

Challenges in Online News Translation

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Abstract

This research discusses the translation of online news articles from Indonesian into English on the official website of the Cabinet Secretariat (www.setkab.go.id). Data collected are three news articles and their translations in English. This research is a qualitative research in the field of translation studies. The result of this study indicates that in the translation of news from the Cabinet Secretariat website, three main translation problems are identified, namely the translation of the headline, providing additional information in the translation, and the translation of the news lead. The research also finds that in translating online news, translators often not only translate the news online, but also rewrite the news in the TL.

Keywords: translation, translator, online news, rewriting.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas penerjemahan artikel berita daring dari bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris dalam situs resmi Sekretariat Kabinet (www.setkab.go.id). Data yang dikumpulkan adalah tiga artikel berita dan terjemahannya dalam bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dalam bidang kajian penerjemahan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam penerjemahan berita dari situs Sekretariat Kabinet, teridentifikasi tiga masalah penerjemahan utama, yakni penerjemahan judul berita, pemberian informasi tambahan dalam terjemahan, serta penerjemahan lead berita. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa dalam penerjemahan berita daring, penerjemah sering kali tidak hanya menerjemahkan sekadar berita daring itu, tetapi juga menulis kembali berita tersebut di dalam BSa.

Kata kunci: penerjemahan, penerjemah, berita daring, penulisan kembali.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Translation plays an important part in the works of ministries and government institutions in Indonesia. Through translation, laws, news, speeches and other products of the government can be communicated to people outside Indonesia who do not understand the Indonesian language.

The presence of translators and interpreters in many government institutions and ministries Indonesia is also not uncommon these days. The jobs of those translators range from translating legal texts, speeches, website translations, news articles, or interpreting. The translation is mostly done from Indonesian into other languages such as English.

As stated above, one of the translation jobs that those translators do is translating online news articles. Nowadays, almost all ministries and government institutions have their official websites, which feature among others online news on government-related issues. In fact, a website has become an integral part of all ministries and government institutions. Some of those websites are even available in other languages such as English, Arabic, Mandarin, French, and some other languages.

Peyrot in Hariyanto (2015) argues that there are seven classic reasons to translate websites, namely:

- (a) More people are non-native speakers of English
- (b) A lot of people are searching and surfing the webs only in their native languages
- (c) Less and less Internet contents are in English
- (d) Web users have a tendency to spend more time with web using their language,
- (e) They tend to purchase via websites with their native language
- (f) More and more online trade is in non-English language
- (g) Non-English speaking market grows rapidly.

As in the case of website translation in government institutions and ministries in Indonesia, the reasons are as follows:

- (a) The localized website aims for non-Indonesian readership or international readers;
- (b) The localized website is expected to introduce Indonesia to the international world;
- (c) The localized website is also expected to build more understanding about Indonesia for the international community.

As stated earlier, one of the common features commonly found in the websites of ministries and government institutions in Indonesia is online news, which is written in the Indonesian language. This news is mainly about domestic affairs and international affairs related to the government or news from the perspective of the government. To reach out to international readership, those news articles are also translated into other languages, predominantly English.

One of government institutions in Indonesia that has its official website and the English version is Cabinet Secretariat. The official website of this institution – www.setkab.go.id - has a number of features such as news, columns, laws, presidential regulations, online news, speeches, and pictorial news. As for the online news section, it is available both in Indonesian as the Source Text (ST) and English. Only certain news articles with international implications or about Indonesia's foreign policies are translated into English.

When it comes to translating online news articles, just like translating other types of texts that carries its own problems and challenges, translating news articles arguably poses its own problems and challenges. The demands for its accuracy is arguably high because most of those news articles contain facts, data, factuals information and so on. Other non-technical difficulties may also be faced by translators, such as the demands to work fast and under pressure because news articles have to be updated and the translations must also be available immediately after the news articles

are published. It is also considered that translators working on online news are often called “international journalists” as what happens in Reuters for example (Bassnett, 2014). It is widely accepted format of news written in one language can be different from news format written in another language. There are also arguably differences between formats of news written in Indonesian with that in English. For translators translating news articles, this condition can pose difficulties and challenges for translators who translate news articles from one language into another. It is for this reason that this paper seeks to investigate problems in the translation of news articles at the official website of Cabinet Secretariat. The research uses three four translations of four news articles from the English version of Cabinet Secretariat. This research adopts a qualitative method (Travers 2001, p. 4–5; William & Chesterman 2002, h. 64–65) in the form of textual analysis and a case study.

1.1. Translation and Translator

House (2014) argues that translation can be defined as the result of a linguistic-textual operation in which a text in one language is re-produced in another language. In her definition, House also suggests that translation is both a linguistic and textual activity that involves the reproduction of a text written in one language into another language. She also argues that translation is not only a linguistic act but also an act of communication. Meanwhile, Larson (1984) stated that translation is the act of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language and this is done by going from the form of the first language to the form of a second language by way of semantic structure. In other words, in her definition of translation, Larson puts more emphasis on the meaning over the form.

As for translating online news articles, it can be argued that this type of translation is both a linguistic act and an act of communication, just like what is proposed by House (2014). The process of translating online news article does not only involve the linguistic activity of translating a news article written in the Source Language (ST) into the

Target Language (TT) but also serves as an act of communication act, in that the translator is functions as a 'bridge' of communication barriers between the two languages. In this case, the translator is tasked to retell the Indonesian news originally written in Indonesia into English for a wider international audience. For example, when a translator has to translate the news about President Joko Widodo inaugurating a new airport in eastern Indonesia, they have to transfer the messages contained in the news article (what the President says, news about the new airport itself, several direct quotes of the President) from Indonesian into English. In this case, the translator is expected to retell the news in English.

Translating news articles is also a translation activity that should put more emphasis on meaning over form. It must be born in mind that in some cases, the translation of a news article can be, and to some extent, has to be different from its ST in terms of form due to several factors, one of the being the translation has to comply with the 'standard' form a news article in English. Structure of Indonesian news article might be different from that in English and it is the task of the translator to switch the structure from the structure of Indonesian news article into the structure of English news article.

Furthermore, one of the biggest problems in translating news articles, as mentioned before, is that the translators are required to produce translations that are acceptable as proper news articles in English. Thus, in this case, the translation should only become the translated text of the ST but also an 'acceptable' news article in English. In relation to this, Baker (2014) maintains that translation is also understood as a form of (re)-narration that constructs rather than represents the events and characters it re-narrates in another language. The concept of narration itself is defined as our only means of making sense of the world and our place within it (Baker 2006; Harding 2012a, 2012b). The narrative concept, according to Baker, proceeds from two basic assumptions about the relationship between

human beings, their environment, and the stories that circulate within that environment: the first is that we have no direct, unmediated access to reality; specifically, our access to reality is filtered through the stories we narrate to ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live and the second assumption is that the stories we narrate do not only mediate our access to reality but also participate in configuring the reality. The notion of translation is a type of rewriting is first stated by Lefevere (1992, p.127) in Munday (2001), who argues:

Translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting, and ... it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin.

In relation to translating news, as suggested earlier, the translator is required to re-tell or to re-narrate the stories originally written in Indonesian into English for TT readers or international readers. International readers who have no access to news about Indonesia due to language barriers can probably read the news thanks to the 're-narration' done by the translators.

1.2. Journalistic Translation

Journalistic translation can be regarded as a non-literary translation. It can also be argued that this type of translation is a specific type of translation as it presents unique challenges in the translation process, one of which is the different news structure that might be different in ST and TT. In general, there are no universal rules as for what news article should be like. Bard (2005) proposes the notion of 'style' in newswriting. According to him, 'styles' are simply standard one refers to in deciding how to spell, punctuate. In general, however, Bard argues that news article in English should contain the following things:

- **Headlines**, the title of the article. It usually should be the shortest, punchiest summary of the story. It has the skeleton of, but seldom is, a complete sentence. It must have a noun and a

verb (the verb understood if not expressed). Articles, most adjectives and auxiliary verbs are omitted.

- **Lead**, which is the first dozen or so words that carries 90 percent of the burden of the whole story. In other words, a lead set the tones of the whole article and from the lead, we can expect that the story is all about.
- **Body**, which contain facts that support the lead, and they are in descending order of importance, all the way to the least important fact, which makes the bottom point of the pyramid.

It is those three main parts that are usually found in news articles in English and the problems arise when translating a news article written in Indonesian. For example, the Source Text sometimes does not have a lead an when it has to be translated into English, a common news article in English must have a lead. Translating news can be considered a special type of translation. News mainly contain information, such as data, number, statistics, policies, direct quotes of the President, the Vice President, ministers, government officials, and many others. The accuracy of translation of a news article has to be maintained and the translators have to ensure that the translated news contain as much as data contained in the original text. Furthermore, it can also be said that the task of translator who translate news also involves 'transferring' the form of news article used in ST into the form of news article used in TT.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative method (Travers 2001, p. 4–5; William & Chesterman 2002, h. 64–65) in the form of textual analysis and a case study. Source data of this research are samples of English translations from the online news articles originally written in Indonesian language. This research investigates cases of translation of headlines, how to deal with the missing lead, and how to add extra information needed in the translation. Unit of translation used in this research is sentence.

3. FINDINGS

Several main problems found in the translation of online news articles at the website of Cabinet Secretariat are discussed follows:

3.1. Additional Information

In some cases, translators working on online news translations have to provide more information and data in the translation to make the translation clear for the TT readers, as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1.

| ST | TT |
|--|---|
| <p>Untuk mendukung kesiapan Indonesia menghadapi persaingan tersebut, Presiden Jokowi salah satunya meminta dilakukan percepatan pengembangan Bandara Sultan Thaha, Jambi, yang dikelola oleh PT Angkasa Pura II.</p> | <p>Therefore, as one of the preparations for Indonesia in facing the global competition, President Jokowi has instructed the expansion of Sultan Thaha Airport, which is managed by state-owned airport operator PT Angkasa Pura II.</p> |

The phrase ‘PT. Angkasa Pura II’ is translated into English as ‘state-owned airport operator’ by adopting the Addition translation strategy proposed by Newmark (1998). This addition is needed and justified because TT readers should be given more information on what PT Angkasa Pura II is. It can be assumed that Indonesian readers might know what it is but there is no guarantee that TT readers or international readers know have background knowledge about PT. Angkasa Pura II. The same case applies for other institutions or companies such as PLN (mostly translated ‘state-owned electricity company PLN’) and other similar institutions. The bottom line is that, a translator has to become a cultural and communication bridge between the ST and TT readers. Another example is

| ST | TT |
|---|--|
| Presiden Jokowi menegaskan komitmen untuk membangun Papua dan Papua Barat dengan lebih sering mengunjungi kedua provinsi itu. | President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo has renewed his commitment to develop the provinces of Papua and West Papua by visiting the two provinces more often. |

Additional information in the translation of the news articles aims to provide background knowledge for readers of the translation. It must be born in mind that people who read translations of news articles might not be familiar with things that readers of the ST are already familiar with. For example, Indonesian readers are most likely familiar with Papua province and West Papua province – in terms of where they are located, for example. However, there is no guarantee that all international readers have knowledge about the two provinces. Therefore, it is important for the translators of news articles to give additional information about the two provinces.

From the two examples above, it can be said that in the case of translating news articles, providing additional information in the translation can be crucial. It is wise to think that readers of ST might not share similar background knowledge with readers of the TT.

3.2. Tranlating Headings

Headline – sometimes also known as “title” - is an integrated part in all news articles. To some extent, a headline can tell the reader about the content of the news article. Bard (2005) suggests the following requirements for a good headline:

1. The headline should use strong verbs, active rather than passive.
Use specific, not general nouns.
Women found safe after accident (too broad)
Two women survive fall from tower (specific)
2. The headline should not leave out the subject
Resigns, then changes minds and returns (no subject)

Dean resigns, then changes mind

- Each line should be a grammatical unit. Try not to end a line with a preposition. Avoid splitting verb parts and do not split modifier from a noun.

Quake hits bay area; no damage reported

- Attribution: just as the body in the story, one must attribute everything not vouched for by the reporter as fact

New tuition too high (no attribution)

Tuition too high, say students

In translating the headline of an online news article, a translator sometimes has to change the form of the headline of the ST and make an acceptable headline in the translation, as shown on Table 2 below

Table 2

| ST | TT |
|--|---|
| Dilantik Jadi Kapolri, Presiden Jokowi Minta Tito Lakukan Reformasi Polri Secara Menyeluruh | President Jokowi Inaugurates Tito Karnavian as New Indonesian National Police Chief |

The problem with this translation is that before translating it from Indonesian into English, the translator has to analyze the Indonesian text (the headline) first. It turns out that there is a grammatical error in the TT because if one refers to the word order of the sentence, it can be understood that the one who is *'dilantik'* (inaugurated) as *'Kapolri'* (police chief) is the President himself. If the headline is translation as it is, it would be like the one on Table 3

Table 3

| ST | TT |
|--|---|
| Dilantik Jadi Kapolri, Presiden Jokowi Minta Tito Lakukan Reformasi Polri Secara Menyeluruh | Inaugurated as Police Chief, President Jokowi Asks Tito to Conduct Police Reforms as a Whole |

The English translation of this headline does not make sense because of the dangling modifier found in the sentence. Thus, one alternative to make the translation natural in English is to modify it into:

Table 4

| ST | TT |
|--|---|
| Lagi, 7 WNI Disandera Kelompok Milisi di Filipina' | Seven Indonesians Kidnapped in Southern Philippines: Foreign Affairs Minister |

The translated headline is different from the ST in terms of forms but the translated headline can be regarded as acceptable headlines in English. On the contrary, if the translators faithfully translate the headlines in the ST into English, the translated headlines can be awkward. In other words, in translating headlines, the translator also has to do some sort of rewriting in this case. The knowledge of writing good headlines is also needed by translators working on online news translation.

In the meantime, there are also omissions in the translation as the translator leaves out the phrase '*President Jokowi Minta Tito Lakukan Reformasi Polri Secara Menyeluruh*' (President Jokowi Asks Tito to Conduct Police Reforms as a Whole). The reason for the omission is that headline, especially in English news articles, should be made as short as possible and the main theme of the article is already covered by the phrase 'President Jokowi Inaugurates Tito Karnavian as New Indonesian National Police Chief'.

The translator also decided to add attribution 'Foreign Affairs Minister' to show that the statement is officially issued by Indonesian Foreign Minister. This is something that is not found in the headline in the ST but is actually important to tell readers that this statement is not made by the journalists but by the minister. For these two examples, it can be seen that translating the headline can be tricky.

Another example of the issue of translating headlines is shown on Table 5.

Table 5

| ST | TT |
|---|---|
| Presiden Jokowi: Dengan Cara Apapun Program Listrik 35.000 MW Harus Bisa Diselesaikan | Gov't Will Finish 35,000 MW Electrification Project, the President Says |

The English translation is not shorter than the original text but it also changes a passive sentence in the ST (*diselesaikan*) into an English active sentence (to finish). It is widely believed that English favors active sentences, especially when it is used as a headline. In this case, the translator can take the liberty in changing the form from passive into active. In fact, for the sake of naturalness, it is indeed necessary for the translator to change the form.

3.3. Writing Lead in Translations

A lead is an important element in a newspaper article. Bard (2005) argues that a lead carries 90% of the burden of the whole story and the standard news lead is a quick summary of what the story is all about. Nevertheless, many online news articles in Indonesia does not contain a lead at all. In the case of news articles on websites of government institutions and ministries, some of those news articles often contain leads that are too long, the ones do not represent the whole story and even do not have a lead at all. In this case, the translator has to write the lead in the translation although the original text does not have a lead or the lead in the original text is a bit different. In other words, translators working on online news articles have to make sure the translation contains a good lead. An example of the translation of a lead can be seen on Table 6 below.

Table 6

| ST | TT |
|--|---|
| Presiden Rusia Vladimir Putin yang baru saja memenangkan pemilihan umum di negaranya, merencanakan akan berkunjung ke Indonesia dalam beberapa waktu ke depan. | Russian President Vladimir Putin, who recently won Presidential election in his country, plans to undertake an official visit Indonesia in the near future, according to Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno LP Marsudi. |

The lead in the translation is slightly different from the lead in the ST but it talks more about the whole article and is more appropriate to be made as a lead. The addition ‘according to Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno LP Marsudi’ is also necessary to inform the reader that the statement is an official statement.

4. DISCUSSION

From those examples of translations, it can be argued that in translating online news, a translator often has to re-write the news in the TT. One of the reasons is the different ‘systems’ of the two languages involved. For example, it might be acceptable for a headline to be written to a passive sentence but in general and if the subject is known in English, it is better to make sentence into an active sentence. In this case, a translator must also have good understandings of the ‘norms’ in the two languages involved (in this case Indonesian and English).

Furthermore, translator of online news must also become a good researcher although in general, a good translator should also be a good researcher. Specifically, for translator of online news, they must

provide additional information in the TT for TT readers because oftentimes, the author of the ST does not write a text to be translated.

Knowledge in newswriting in the two languages involved is also crucial in the case of translating news articles because as shown by this research, the “translation” here in practice is re-writing the ST in the TL that is in accordance with the format in the TL.

5. CONCLUSION

Online news translation can be considered as a specific type of translation. Translating online news poses its own challenges and difficulties, including potentially different news article structure between ST and TT and ST that can be poorly written and contain missing, incomplete or inaccurate data. Journalistic translation, to a great extent, reinforces the notion that in many cases, translation is a type of re-writing and to become a good translator, one also has to become a good writer. In the case of translating online news translation at the official website of Cabinet Secretariat, translators can re-write the news articles, instead of merely translating them. In other words, the translators also have to act as journalists.

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