

EXAMINING TRANSLATION PROBLEMS IN INDONESIAN TOURISM BROCHURES: A CASE FROM GORONTALO

by

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the English translations of brochures published by the Tourist Board of Gorontalo Province Government in Indonesia. This quantitative study looked at tourism brochures, both in Indonesian and English, as the source of data. The data were analyzed by considering the frequency and percentage to assess the problems of the English translation used as promotional material. The results reveal that the most frequent problems were syntactic problems (61.54%), followed by semantic problems (26.37%) and miscellaneous problems (12.09%) respectively. This study is expected to contribute in the form of feedback and implications regarding the level of problems and effectiveness of the promotional material in English for future improvement. The results of this study can also be used to develop a model for the use of effective and persuasive English to improve the quality of tourism promotion material by the aforementioned party so that there will be an increased number of interest in foreign tourists visiting Gorontalo in the future. The implication in language learning especially in translator training is also considered.

Keywords: translation problems, English, tourism, brochures

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, the Tourist Board of Gorontalo Province Government has been trying hard to promote the tourism industry to international visitors. In promoting the tourism industry, the board has introduced a slogan for tourism marketing, "Gorontalo: the Hidden Paradise", which is used for all tourism promotion events and products, both national and

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international. One of the government tourist office strategies in promoting this industry is by producing promotional materials, such as tourism brochures.

To date, travel brochures are the material most widely used by the office, and this reflects the fact that brochures are the most common strategy in tourism promotion internationally (Agorni, 2012). The main function of travel brochures is to promote and sell tourist destinations using attractive images and the use of persuasive language to present information to attract tourists and help them organize their trips (Dann, 1996; Kelly, 1997; Valdeon, 2009). The brochure produced by the office is written in Indonesian and has been translated into English as part of their strategy to communicate it with the international market.

However, the translations of the brochures have generally been criticized for their poor quality. The study on quality of translation has become of the focuses in translation training and this is evident in the case of tourism texts. This is considered paramount because poor translation quality certainly undermines the ability of tourism promotional texts to achieve their purpose of attracting readers. This has been shown in a number of studies where translation researchers have shown that the translation of tourism texts tends to be of poor quality (Kelly, 1997; Milton & Garbi, 2000; Ko, 2010; Ma & Song, 2011; Muñoz, 2012; Sulaiman, 2018).

Poor translation quality is a result of low translation competence of translators. There are cases where translators involved in translation work, such as in tourist sector, do not qualify as professional translators in which these translators have no sufficient translation competence to execute such texts (Agorni, 2012; Napu, 2018). Translation is often misunderstood as solely a language transfer activity. Consequently, people who are able to speak a foreign language or more than one languages are considered and deemed to have the ability and competence to translate. In fact, to qualify as a translator, one should have translation competences that consist both linguistic and non-linguistic competence (PACTE, 2000) in which language competence is one of these underlying competences needed to qualify as translators.

Unfortunately, this is not the case which is evident in the tourism sectors translation. As shown above that poor translation quality of tourist texts have caused the texts unable to deliver the intended purpose of persuading readers. this is due to the sheer amount of translation problems in the texts which is commonly resulted from the unprofessional

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translation work. Gorontalo, as one of the emerging tourism industries in the Eastern Indonesia has also indicated this practice. More and more tourist texts are produced in both Indonesian and English every year. However, it is not clear to what extent these tourist texts and their English translation have successfully managed to convey the purpose of the texts as tourism promotional materials.

This present study is expected to contribute to the form of feedback and implications regarding the level of quality and effectiveness of the promotional material in English for future improvement. The results of this study can also be used to develop a model for the use of effective and persuasive English to improve the quality of tourism promotion material by the aforementioned party so that there will be an increased number of interest in foreign tourists visiting Gorontalo in the future.

Therefore, a study is needed to evaluate the quality of the resulting translation as one of the Gorontalo tourism promotion strategies. In conducting the research, this study revolves in one research statement, “What kinds of problems found in the English translation of tourism promotion materials published by the Tourism Board of Gorontalo Government?”

METHOD

This study was designed and carried out through a mixed-method, which is “characterized by the combination of at least one qualitative and one quantitative research component” (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The study particularly examined the nature and percentage of problems of translated tourism texts produced by the Tourist Board of Gorontalo Province Government in Indonesia. The study also considered some locations such as tourist attractions and hotels or inns visited and occupied by foreign tourists in Gorontalo. The study relied on tourism promotion material in the form of bilingual printed brochures, both in Indonesian as the source language and English as the target language.

The data were collected by visiting all tourism offices from the provincial to district and city levels. The data consisted of five tourism brochures and were all available in the data collection visits. In this study, the analysis of data from the corpus consisted of two different forms of analysis. Firstly, data were quantified to see the percentage of the translation problems and then analyzed qualitatively using content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This analysis was carried out by comparing the source text and the target text to see linguistics problems. The analysis of the target texts examined the nature of the translation

errors found in the target texts because errors have been a central part of studies of the quality of tourism texts and they may prevent the translation from achieving its purpose as a tourism text. The whole process of data presenting and referencing system was a manual one. It employed MS Word, Excel, and Manual System of reference (Turmudi, 2020,p.59).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results obtained are summarized in Table 1. The translation problems that did not fall into the linguistics categories were classified as miscellaneous problems. The analysis only provided limited to the selection of prototypical examples that are evident in the entire corpus.

Syntactic Problems

Syntactic problems in the translation are deviation at the level of structures of the target language norms as the results from the insufficient translation competence. This problem becomes the most frequent problem (Table 1) in the study. The category later is divided into four subcategories (Table 2).

Table 1.

Frequency and percentage of problems found in each category

Type of Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1. Syntactic Problems	56	61.54
2. Semantic Problems	24	26.37
3. Miscellaneous Problems	11	12.09
TOTAL	91	100

Table 2.

Frequency and percentage of syntactic problems in each subcategory

Type of Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1. The omission of Grammatical Items	40	71.43
2. Word Form Problems	11	19.64
3. Word Order	4	7.14
4. Misuse of Grammatical Items	1	1.79
TOTAL	56	100

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Furthermore, the most significant syntactic problems occur in the omission of grammatical items and word form problems subcategories. These problems are more likely to result from the limited English language and translation competence. Examples of problems are given below.

Table 3.

Examples of syntactic problems

Type of Problems	Source Language	Target Language	Proposed Translation
1. Omission of Grammatical Items	... <i>ada anjungan tempat para raja dan kerabat istana untuk beristirahat</i>	... there is a place for the kings and <u>relatives</u> to relax...	... there is a place for the kings and [their] relatives to relax...
2. Word Form Problems	... <i>para pencinta olahraga air dapat menikmati berenang dan snorkelling disini</i>	... the water sport lover can enjoy to swim and snorkeling here	... the water sport lover[s] can enjoy to swim and snorkeling here
3. Word Order	<i>Rumah adat Dulohupa adalah balai musyawarah dari kerabat kerajaan</i>	Dulohupa custom home is the <u>hall meeting</u> of royal relatives	Dulohupa custom home is the [meeting hall] of royal relatives
4. Misuse of Grammatical Items	... <i>sambil melihat kegiatan remaja istana bermain Sepak Raga</i>	... while looking at the activity of <u>the</u> teenagers playing Sepak Raga	... while looking at the activity of the teenagers playing Sepak Raga

In the first example, the problem occurs because of the missing possessive adjective in the target language. In its source-language text, the word possession marker in this context is not explicitly marked whereas in English this is needed to show possession.

The second example reveals the omission of plural ‘s’ in the word of *lover*. This is due to the word *para* in Indonesian is a collective noun that refers to more than one person and so the word *lover* should be plural.

Further, a problem with word order is found in example number 3. The translation of ‘hall meeting’ is a literal translation of ‘balai musyawarah’ where the phrase has been treated as if it is two independent words and translated each in the order it occurs in the source text. The term is, however, a lexical compound that equates with ‘meeting hall’ in English.

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The latter instance denotes the problem that occurred in misuse of grammatical items, in which there is an unnecessary usage of the definite article ‘the’ in the target language. The use of ‘the’ implies a definite group of teenagers, but this is not the case in the source text.

Table 4.

Frequency and percentage of semantic problems in each subcategory

Type of Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1. Lexical Choices	14	58.33
2. Idiomatic Expression	1	4.17
3. Stylistic Problems	1	4.17
4. Missing Translation/Untranslated Phrase	8	33.33
TOTAL	24	100

Semantic problem is concerned with word meaning; it may involve lexical choices and translations of idiomatic expressions that lead to the unclear meaning in the text. Among the subcategories in the aforementioned problem, the lexical choices subcategories had the highest frequency of problems that occurred. Lexical choices errors occur because the translator has not identified the correct source language word where there is more than one equivalent in the target language. As a consequence, the chosen word is not contextualized appropriately which resulting in an unnatural English translation. The examples of semantic problems in this study involve lexical choices, idiomatic expressions and register choices, which will be illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5.

Examples of semantic problems

Type of Problems	Source Language	Target Language	Proposed Translation
1. Lexical Choices	<i>Rumah adat</i>	<u>Custom home</u>	Traditional house
2. Idiomatic Expression	... <i>pada bagian belakang ada anjungan</i>	... <u>On the back side</u> of the pavilion	[at the back of/ at the rear of] the pavilion
3. Stylistic Problems	... <i>ada anjungan tempat para raja dan kerabat istana untuk beristirahat dan santai sambil...</i>	... there is a place for the kings and relatives <u>to relax</u> and <u>take a rest</u> while looking at the activity of...	... there is a place for the kings and relatives [to repose] and [to relax] while looking at the activity of...

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4. Missing Translation/Untranslated Phrase	<i>Dia datang untuk menyatukan <u>Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia</u></i>	He came to Gorontalo to unify <u>Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia</u>	He came to Gorontalo to unify [the United States of the Republic of Indonesia]
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As in the first example, instead of using the terms ‘traditional house’, the translator choose ‘custom home’ to describe ‘rumah adat’ in the source text. Both words have more than one equivalent meaning in the target language. The word *rumah* equates to ‘house’ or ‘home’ in English and in this context, the reference is to describe the building as an architectural form and therefore the word ‘house’ would be the most suitable translation. The word *adat* is also polysemous and could mean ‘custom’ as a noun or ‘traditional’ as an adjective. This particular context however would require an adjective in order to modify the ‘house’ and therefore the word ‘traditional’ is the most suitable equivalent translation.

Further, the underlined phrase in sample number 2 is problematic as it is a literal translation where the source text has been a word for word translated into the target language. This literal translation ‘on the back side’ is however not an idiomatic expression in English referring to relative space and it may have unintended humorous consequences in the target text as it refers idiomatically to a person’s bottom. Therefore, a different translation such as ‘at the back of’ or ‘at the rear of’ would be more suitable as the appropriate idiomatic expression in the context.

Sample number 3 shows the inconsistency in the way the text is written as it is mostly in formal English. But the phrase ‘take a rest’ is less formal and would have been a more consistent register choice.

Besides, sample number 4 reveals that the official name of the country has not translated into its official English translation; the *United States of the Republic of Indonesia*. As the phrase is left untranslated, it is not accessible to an English speaker that resulting in misinterpretation of the significance of the text.

Table 6.

Frequency and percentage of miscellaneous problems in each subcategory

Type of Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1. Repetition of Information and Words	3	27.27

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2. Punctuation	1	9.09
3. Spelling	1	9.09
4. Translator Intervention	6	54.55
TOTAL	11	100

This study also finds other kinds of translation problems that could not be categorized into either syntactic or semantic problems. Therefore, these problems are categorized as miscellaneous problems. The problems consist of some subcategories which are provided in Table 6. The following section will describe the sample of the aforesaid problem.

Table 7.

Examples of miscellaneous problems

Type of Problems	Source Language	Target Language	Proposed Translation
1. Repetition of Information and Words	<i>hanya berjarak 10 km dari pusat kota</i>	It is only 10 km from the <u>city</u> center of Gorontalo <u>city</u>	It is only 10 km from the { <u>city</u> } center of Gorontalo <u>city</u>
2. Punctuation	<i>Kita juga dapat menemukan beberapa hewan langka seperti <u>babi rusa</u> dan anoa</i>	We can also find several rare animals such as <u>pig</u> , <u>deer</u> and anoa	We can also find several rare animals such as [babirusa] and anoa
3. Spelling	<i>... dibangun pada tahun 1525 oleh Portugis</i>	... built in 1525 by <u>Portuguesse</u>	... built in 1525 by [Portuguese]
4. Translator Intervention	<i>... terkenal dengan Salvador Dali, yaitu terumbu karang dengan ukiran yang mirip seperti lukisan sang maestro yang belum ditemukan dimanapun didunia selain di Olele</i>	Find out what is around the hidden paradise	... popular for its coral reefs because of the unique resemblance to a masterpiece by Salvador Dali which is not found anywhere else in the world except in Olele.

These problems of repetition, punctuation, and spelling as seen in the underlined sentences seem to result from the lack of attention to editing the completed translation.

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Further, in sample number 4, the translator has both omitted and added material in this text. This intervention has created a loss of information from the original message and provides less information about the significance of the site than in the original version.

Discussion

Out of six promotional brochures discussed in this study, it reveals that syntactic problems are the most prominent problems found in the text which followed by semantic problems. These findings indicate that the translator has insufficient competence in the target language. The discussion above has shown that there are a number of translation problems in the texts. Most of the linguistic problems identified have also been found in other tourist translation studies (eg., Ma & Song, 2011; Muñoz, 2012; Permadi & Prayogo, 2012; Hartati, 2013; Puspitasari, et.al, 2013; Liu & Wen, 2014). This problem may be caused by the translator's limited English skills. Problems with translation are also caused by the literal (word-for-word) translation strategy that has been used throughout the text and this demonstrates the competence of the translator (Kelly, 1997; Muñoz, 2012).

Further, it is very likely that these two limited competencies (English and translation competencies) can be linked to one another. This is because translators have inadequate skills in translating into the target language so they tend to translate the source text word for word. As a result, the target text is literally translated text. On the one hand, this literal (word-for-word) translation approach is caused by the limited ability of the translator to interpret the text. Due to poor English competency, the translator may be less able to distinguish the appropriate words for the context because s/he tends to translate each word from the source language text using a dictionary. This is evidenced in the misuse of lexical choice of six texts, in which the translator has not recognized the polysemous word and has chosen an inappropriate word for a certain context that actually changes the original meaning and message in the target text.

Furthermore, translation does not go through a quality assurance system to translate into a target language, such as having reviewed by other translators or readers in the target language prior to publication (McAlester, 2000; Adab, 2005). Newmark (1991) argues that low-quality tourism text translations may be caused by translators who are not competent enough in translating, especially when translating into the target language. As a result, the low

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proficiency of translators to translate into the target language has created many translation problems.

In addition, it is revealed that some of the translators' works have provided evidence of good translation practices, especially through intervention. Translator interventions have demonstrated a good sense of mediation through adding information. As stated by Baker (1992, 2009) and Kelly (1997), in an effort to allow full understanding, interventions in the form of adding new information and eliminating redundancy or repetition that can change the meaning in the text can be carried out by translators. Therefore, some additional information achieves the purpose of the text by making implicit information from the source text to be explicit in the target text; these interventions are great for providing complete understanding and producing quality translations for the intended audience.

Nevertheless, not all intervention work discussed in this study achieves a successful mediation; instead, it creates problems in the text. Some of the omissions have abandoned the original message and significance of the site. Meanwhile, additional information contained in the text looks like new information that is not contained explicitly or implicitly in the source text. As a result, the function as a mediator that clarifies and helps target readers to understand the source text is not achieved. Rather, these additions tend to distort the function and purpose of the text as they change the significance of the site depicted in the original text. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether or not this intervention is really a translation or a new text.

In order to achieve communicative goals and be able to attract readers (tourists), the ideal translated text should be able to present original text information in an informative, persuasive manner and free from translation problems or errors (Kelly, 1997; Newmark, 1991). As suggested by the functional approach, the quality of translation is seen from the way the text is translated to achieve the functions and goals of the target text reader. However, the problem of translation errors that are often seen in this study may reduce the persuasive and attractive purposes of the text. Furthermore, translation errors and problems caused by translator intervention might also change the designed communicative functions in the source-language text. Evidence of problems in these texts has reflected the inability of the translator to perform or transfer the functions of the text required by the target audience. These problems, then, undermine the achievement of translation objectives and consequently lead to an unprofessional image and low quality of translation; as the result, it impacts the effectiveness of the text as a promotional text to attract tourists.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The discussion of the six texts reveals that the most frequent problems were syntactic problems (61.54%), followed by semantic problems (26.37%) and miscellaneous problems (12.09%) respectively. The analysis also shows that most of the translation errors occur due to the overuse of a literal translation approach, which copies the structure and stylistic features of the source texts into the target texts. The sorts of problems found in these Indonesian texts are typical of problems found in low-quality translations of tourism materials. The sorts of translation errors found in the texts indicate that the translator has insufficient target language competence and translation competence. This indicates that translations were done by target language speakers of English and that there was a limited quality assurance to overcome the limitations of the translators. The study recommends the government employ target language translators as a practical solution in situations where the demand for translators does not match the availability of translators who can work into their source language.

Furthermore, the findings of this study may have an implication in terms of language learning especially in translator training. This is true when it comes to beginning translator training at university. Tourist texts can be used as materials for translation exercises as a way to raise awareness of translation problems and to improve translator competence (Kelly, 1997).

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