a more than 90 translated titles identified through a manual count of their published catalogue (PTS Publishing House, 2025).

Self-help books are a unique form of persuasive discourse that follows a problem-solution structure (Dolby, 2005), where authors aim not only to inform but also to transform how readers think and behave through the strategic use of linguistic resources that position the author as credible and authoritative while managing potential resistance and alternative viewpoints from readers. This is achieved through strategies such as quoting credible sources, using negating devices to acknowledge and reject alternative views, and employing tentative language to mitigate assertions (Koay, 2019; Virtanen & Halmari, 2005). Within the Appraisal framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Engagement resources serve precisely this function. Engagement resources refer to the linguistic means used by authors to acknowledge, position, and negotiate with alternative voices and viewpoints. However, the appropriate levels of directness and authorial assertion are not universal but culturally situated. Research in cross-cultural communication has shown that Western culture tends to prefer explicit, confident, and direct assertions as markers of authority and sincerity. The Malay culture, like many Asian cultures, often prefers indirectness, hedging, and humility, as these are seen as respectful and promote harmony in relationships (Goddard, 1997; 2001; Sanchez-Burks et al., 2003; Khalid Ali, 2022). The Malay ethics and value system emphasise *budi* (Dahlan, 1991, as cited in Storz, 1999), a quality resulting from thoughts and feelings that constantly pursue positive elements, mutual benefit and peaceful relationships in life (Khalid Ali, 2022). Being helpful, polite, considerate, and courteous are the characteristics traditionally associated with Malays (Mastor et al., 2000; Zawawi, 2008; Azman et al., 2020). The polite system includes verbal and non-verbal communication, word choice, vocal tone, and forms of address according to a status hierarchy (Dahlan, 1991, as cited in Storz, 1999; Mansor et al., 2018; Huszka et al., 2026).

As the demand for translated content continues to grow in multilingual markets such as Malaysia, understanding how meaning is mediated across languages becomes increasingly relevant. These varying cultural preferences create challenges for translators working with persuasive texts, as what builds credibility in one culture may be seen as rude or inappropriate in another. Translators need to negotiate between the sourse-text's rhetorical strategies and the target culture's communication norms, thus reshaping the interpersonal meaning. Besides, this research also addresses practical needs for translator training and publishing. In translator training, there is a gap in teaching cultural mediation beyond word-level or fidelity-based translation (Katan, 2015). Trainee translators often rely on intuition when handling interpersonal tone and author-reader relationships, lacking frameworks to explain and justify their choices. By using the Appraisal Theory and deictic positioning, this study provides educators with tools for teaching how persuasive writing works differently across cultures and how translators can manage these differences systematically. For publishers, understanding how translators handle Engagement resources helps balance persuasive impact with cultural appropriateness, by providing evidence-based patterns that can guide publisher policies, translation briefs, and translator-client discussions about managing interpersonal stance in persuasive texts.

Despite the growing commercial success of self-help literature in multilingual markets, the translation of this genre remains under-researched. Existing studies have focused predominantly on lexical and semantic challenges, leaving discourse-level analysis, particularly the role of evaluative language in constructing author-reader relationships, largely unexplored. While Appraisal Theory has been increasingly applied in translation studies since Munday's (2012) pioneering work, no study has examined how Engagement resources are mediated in English-Malay self-help translation. This gap is significant given the cultural distance between English and Malay communication norms, where differences in directness, hedging, and interpersonal positioning are known to affect how persuasive discourse is received. Furthermore, person deixis, which has been recognised as one of the key strategies for reader engagement in self-help discourse (Koay, 2019; Cherry, 2008), has received little scholarly attention in translation research within this genre. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how translators mediate Engagement resources, including person

deixis, when translating English self-help books into Malay, and explain culture- and genre-related factors in the mediation process.

Hatim and Mason (1997) conceptualise the translator's negotiation as mediation—"the process of incorporating into the processing of utterances and texts one's own assumptions, beliefs, etc" (p. 190) and see translators as cultural mediators, a definition that has since been widely affirmed in translation studies scholarship (Katan, 2016; Wang, 2018). Similarly, Hermans (1985) describes manipulation in translation as a descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic approach influenced by the norms and constraints that shape how translations are produced and received, a framework that continues to inform contemporary translation studies (Baker, 2022). Munday (2012) further refines this understanding by arguing that mediation typically occurs at "critical points," namely, textual features that require interpretation and intervention from the translator. These critical points are most susceptible to value manipulation and especially revealing of the translator's underlying values.

Appraisal Theory (AT) emerged in the 1990s as an extension of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Fully articulated in Martin and White's (2005) seminal work, *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English,* AT provides a framework for analysing evaluative language and interpersonal positioning in discourse. It has been recognised as one of the most comprehensive and detailed frameworks for studying evaluation in monolingual contexts (Bednarek, 2006; Thompson, 2014). Additionally, it serves as a useful tool for analysing evaluation in translation (Manfredi, 2014; Munday, 2012, 2021; Tajvidi & Arjani, 2017). The AT comprises three main domains: Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement. Attitude provides for the meanings that convey positive or negative assessment of feelings, behaviour, or matters; Graduation provides for further evaluation that shows either a greater or lesser degree of intensity and directness; and Engagement shows the writer's stance towards a phenomenon or the writer's relative position with the text receiver. This study will apply the Engagement system.

While Martin and White's (2005) Engagement system provides robust categories for analysing dialogic positioning, it does not address personal pronouns. Pronouns are included in this study because they have long been recognised as a significant contribution to the study of engagement. Personal pronouns have been studied as an engagement feature in political discourse, academic writing and lectures (Hyland, 2005; Fortanet, 2004; Yeo & Ting, 2014). Studies by Munday (2012) and Halmari (2005) discover that American presidents used the pronoun *we* to locate themselves nearer to their audience; even if *we* may not actually include all audience members, the persuasive intention is to make them feel included. Chilton (2003, p. 56) notes that the inclusive first-person *we* "can be used to induce interpreters [i.e. receivers of a text] to conceptualise group identity, coalitions, parties, and the like, either as insiders or outsiders." Hyland (2005) also found that in academic discourse, the inclusive *we* is used to bind writer and reader together and is seen as the most frequent engagement device in academic writing to construct "both the writer and the reader as participants with similar understanding and goals" (p. 182). Wijana (2013) also finds that the inclusive *we* (*kita*) is used in Indonesian popular scientific discourse to draw readers into the discussion, creating a sense of shared participation. Fortanet (2004) calls the usage of *we* as a cooperative device, in contrast with , a distancing device. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, where the use of the inclusive *we* is linked to positive politeness, while the use of *you* with its distancing effect is linked to negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In the self-help context, Koay (2019) examines persuasion in self-help books and notes that authors use reader pronouns as a strategy to engage readers. Similarly, Cherry (2008) notes that the frequent use of *you* in self-help books signifies a form of personal and individual engagement with the reader. In the Malay language, local scholars also acknowledge the impact of pronouns on interpersonal communication, as pronouns are closely tied to social status, degree of closeness, immediate surroundings, and the topic of discussion in a particular communication setting (Haji Omar, 2009). The Malay language has two first-person plural pronouns based on the degree of inclusiveness: *kita,* which is inclusive (including the addressee), and *kami,* which is exclusive (excluding the addressee). The use of the second-person pronoun is more complex. It ranges

from various degrees of politeness and formality, including choices of *engkau, kau, kamu, awak, anda,* and *kalian.* Moreover, Malay cultural norms often substitute direct pronouns with alternative forms of address: children use kinship terms like *mama, pakcik* ('uncle') when speaking to elders, while those in subordinate positions use respectful titles like *encik* or *tuan* ('sir') when addressing superiors. Using the wrong pronouns may cause friction and disputes in communication because it is related to language politeness (Yusof, 2018; Sulaiman & Mohamad Yusoff, 2020). Drawing on Chilton's (2003) deictic positioning, this study explores pronoun use to understand how speakers position themselves and others through deictic markers in communication. It expands the Engagement framework by integrating person deixis as a key resource for shaping interpersonal meaning in persuasive discourse.

AT has been applied overwhelmingly in monolingual studies, whereas its use in translation studies (TS) emerged significantly after 2012, particularly following Munday's pioneering work (Munday, 2012), which catalysed research using this framework. Systematic reviews by Tajvidi and Arjani (2017), Liu et al. (2022), and Firouzi and Farahzad (2025) indicate growing interest in this area. AT has been applied to translation analysis across diverse genres, including news reports and commentaries (Chen, 2011; Huan, 2018; Pan & Liao, 2020), literary texts (Rodrigues-Júnior & Barbara, 2013; Alsina Keith et al., 2017; Fan & Miao, 2020), official documents (Abbamonte & Cavaliere, 2006; Romagnuolo, 2014), academic, scientific, and technical texts (Arjani, 2012; Yang, 2020), dubbed and subtitled film dialogues (Mouka et al., 2015; Pérez-González, 2007), political discourse (Munday, 2012, 2015, 2017; Li & Zhang, 2021; Ahmed & Fathi, 2025), advertisements and public notices (Qian, 2007, 2017), and poetry (Dong & Lin, 2018), involving English paired with Chinese, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Dutch, Indonesian, or Greek, demonstrating both its cross-linguistic versatility and its applicability across a broad range of text types. The research mainly concentrated on translation shifts, translators' decision-making, positioning, and ideologies. However, the three subsystems have not received equal scholarly attention. While Engagement resources are less commonly studied than Attitude or Graduation resources, research demonstrates their usefulness in mediating persuasive messages and interpersonal positionings. For example, counter-expectancy markers, which are dialogical contractive resources (Deny and Counter) are found to enhance persuasion in political discourse (Munday, 2017) and appellative functions in soft news (Lu & Chen, 2011). In contrast, the removal of Engagement resources in the translation of EU promotional materials undermines promotional aims (Constantinou, 2020). Prioritising propositional content over engagement resources in translating political texts also compromises the speaker's persuasive intent (Ahmed & Fathi, 2024). On the other hand, inconsistent use of pronouns (using pronouns of different formalities or omitting them) affects perceived closeness between the speaker and the audience (Munday, 2017; Constantinou, 2020). Collectively, these findings confirm that Engagement resources are functional necessities in translation rather than merely stylistic choices, underscoring the need for their systematic examination in persuasive genres such as self-help literature.

Although translated self-help books are widely available and commercially successful, scholarly research on the translation of this genre remains limited (Paiva, 2015). Existing studies concentrate predominantly on Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, reflecting the West-to-East directional flow of this genre. Studies using Polysystem Theory indicate that translated self-help literature plays an important role in reshaping the literary landscape of the target culture, shifting societal values from collectivism to individualism (Pekcoşkun, 2013; Yilmaz-Gümüs, 2017) and greatly impact local society (Ozaki, 2017). Micro-level case studies have examined translation norms (Alkheder, 2013), pragmatic features (Al Shandouri, 2016), semantic shifts attributed to translator competence (Alshubaily, 2019), and culture-specific translation procedures, with findings suggesting a preference for foreignisation strategies (Yilmaz-Gümüs, 2012). Paiva's (2015) process-oriented study, grounded in *Skopos* theory, provides detailed documentation of translation decision-making but focuses primarily on technical linguistic problems. Notably absent from this body of research is any systematic application of Appraisal Theory to examine how evaluative language—the central linguistic resource through which self-help books motivate, persuade, and construct reader relationships—is

translated across cultures. This study addresses this critical gap by investigating evaluative patterns in self-help translation.

Scholarly interest in English-Malay translation has expanded considerably in recent years, with studies spanning a diverse range of genres including children's literature (Shaik Ismail, 2007; Daud et al., 2021; Zabir, 2025), popular fiction (Haroon & Daud, 2017; Zabir & Haroon, 2018; Zabir & Mansor, 2019; Haroon, 2022), tourism discourse (Ling et al., 2019; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019), speeches (Sharmini et al., 2018), news (Abdul Sukur & Abdul Wahid, 2015; AlAqad & Al-Saggaf, 2021), magazine articles (Zainal Abidin et al., 2016), and self-help literature (Al Shandouri, 2016), with emerging interest in machine translation and generative AI applications (Yeong et al., 2016; Abdul Sukur & Ain, 2022; Syafiee & Yaqin, 2025). However, existing research has largely focused on lexical and semantic challenges, such as the translation of proper names, culture-specific items, and personal titles, and on the application of various translation procedure taxonomies. This suggests that there is still considerable scope for discourse-level analysis in English-Malay translation studies. The methodological focus on the word-level seems to treat translation as a purely semantic transfer, failing to account for how Malay translators reconstruct the evaluative "voice" of the original author. The present study examines evaluative language patterns at the discourse level, thereby extending translation research beyond lexical-semantic concerns to investigate how meaning is constructed and negotiated across extended texts in both languages. Furthermore, research applying AT to English-Malay translation is limited, with few studies focused solely on the Malay language. A comparative study on English and Malay research article conclusions reveals that English uses more Attitude indices and balances Engagement devices for a reader-friendly approach, whereas Malay leans towards more contracting devices, making it less accessible (Loi et al., 2016). A follow-up study (Loi et al., 2021) focused on Malay academic writing shows that Attitude and Graduation resources work together to create rhetorical effects. More recently, Sarikon and Abdullah (2024) applied AT to analyse how all AT subcategories function as strategic tools to shape reader perspectives and advance particular ideologies in Malay newspaper commentaries. Despite these contributions, AT-based studies of the Malay language remain scarce, indicating a significant research gap that warrants further scholarly attention.

This study aims to identify the distribution of Engagement resources in the source texts and to analyse their transfer into Malay in the self-help genre. The study is guided by four research questions (RQ): (1) How are the Engagement resources distributed across the text? (2) What is the retention rate, and what types of translation shifts occur in the translation of Engagement resources, and what regularities or patterns can be identified in this process? (3) What translation shifts occur in person deixis? (4) What factors motivate these mediation strategies? Together, these questions seek to advance understanding of how Engagement resources are culturally mediated in translation, offering insights that are relevant to both translation scholarship and professional practice.

II. METHODS

This section adopts a qualitative research design grounded in close textual analysis. The study examines how Engagement resources are mediated in the English-Malay translation of self-help books. A comparative source-text-target text (ST-TT) analysis is employed to identify translation shifts and interpret mediation patterns. The self-help books selected for this study focus on the human mind—the faculty responsible for shaping opinions, views, and judgments, mainly to promote the right mindset and correct cognitive biases. They are *The Art of Thinking Clearly* (ATC) by Rolf Dobelli (2013), *The Magic of Thinking Big* (MTB) by David J. Schwartz (1995), and *Think Like a Champion* (TLC) by Donald J. Trump (2009), along with their respective Malay translations (Dobelli, 2015; Schwartz, 2010; Trump, 2014). All translations were produced by different translators and published by PTS Publishing House, the leading publisher of translated self-help books in Malaysia.

The primary analytical instrument is Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), specifically the **Engagement** system, which provides a taxonomy for categorising linguistic resources that indicate the author's stance and voice positioning in relation to readers. Engagement can be either **Monogloss** or **Heterogloss**. Monogloss, mainly related to bare assertions or categorical assertions, does not recognise or entertain alternative views,

while Heterogloss acknowledges the presence of multiple conflicting voices and can be further classified as dialogically contractive **(Contract)** and dialogically expansive **(Expand)**. **Contract** encompasses utterances that constrain the scope of alternative voices, having two values: **Disclaim** and **Proclaim**. Under Disclaim, alternative positions are introduced into the dialogue but are then denied, suppressed or replaced. Disclaim can be achieved through either the expressions of **Deny** (introduce a position in order to reject it) or **Counter** (introduce a proposition that replaces another more expected proposition). The value of Proclaim implicitly anticipating other responses instead of directly evoking and overruling them encompasses the formulations of **Concur, Pronounce,** and **Endorse.** Concurring statements clearly express the writer's agreement with the addressee. These are dialogistic but contractive because they are presented in a way that alternatives are characterised as opposing what is "generally" shared. Concur can also be expressed through rhetorical questions, assuming certain agreed-upon responses. Pronouncement expressions are used to highlight the viewpoint of the writer or to introduce authorial intervention explicitly. The writer is seen as making an assertion against some doubt or counter-positions. Endorsements are formulations by which the writer refers to external sources in a way that is valid, reliable and trustworthy. By doing this, the author limits the range of negotiability due to authorial approval. Under **Expand**, which is dialogically expansive, there are two values: **Entertain** and **Attribute**. Entertain formulations assist the writer in portraying his/her stance as one of many potential views, thereby creating a dialogic space for those possibilities. The resources in this category are realised through modal auxiliaries (*could, must*), mental verbs (*I think, I believe*), expressions of hearsay and expository questions with open-ended answers. Entertain includes modals of probability *(e.g., maybe, probably) and modals of evidentiality (e.g., seems, apparently)*. The **Attribute** value is used to quote viewpoints of external sources, either with neutrality (the **Acknowledge** subvalue) or with authorial disendorsement (the **Distance** subvalue). The taxonomy of the Engagement system is shown in Figure 1.

Analysis of Engagement under AT leans towards how language creates meaning in context and achieves rhetorical effects, rather than focusing solely on grammatical forms (Martin & White, 2005). Therefore, the Engagement resources indicating stance and voice positioning encompass a wide range of linguistic expressions, including lexical items, grammatical structures, and discourse markers. Each unit of analysis is examined for linguistic markers that indicate the author's positioning on viewpoints in relation to the readers according to AT. These identified Engagement resources are then categorised according to the taxonomy of the Engagement system.

As a complementary instrument, Chilton's (2003) deictic positioning is applied to the analysis of pronouns. Since pronoun shifts constitute a distinct dimension of engagement between writer and reader, deictic positioning is incorporated to obtain a fuller picture of how the translator-reader relationship is constructed across languages.

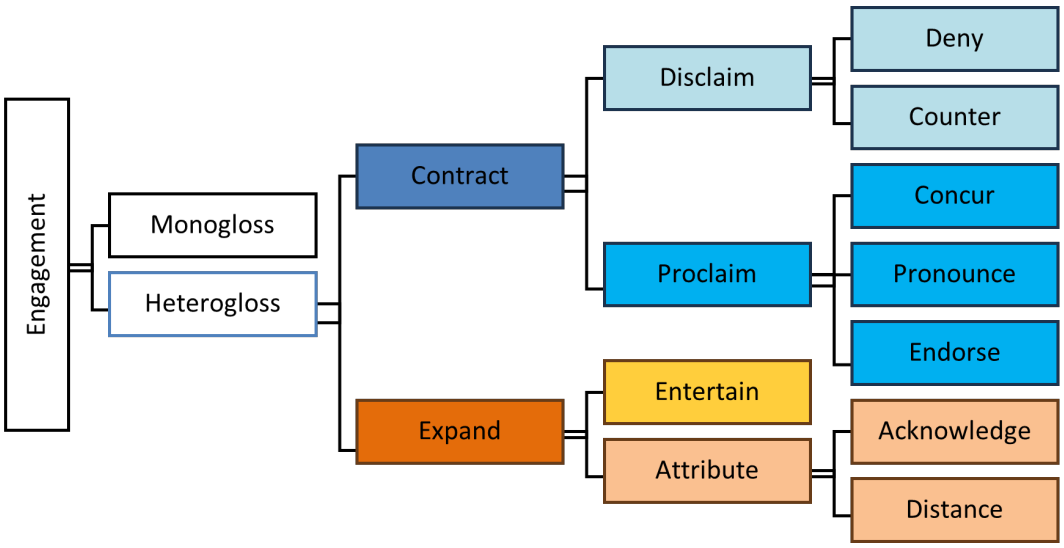


Figure 1. The Engagement system (based on Martin & White, 2005, p. 134)

The units of analysis for this study were established as part of a larger project examining all three Appraisal systems—Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement—in English-to-Malay self-help translation. Accordingly, the units were not delimited by Engagement features per se, but by the presence of critical points, defined as "those points and lexical features in a text that in translation are most susceptible to value manipulation" (Munday, 2012, p. 41). Drawing on Munday (2012) and existing English-Malay translation literature, the following types of critical points were identified as the basis for unit selection: culture-specific references, sensitive words, context-dependent markers, polysemous words, swear words, technical terms, proper nouns, blunt expressions, figurative language, and pronouns. These types were selected because they represent the linguistic features most likely to carry evaluative potential in self-help discourse and most susceptible to mediation in translation. The first 100 critical points from each book are singled out with their co-text to form segments of text (units of analysis). This amounts to 245 units of analysis: 74 in ATC, 101 in MTB, and 70 in TLC (the difference is due to the possibility of multiple critical points within a single unit of analysis). The number of words and sentences for each book data is as follows: ATC = 2848 words, 182 sentences; MTB = 2880 words, 210 sentences; TLC = 2849 words, 166 sentences. Once the units of analysis have been identified and coded, the corresponding TT segments are also determined. For ease of reference, each unit of analysis is coded as [book name][chapter number].[passage number] (e.g., ATC 1.01).

Within these pre-determined units of analysis, the analytical process involves systemically identifying all evaluative expressions related to the Engagement system from both the ST and the TT. This means that the Engagement analysis was not restricted to the specific feature that triggered the unit's selection, but extended to all instances of stance and voice positioning, including pronoun use, occurring within the co-text of each segment. This approach reflects the understanding that evaluative language functions holistically within discourse, and that isolating a single feature from its surrounding text would risk decontextualising the analysis.

The data analysis was conducted manually by the first author and managed using spreadsheets. This tabular structure enabled systematic ST-TT comparison within and across texts. To ensure consistency and reliability of the coding process, intra-rater reliability was established through test-retest procedures. Cases that were initially ambiguous or difficult to categorise were flagged during the first coding pass. At a later date, the first author returned to these flagged cases and reassessed them independently to ensure consistent coding decisions. A randomly selected subset of 162 segments (23% of the data, with equal numbers taken from each of the three books) was re-coded after a twelve-week interval, without reference to the original coding. This time gap reduces memory effects and ensures that consistency is achieved through the systematic use of the AT framework rather than relying on memory of previous decisions (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). Following the coding of both ST and TT, the evaluations in ST and TT are compared to identify shifts that occurred. The classification of translation shifts is shown in Table 1. The patterns are observed from the translation shifts, and the findings are interpreted and discussed in relation to cultural and genre contexts.

Table 1 Evaluative shifts identified from textual analysis

Shifts	Remark
Retention	Same Engagement category maintained
Monoglossic shift	Heterogloss values in ST become Monogloss
Heteroglossic shift	Monogloss values in ST become Heterogloss
Expansion shift	A value within Heterogloss moves towards expansion
Contraction shift	A value within Heterogloss moves towards contraction
Omission	Engagement marker deleted (the ST is not translated)

III. RESULTS

This section presents some interesting findings of a systematic analysis of all 245 units of analysis identified across the three self-help books. All instances of Engagement resources in the English source texts and their Malay translations were examined without exception. The tables and figures in this section show the results from the complete dataset, meaning the quantitative results reflect the entire data, while the examples discussed are representative illustrations chosen to demonstrate the patterns most salient to the research questions

or offer particular analytical interest. Where translation shifts deviate from the dominant patterns, these are acknowledged accordingly. This section first addresses the distribution of the Engagement resources (RQ1), with focus on Heteroglossic Engagement resources (as Monogloss statements carry no dialogic marking and are thus not analysed within the scope of the Engagement system under AT). Monogloss statements are relevant only when they result from a translation shift, that is, when a Heteroglossic ST item is rendered as a bare assertion in the TT. This is followed by an analysis of the retention rate and types of translation shifts, along with the regularities and patterns identified in the data (RQ2). The translation of person deixis, specifically the second-person pronoun, is then examined (RQ3). Motivating factors are mentioned briefly in the relevant subsections and discussed in more detail in the Discussion section (RQ4).

The Distribution of Heteroglossic Engagement Resources

Figure 2 shows breakdown of Contract and Expand indices within the Heterogloss category in ST and TT.

As shown in Figure 2, the overall distribution of Engagement values is largely preserved across ST and TT. Subtypes of Disclaim (Contract) and Entertain (Expand) show a reduction in the TT, while Proclaim (Contract) shows a slight increment of 4 instances in the TT (for Concur), and Attribute (Expand) shows no change between ST and TT. This overall finding shows that, except for a larger drop in Counter instances, there are no drastic changes between the ST and the TT with respect to Engagement realisations in the self-help books. This overall stability is itself a meaningful finding, as it suggests that translators generally treat Engagement resources as transferable across the English-Malay language pair.

The expansive values are predominantly Entertain, amounting to 59 in the ST and 54 in the TT, while Attribute indices (comprised of Acknowledge and Distance) only occupy a small number of 4 in the ST and 4 in the TT. The discourse of including external voice is mostly under the Endorse category of the Contract. This shows that the self-help genre quotes external voices mainly to support and strengthen the authorial voice and seldom quotes external sources on a neutral ground (Acknowledge) or to show dissociation (Distance). This reflects the persuasive function of the genre, where external voices are used primarily to support and strengthen the authorial stance. From a theoretical viewpoint, this study suggests that Appraisal Theory's categories are applicable beyond English, and can effectively capture interpersonal meaning in typologically distinct languages such as Malay.

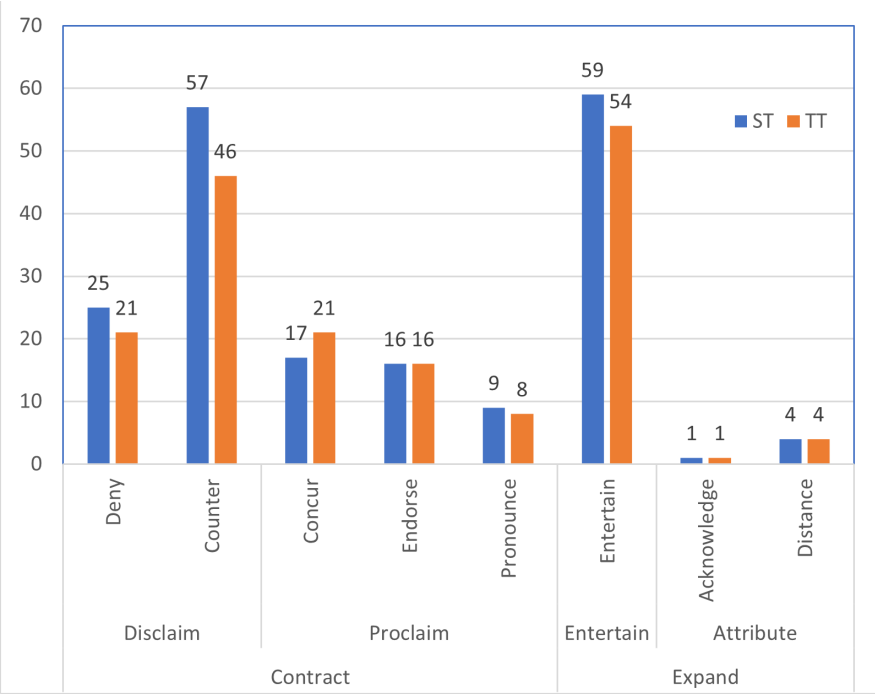


Figure 2. Realisations of Engagement values in Heterogloss

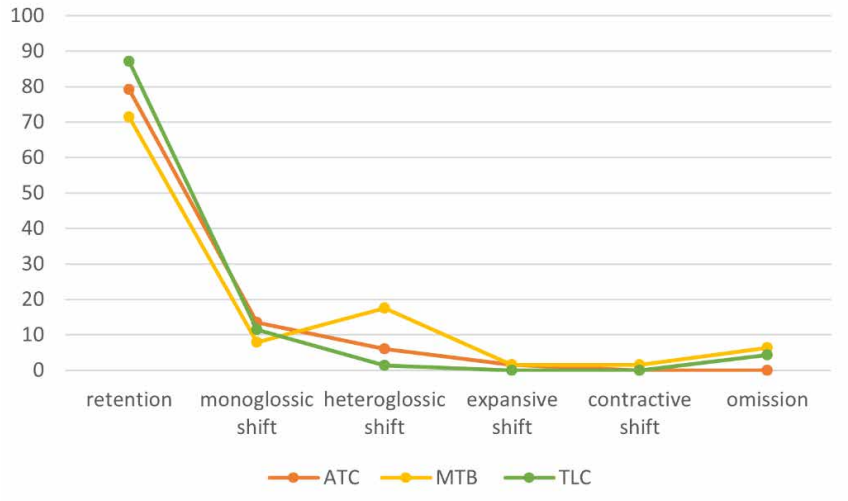


Figure 3: Translation shifts in Engagement resources (by percentage)

Patterns of Translation Shifts—High Retention Rate of Engagement Resources

Figure 3 illustrates the patterns of translation shifts for each self-help book based on the percentage.

Retention dominates across all texts (71-87%), with TLC showing the highest retention (87%), followed by ATC (79%) and MTB (71%), indicating that roughly one-third of Engagement resources are transferred without a category change. The consistently high retention rate across all three translators and all three books points to a clear pattern: translators of self-help texts tend to preserve the dialogic positioning of the ST, suggesting a general orientation towards functional equivalence in this genre.

Where shifts do occur, they follow revealing patterns. **Monoglossic shifts,** that is, the removal of Engagement markers resulting in bare assertions, occur around 10% in all three texts, with ATC showing the highest monoglossic shift (13%), followed by TLC (11%) and MTB (8%). These occur in the following cases: Removal of personal Proclaim phrases, such as *I am sure* (ATC 4.03) and affirmative phrases like *inevitably* (ATC 13.08), *yes* (MTB 1.33), *absolutely* (MTB 1.40), changing rhetorical questions to statements (MTB 2.55) and the reduction of modal verbs like *might* (TLC 12.01) and *may* (MTB 2.11), and loss of counteractive statements (ATC 13.08, TLC 1.03, TLC 4.03). This suggests that translators occasionally remove Engagement resources for simplification purposes, possibly to produce more direct and assertive prose in the TT.

Heteroglossic shifts show more variation across translators. While ATC and TLC show a minimal heteroglossic shift of 6% and 1%, respectively, MTB shows a significantly higher percentage (17%). **Expansive and contractive shifts** occur very minimally (less than 1.6%) across all three texts, while **omission** is found only in MTB (6%) and TLC (4%). In summary, the data show that Engagement resources are predominantly retained in translation, reflecting a general tendency towards preserving the dialogic stance of the ST. Where shifts occur, monoglossic shifts are the most consistent pattern across all three texts, while MTB stands out for its higher rate of heteroglossic intervention.

Dominance of Counter and Entertain Resources

The data reveals that Counter strategies (Contract) and Entertain strategies (Expand) demonstrate almost equal dominance. The ST shows 57 instances of Counter and 46 instances of TT, compared to Entertain, which shows 59 instances in ST and 54 instances in TT (Figure 2). Both show only a modest reduction in the TT, indicating that these resources are largely preserved in translation.

Such a distribution proves particularly significant for understanding the rhetorical architecture of self-help discourse. Counter covers formulations in which previous propositions or alternative voices are introduced only to be rejected, replaced or considered invalid, typically through contrastive conjunctions such as *however, but,* and *even though*. This means that authors of self-help books tend to acknowledge certain propositions

that might align with the readers' situation, only to counter them with the view to "correct" or adjust them with new propositions. Entertain, by contrast, signals that the authorial voice is one among many possible voices, typically realised through modal expressions that open up dialogic space rather than closing it down.

The almost equal dominance of Counter and Entertain is not coincidental. It reflects a deliberate rhetorical strategy in self-help writing that simultaneously constrains and expands the dialogic space, striking a balance between authoritative voice and semblance of openness to alternative views. This Entertain-then-Counter movement functions as the genre's core persuasive mechanism: the author first acknowledges the reader's existing perspective to build rapport, then redirects their thinking toward the central message.

The example below illustrates the interplay between the two resources.

[TLC 15.02]

ST: There are prodigies, it **seems**, **but** under close scrutiny all prodigies were carefully trained.

TT: Memang **seolah-olah** wujud golongan yang berbakat luar biasa, **tetapi** apabila diperhatikan secara dekat, kesemua mereka ini dilatih dengan rapi.

BT: Indeed, it may **seem** that there are extraordinarily talented people, **but** upon closer examination, all of them were carefully trained.

The opening clause employs Entertain through *seolah-olah* ('it seems'), acknowledging the common perception that some individuals are successful simply because of their inborn talents. The subsequent Counter resource *tetapi* ('but') then pivots to challenge this perception, introducing an alternative viewpoint, showing that careful training, rather than talents alone, is the key factor in achieving outstanding accomplishments. By first entertaining the popular belief, the author establishes rapport and avoids alienating readers who might hold this view. The Counter then redirect the readers' understanding toward effort-based achievement.

The translation faithfully maintains the original pattern, using *seolah-olah* for hedging and *tetapi* for contrast. More significantly, the translator adds *memang* ('indeed') at the opening, which is a Concur resource not present in the ST, thus actively reinforcing rather than merely transferring the rhetorical pattern. While this is an atypical case, it is notable as it shows that translators occasionally make context-specific choices to foreground solidarity with the target reader. In summary, Counter and Entertain resources tend to work hand in hand. to create a recurring rhetorical pattern: acknowledge the reader's view, then reframe. This pattern is consistently preserved in translation, and in some instances is even strengthened through the addition of Concur markers in the TT.

Translation Shifts in Counter and Entertain Resources

Since the self-help discourse is dominated by Counter and Entertain Resources, attention is given to the translation shifts involving these resources. Table 2 presents the full distribution of shift types across all identified instances.

Table 2. Translation shifts in Counter and Entertain resources

Translation Shifts	Counter	%	Entertain	%
Monoglossic Shift	9	60	9	90
Expansive Shift	1	7	-	-
Contractive Shift	-	-	1	10
Omission	5	33	-	-
Total	15	100	10	100

Monoglossic shifts are predominant, comprising 60% of the shift in Counter resources and 90% in Entertain resources. Removal of the countering device that results in Monogloss statements is sometimes due to different political views. One example is TLC 1.03, as shown below:

[TLC 1.03]

ST: After 9/11, this country received a lot of compassion from countries and people around the world. Within a short amount of time, **however**, we were hated.

TT: *Selepas tragedi 9/11, banyak negara dan masyarakat antarabangsa menyuarakan rasa simpati kepada Amerika. Pada masa yang sama, kami juga dibenci.*

BT: After the 9/11 tragedy, many countries and international communities expressed sympathy for America. At the same time, we were also hated.

Deictic positioning (Chilton, 2003), a concept that examines how language users position themselves and others in communication through the use of deictic markers, is at work here, where *this country,* referred to by the author, is translated as 'America' from the perspective of the translators. The first part of the proposition acknowledges a widely recognised response to the 9/11 tragedy. The international community expressed sympathy

with the United States. The following proposition contradicts the initial response, showing a drastic change in global sentiment towards the United States, from compassion to hatred, within a short time, probably due to some subsequent actions or policies by the United States. This expresses the author's dissatisfaction with the current affairs of the nation (at the time of writing). However, this is not the meaning translated in the TT. The TT renders *pada masa yang sama, kami juga dibenci.* ('at the same time, we were also hated.'), indicates that the US is loved and hated at the same time, before and after the 9/11 tragedy. This difference stems from the different viewpoints between the author and the translator. The author, being an American, views his country as an American, but the translator, being someone outside of the U.S., has a more global perspective of countries' attitudes towards the U.S. This shift is not a translation error but a perspective-driven reframing. It illustrates how deictic positioning can differ between author and translator, leading to a substantive change in dialogic meaning. This is one of the more analytically significant cases in the dataset, as it shows that translation shifts in Engagement resources can be ideologically motivated rather than merely stylistic.

On the other hand, the removal of the Entertain resource indicates that translators occasionally remove hedges, modals, or attribution to produce more direct statements. Some examples are shown below.

[TLC 12.01]

ST: he **might** not be a great fit.

TT: beliau bukan calon yang sesuai.

BT: he is not a good candidate.

[TLC 9.07]

ST: ...The Art of War by Sun Tzu. This was **apparently** written in the sixth century BC…

TT: *... The Art of War hasil karya Sun Tzu. Karya ini ditulis pada abad keenam sebelum Masihi…*

BT: ...The Art of War by Sun Tzu. This work was written in the sixth century BC...

[MTB 2.58]

ST: My opinion is **probably** worthless.

TT: *Pandangan saya tidak ada nilai langsung.*

BT: My view has no value at all. (TT2)

In TLC 12.01, the epistemic modal verb *might*, which functions to soften the negative judgement of the person, is omitted in the TT, producing a more direct and concise statement. In TLC 9.07, the word *apparently* suggests some degree of uncertainty. However, the use of *apparently* here may not necessarily indicate uncertainty, but serves a rhetorical purpose (Martin & White, 2005). Instead of stating an absolute fact, the author uses *apparently* to imply widely accepted knowledge shared with the readers. Besides, using *apparently* also sounds more conversational and less formal, thereby creating rapport with the readers. The TT omitted this word, rendering the claim a fact to be accepted by the readers, thereby losing the conversational tone. The same effect is also found in MTB 2.58 where *probably* is omitted, shifting the heteroglossic nature of the utterance towards bare assertion, thus losing the conversational tone. Overall, translators maintain most Engagement while selectively making translation shifts based on context-specific judgments, with the most common shifts involving the removal of Counter and Entertain resources.

Idiosyncratic Features in Translation

From the findings shown in Figure 3, heteroglossic shifts present more variation. While ATC and TLC show a minimal 6% and 1% of heteroglossic shift, respectively, MTB shows a significantly higher percentage (17%). This more frequent shift is due to the MTB translator's insertion of affirmative phrases into like *sudah tentu* ('of course') (MTB 1.01, 1.03, 2.15), *memang* ('indeed') (MTB 1.31, 2.45), *sebenarnya* ('actually') (MTB 2.42) into statements that had no Engagement markers in the original. One example is shown below.

[MTB 1.01]

ST: Nobody enjoys crawling, living in mediocrity. [Monogloss, MTB 1.01]

TT: ***Sudah tentu*** *tiada siapa yang mahu hidup dalam keadaan serba kekurangan.* [Heterogloss: Contract: Proclaim: Concur]

BT: **Of course**, no one wants to live in a condition of lack.

Such realisations are categorised as Concur subvalues of the Proclaim value under Contract. By using affirmative phrases, the translators intend to emphasise the logical statements in order to reinforce a proposition. In doing so, the ST monoglossic statements become heteroglossic, where the contractive authorial voice is inserted into the statements. Such a pattern of insertion of

contractive authorial voice is absent in ATC and TLC. This shows that the inclination to insert contractive elements to bare assertions may have just been the translator's idiosyncrasy, and should not be applied generally as a translation tendency in the translation of English-Malay self-help books.

Pronoun Shifts of *You* to *Kita* in the Translation of Person Deixis

A detailed analysis of the translation of the second-person pronoun *you/your* in the dataset is carried out, and the results are shown in Table 3.

The second-person pronoun is consistently changed to the first-person plural *kita* ('we'). The Malay language has two first-person plural pronouns based on the degree of inclusiveness: *kita* as inclusive (including the addressee) and *kami* as exclusive (excluding the addressee) (Asmah Haji Omar, 2009). In some instances, *you* is replaced with other forms of addressee, sucah as *tuan* ('sir') and *pembaca* ('reader'). Some examples are shown in Table 4.

Consider ATC 1.06, MTB 2.14, and TLC 13.01. Both the ST and TT are coded as the same Engagement category. Nevertheless, the change in pronouns from *you* to *we* results in interpersonal change. In the ST, the author's use of *you* to address the reader excludes himself from being the victim of various misconceptions. This creates a distance between the author and the reader, a sense of inequality in which the author is seen as the guru, the expert, while the reader is seen as one in need ofclearer summaries at the end of each subsection and more explicit explanations of key patterns in simpler terms help and guidance, as they might be unaware of or vulnerable to such biases. However, in the TT, using *kita* ('we' or 'us') in Malay includes the writer and the reader in the same group that may also be at risk of bias, thus creating rapport and the sense of an equal footing between the writer and the reader. Therefore, the author-reader relationship shifts from hierarchical instructor-learner positioning to egalitarian co-participant positioning. Besides, monoglossic bare assertions, like those in ATC 1.03, have very strong presuppositions. To the TT readers, the assertions made in this present text are blunt and direct, even bordering on offensive. One way to mitigate this strong effect and yet retain the same monoglossic

Table 3. Translation of second-person pronoun

ST	TT	BT	MTB	ATC	TLC
you/your	*anda*	you/your (more formal)	1	-	-
	kamu	you/your	5	-	1
	awak	you/your (less formal)	-	-	1
	kita	we/our (inclusive)	23	20	24
	tuan/pembaca	sir/reader	2	-	3
	not translated	-	1	1	2

Table 4. Changes of Second-person pronouns in translation

Data	ST	TT	BT
ATC 1.06	**You** should recognize that the survivorship bias is at work. [Expand: Entertain]	*Tetapi **kita** harus akui, survivorship bias sedang berlaku.* [Expand: Entertain]	But **we** have to acknowledge that survivorship bias is taking place.
MTB 1.33	Never-yes, never-sell **yourself** short. [Proclaim: Concur]	*Jangan sesekali merendah-rendahkan **diri kita sendiri*** [Monogloss]	Don't ever belittle **ourselves**.
TLC 13.01	**You** should always be ready to go at it **yourself**. [Expand: Entertain]	***Kita** perlu sentiasa bersedia melakukannya **sendiri.*** [Expand: Entertain]	**We** should always be ready to do it **ourselves**.
ATC 1.03	…**you** systematically overestimate **your** chances of succeeding…**you** (like Rick) succumb to an illusion, and **you** mistake how minuscule the probability of success really is. [Monogloss]	*…jangkaan **kita** terhadap peluang untuk berjaya secara sistematik melebihi yang sepatutnya. **Kita** (serta individu seperti Rick) hanyut dalam ilusi dan tersalah anggap terhadap kebarangkalian peluang untuk berjaya yang sebenarnya sangat tipis*. [Monogloss]	…**our** expectation of the chance of success is systematically more than what it is supposed to be…**we** (and individuals like Rick) drift in the illusion and mistakenly think that the probability of chances to succeed, which actually is very slim.

tone is to change the pronouns from second-person singular/plural *you* to first-person plural *we* in Malay.

In summary, the systematic shift from *you* to *kita* across all three translators is one of the most significant findings of this study. Rather than a simple lexical substitution, this shift reflects a consistent cultural mediation strategy that transforms the author-reader relationship from hierarchical to egalitarian. This demonstrates that cultural factors, not just linguistic ones, are central drivers of translation decisions.

IV. DISCUSSION

Translators largely replicate the lexical and grammatical features of the Engagement system, with mediation occurring selectively rather than systematically. The high retention rate (71-87%) suggests that translators generally preserve the interpersonal positioning of the ST, while a modest level of monoglossic shifts (8-13%) indicates that translators occasionally remove hedges to create a more direct, simpler language style. This corresponds with the tendency in Malay for prose to be more reader-responsible, where readers are not expected to participate in the dialogue (Loi et al., 2016). One notable divergence is the MTB translator, who exhibits a markedly higher rate of heteroglossic shifts (17%) compared to ATC (6%) and TLC (1%). Qualitative analysis reveals that this is the MTB translator's idiosyncrasy (the tendency to add Proclaim markers to bare assertions) rather than systematic cultural mediation. This finding presents a complicating case: it demonstrates that translator agency can produce patterned, systematic-looking shifts that are, in fact, stylistic rather than cultural in origin. Expansive and contractive shifts remain minimal (less than 1.6%), indicating that translators rarely change the dialogic orientation of already heteroglossic statements. The remaining 3% of omissions are likely due to the translator's judgment that the ST is redundant or unnecessary.

The high retention rates of Engagement resources might initially suggest that translators maintain source text interpersonal positioning with minimal intervention. However, significant cultural mediation occurs at the level of person deixis. Analysis reveals that translators systematically transform second-person *you* into first-person inclusive *kita* ('we') throughout the TT. By using *kita*, the translators mitigate the direct, individualistic, and potentially face-threatening tone characteristic of English-language self-help discourse to become a more inclusive, collectivist positioning (Hyland, 2005; Fortanet, 2004; Yeo & Ting, 2014). This aligns with Malay communication norms, which emphasise group harmony and face-saving (Goddard, 1997; 2007; Mastor et al., 2000; Zawawi, 2008; Storz, 1999).

The pronoun shift also has a linguistic motivation. As Staels (2004) notes, the English you in self-help texts often functions as an indefinite pronoun directed at a general audience. In Malay, however, there is no straightforward equivalent, as the language offers multiple second-person pronouns, including *engkau, kau, awak, anda,* and *kalian,* showing different levels of formality and social meaning (Yusof, 2018). Choosing any one of these risks sounding inappropriate or awkward to readers. By using *kita* instead, translators avoid this complexity while also aligning the text with Malay collectivist communicative norms, a pattern similarly observed in English-Malay documentary translation (Sulaiman & Mohamad Yusoff, 2020).

Munday (2015) hypothesised that Engagement resources may shift in translation towards a distancing from the deictic centre. This study, however, points in the opposite direction: pronouns addressing readers bring the deictic positioning closer in translation. While Loi et al. (2016) observe that Malay research articles tend to be more contractive than their English counterparts, the present findings suggest this operates selectively. Contraction appears to target specific features such as epistemic hedges, rather than reflecting a general suppression of dialogic space. However, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from these comparisons, as the body of research on Engagement mediation in translation remains small. Munday's (2015) hypothesis was based on political discourse, and Loi et al.'s (2016) observations drew on research articles, both of which differ considerably from self-help texts in terms of purpose and audience. The lack of studies examining Engagement mediation across various genres and language pairs makes it difficult to ascertain whether these patterns are specific to certain genres or reflect wider translational norms. More research across genres and languages is required to establish any generalizable conclusions. All these observations show that the mediation of Engagement resources is highly dependent on genre specificity, in addition

to cultural and linguistic suitability factors.

The findings of this study carry implications at both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, the high retention rate of Engagement resources suggests that Appraisal Theory's categories are applicable beyond English and can effectively capture interpersonal meaning in different languages, such as Malay. This affirms Martin and White's (2005) conception of Engagement as a resource for managing reader alignment and demonstrates how this management is strategically constructed at the genre level. Nevertheless, this study also reveals a limitation of "parameter-based frameworks", a term Bednarek (2006) used to refer to frameworks that systematically categorise evaluation, such as Appraisal Theory. Cultural mediation occurs not by changing Engagement categories but by reconfiguring deictic positioning to align with Malay preferences for inclusive, collectivist interpersonal relationships, which a standard Appraisal analysis alone cannot capture. Consequently, the inclusion of deictic positioning is crucial for a clearer understanding of engagement mediation.

For translator training, Appraisal Theory, particularly the Engagement system, should be incorporated into translation curricula so that trainees have a systematic framework to rely on, rather than making intuitive decisions when handling evaluative language. Training should also address deictic positioning, as pronoun choices carry significant interpersonal weight. Translators need to understand how to align these choices with local communicative conventions rather than simply transferring the source text's pronouns literally. This can be applied to practising translators. For professional practice, publishers of this genre could benefit from clearer editorial guidelines on handling second-person address and dialogic positioning in Malay self-help translation, rather than leaving these decisions entirely to individual translators. On a broader scale, policymakers and language authorities may wish to consider how translation conventions in popular non-fiction contribute to the maintenance or adaptation of the Malay sociopragmatic norms around hierarchy and collectivism, especially as Malay-language publishing continues to engage with globally circulating genres.

This study has several limitations. First, the corpus is restricted to three cognitive self-help books from a single publisher, which limits the generalisability of the findings. Future studies should examine a wider range of self-help genres to determine whether the patterns observed here extend beyond cognitive self-help texts. Second, the analysis was conducted by the first author without inter-coder reliability testing. While Martin and White's framework provides systematic coding criteria, classification decisions at the boundaries of Engagement subcategories inevitably involve some interpretive judgement. Future studies would benefit from involving a second coder and reporting inter-rater agreement measures. Third, the analysis of data is also more illustrative than representative. This current research focuses on "portraying evaluation" rather than "creating evaluation" (borrowed from Bednarek, 2008, p. 146). In other words, this study focuses on how writers portray evaluations, rather than the response that might be created in the text or in the reader. Future studies, such as the reader response study, which investigates the "creating evaluation" part, will certainly complement the current research.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined how translators mediate Engagement resources when rendering English-language self-help books into Malay, revealing systematic patterns of cultural adaptation in dialogic positioning and interpersonal meaning. Analysis reveals an overall retention rate of 79%. Substantial mediation occurs through person deixis change, with the second-person *you* systematically rendered as inclusive *we*, to imply inclusivity and mitigate disrespect, thus modifying the author-reader relationship from hierarchical to egalitarian positioning. This cultural mediation operates below the level of Engagement category change, demonstrating that a standard Appraisal analysis without deictic consideration would overlook one of the most interpersonally consequential translation decisions in the corpus.

These findings have direct implications for research and practice. Theoretically, the study demonstrates the need to extend Appraisal Theory to include deictic positioning when applied to translation contexts, as cultural mediation does not always manifest at the category level. For translator training, the *you* to *kita* shift should be taught as a deliberate act of cultural reframing rather than

a routine pronoun substitution, equipping trainee translators with the awareness to handle person reference systems as carriers of interpersonal meaning. For professional practice, publishers commissioning English-to-Malay self-help translations would benefit from developing clear, genre-specific guidelines on pronoun use to ensure consistency among translators. For future studies, analysing a larger corpus would enable researchers to distinguish idiosyncratic translator preferences from shared conventions. Such research could determine whether the observed patterns constitute emergent translational norms or even "laws" governing self-help translation behaviour (Toury, 1995, 2012). Comparative studies can also be conducted to assess the engagement resources in translated self-help books versus those in locally written self-help books. This study shows that self-help translation requires active cultural negotiation, in which translators serve as key mediators between different expectations for persuasive communication.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The authors have read and followed the ethical requirements for publication in *Jurnal Arbitrer* and that the current work does not involve human subjects, animal experiments, or any data collected from social media platforms.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Phoebe Lim Ian Yee collected and analysed the data and wrote the whole manuscript.

Charity Lee reviewed and revised the manuscript for intellectual content and clarity.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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