

THE UNNATURALNESS OF INDONESIAN PUBLIC SIGNS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH IN MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to discover (1) the kinds of unnatural Indonesian-English translation of public signs in Medan city; (2) To investigate the appropriate techniques to avoid the unnatural Indonesian-English translation of public signs in Medan city. This research was done by applying descriptive qualitative method. The data of this research were Indonesian-English public signs found in Medan city. The data were analyzed by using qualitative descriptive analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman. The findings of this research showed that: (1) there were four kinds of unnatural translation found in Indonesian-English translation of public signs in Medan city. They were spelling mistakes, change or loss information, grammatical mistakes and inappropriate choice of words; (2) There were some techniques can be used to avoid the unnatural translation found in Indonesian-English translation of public signs in Medan city. They were borrowing, adaptation, and transposition technique.

Keywords:*Unnatural translation, Public Signs.*

INTRODUCTION

The signs that are shown publicly, offering a kind or warning, direction, notification and other closely related literal or graphical information was called Public Signs (Hayati, 2014). Public signs are considered a very crucial component to the language environment of a city, especially a big city such as Medan city. Public sign means the text language for people in public. There are many identical expressions, such as sign language, logo, signs, and slogans and so on. These terminologies have been replaced in government standard conception by a new general popular terminology that is the public sign.

Medan, as the neighboring place of some beautiful tourist destinations such as Bukit Lawang and Parapat, has a considerable role in the field of tourism and more tourists want to explore and visit Medan. So, the portrait of the public signs is very crucial. Translation of public signs represent an International level of environment establishment in a city whether the appropriate use of public signs will have a straight effect on the portrait of the city in International. So, the public signs translation has a developing importance. As the matter of fact, the unnatural translation of public signs are seen in Medan city.

Many English texts in public signs in Medan are seen as in accommodations, restaurant, and shops. Medan as the neighboring city of Parapat and Bukit Lawang in North Sumatera province, Indonesian-English public signs are used greatly at public settings such as hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, parking areas, public conveniences and other places to convey information to the people

both Indonesian and tourists. Public signs have a number of different characters. For example, in form of a single board, paper or metal, with the words clearly written or pictures in large print for people to see or read from a distance. Due to the constraints of concrete area, the sentences used in public signs are always compact, delivering essential information in just a few words or phrases, such as 'wet floor' and 'no smoking'. The public signs translation can be considered as a special scope which needs proper strategies to deliver the messages from the source language text (SL) to the target language text (TL).

Usually, public signs are known in the form of a few words or phrases or sentences, pictures, or words followed by a picture, which has function not only as a face of the city and the nation but also as the first inviting card given to the tourists. In addition, public signs have exact functions as conveying messages, warning, or instructing. But, it is disappointing that the wrong translations of the public signs are often seen in some areas. The unnaturalness in translation can be viewed from the linguistic aspect, analyzing the bulky use of words, sentences, grammatical structures (Lan, 2016). In public sign translations, the use of words or phrases and grammar rules are crucial. In translating the signs into English, a comprehension of linguistic aspects of the public signs is needed to permit the researcher in studying the translations of the public signs.

The fact that many mistakes found in the English public signs translation is necessary to be identified and solved since the public signs play crucial roles in society and environment (Aprianti, 2019). It

triggers the researcher to do deeper investigation in the unnaturalness translation of public signs in Medan city since Medan city is one of the big city in Indonesia.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

This study was categorized as the library research. It meant that the research conducted in some places that permitted the researcher to get the data. The research has been conducted for 6 months. It started from May to October 2020.

The data of this research were Indonesian – English public signs found in Medan city. The data were in form of texts or pictures followed by texts. The data were collected in the form of photos of Indonesian – English public signs in Medan city. The source of data were the text which written on the picture of the public signs in Medan city. The text was the Indonesian – English translation of public signs.

In accomplishing this research, the study conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. This research focused on the unnatural translation of public signs found in Medan city. The analysis described the translation quality of the public signs in Medan and proposed the possible strategies that can be done to avoid the unnatural translation of the public signs found in Medan city. The public signs were captured in form of photos and they were analyzed according to theories proposed by some experts about translation quality and translation strategies.

In accomplishing this study, the data were collected by using documentary technique which meant that the data were found from observing, reading, studying and analyzing the reference related to

the study. The steps of data collection were as follow:

1. Investigating the public signs in Medan city which have unnatural translation. The kinds of public signs which studied in this research were not limited into specific kinds. It meant that the public signs can be in kinds of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and government building.
2. Taking the pictures of the public signs which contained unnatural translations in the texts. There were seventeen pictures of public signs found in Medan city, two of them were categorized into place names (picture 9 and 10) and fifteen pictures were categorized into commercial shop signs.
3. Identifying the unnatural translation of the public signs. It has been found that there were twenty six data which categorized into unnatural translations.
4. Classifying the translation into the classification of unnatural translation.
5. Finding out the appropriate techniques to avoid the unnatural translation.

The data were analyzed by using qualitative descriptive analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014). The steps were as follow:

1. Data Reduction

In data reduction, there were some steps done by the researcher, namely: First, the researcher collected the data about the unnaturalness of translation of public signs found in Medan city. Second, the researcher transcribed the data. Their relevant data were discarded. Third, after reducing the data, the researcher analyzed the data based on theory proposed by the experts.

The analysis was done in the form of descriptive.

2. Data Display

The second step was data display. In data display, the researcher organized and compressed the data that permits conclusion drawing and the action. The data were displayed in form of figures. In the process of displaying the data, it was based on the formulation of the problems.

3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification

The third step of the analysis was conclusion drawing and verification. After the data were reduced, analyzed and displayed, the researcher then drew conclusions based on the formulation of the problems stated in this research.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

After having analysis the data, there are some crucial points to be discussed in this research. Newmark (1988) states that unnatural translation can be defined as the failure to recreate a text, according to the writer's intention, the reader's expectation, and the appropriate norms of the target language, making the translation imperfect and not literally elegant. Unnatural translation distorts the writer's intention, disappoints reader's expectation for not meeting the set of requirement of the target language used (Shei, 2002). Dewi (2015) states that unnatural translation can be caused by the ungrammatical structures in translating the target language text, the use of inappropriate word, and the mechanic error in translating the TL. Meanwhile, Aprianti (2019) explains that unnatural translation can be caused by embarrassing spelling mistakes, change or loss information, grammatical mistakes,

inappropriate choice of words and on cultural background.

The unnaturalness of translation occurred in the translation of public signs in Medan city. Public signs are actually a very crucial component to the language environment of a city, especially a big city such as Medan city. Public signs mean the text language for people in public. There are many similar expressions, including sign language, logo, signs, and slogans and so on. The basic characteristic of public signs in general must consider a correct grammar and spelling, with a short and clear language, a precise word choice, commonly used words, and comprehend the cultural differences (Guo, 2012). But the findings in this study showed that there were the unnaturalness of translation in public signs in Medan city. The unnatural translation was found in the commercial shop signs and the place name in Medan.

Based on the data found in this research, the unnatural translation found in Indonesian – English translation of public signs in Medan city was caused by four elements. They were embarrassing spelling mistake which dominantly occurred, change or loss information, grammatical mistake and the use of inappropriate words in translating the public signs. A natural translation must be the work of skillful translator. To be able to produce it, the translator should have competences in both the source and the target language and should have extensive cultural background. The competences that the translator should have such as the lexical, grammatical and cultural knowledge of both source and target language.

The last but not least, the translator should have sufficient

knowledge in applying the appropriate technique in translating the public signs. Molina and Abir (2002) proposed eighteen techniques that can be used in translation. Each technique has its plus and minus. It depends on the translator's ability to decide which technique should be applied in translating the text. Based on the data analysis in this research, there were three techniques that can be applied to avoid the unnatural translation found in Indonesian – English translation of public signs in Medan city. They were borrowing, adaptation and transposition technique. Translation is not an easy matter. Larson (2016) states that there are some aspects that the translator needs to concern with, namely, lexical, grammatical structure, communication, situation and the cultural context of the source and the target language.

DISCUSSION

This research dealt with the unnaturalness of translation of Indonesian public signs into English in Medan city. The source of the data was Indonesian-English public signs found in Medan city. The data was analyzed using interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014) namely data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. Data Reduction

After observing the public signs in Medan city, it was found that there were 17 public signs which categorized into the unnatural translation. From those 17 public signs, it was obtained 26 data because there were some public signs which had more than one unnatural translations. The data reduction can be seen as follow:

a. Embarassing Spelling Mistakes

Spelling is an crucial aspect of language knowledge; it is a key functional component of writing. Poor spelling can interfere with communication and it affects the quality of translation. Poor spelling makes the translation unnatural. Spelling mistakes can be classified into four main types namely omission, substitution, transposition and insertion. The sign can be found in the public signs in Medan city is “blezer”. The word “blezer” cannot be found in dictionary. So, it cannot be used in public signs because it would make the reader, especially tourists, hard to understand the word. It should be written as “blazer”. Based on Oxford dictionary, “blazer” has a function as noun which means a semi-formal jacket. Based on the data, it can be seen that the word “blezer” was unnatural because there was spelling mistake of substitution.

b. Change or Loss Information

The translator should have sufficient knowledge of the language and of the cultures of both languages. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult to find the lexical equivalent between the target language culture and the source language culture since they are very different from one to another. It can be seen as follow: “**make wisuda.**” The data was taken from a public sign of a salon in Medan city. After asking the owner of the salon, it was known that the phrase refer to the service offered by the salon. Based on Oxford dictionary, “make” has a function as a verb which means to build, construct or produce. The word “wisuda” cannot be found in dictionary because it is an Indonesian word which the equivalent translation is

“graduation”. So, the phrase “make wisuda” cannot be used in public signs since there was change or loss information in the translation. It is better if translated into “make up for graduation”. Based on Oxford dictionary, “make up” is a verb which means to prepare someone for a theatrical performance by means of costume, cosmetics and etc. “Graduation” means the action or process of graduating and receiving a diploma for completing a course of study. Therefore, the translation of public sign above was categorized into an unnatural translation

c. Grammatical Mistakes

A proper translation should, at least, accord with the grammatical rules or linguistic conventions of the target language. Whether a translation obeys grammatical rule or not is always fundamental standard of judging a good one. Grammatical mistakes caused the translation sounded unnatural and it was found in the public signs in Medan city. It can be seen as follow: “**waffle street Medan.**” The equivalent translation of the phrase above is *waffle jalanan Medan*. But it was translated into “waffle street Medan”. It can be seen that there was grammatical mistakes in the adjective sequences. Waffle was the noun which preceded by the adjectives of “street” and “Medan”. The adjective “street” was intended to explain the type of the waffle and the word “Medan” was the origin of the noun. It should be written as “Medan street waffle” because a noun which followed by adjectives should follow the sequences. The sequences were the origin, the type and ended by the noun. It would be more natural if the phrase was translated by following the adjectives sequences.

d. Inappropriate Choice of Words

The choice of words in translating the source language into the target language is one of crucial rules in translation. Unnatural linguistic translation can be caused by inadequate solutions to pragmatic translation problems such as lack of a receiver orientation. The consequences of such errors are serious because target readers tend to realize that they are getting irrelevant or insignificant information. This type of unnatural translation was found in public signs in Medan city. It can be seen as follow: “**taylor**”

Based on Oxford dictionary, the word taylor is obsolete form of tailor. It means that the word is no longer used in the target language. Therefore, the data above was categorized into the inappropriate choice of word. It was more natural if the word was translated into “tailor” which means a person who makes, repairs, or alters clothes professionally, especially suits and men’s clothing. It is crucial for the translator to have sufficient knowledge about the equivalent vocabularies in the target language because the inappropriate choice of words caused serious consequences. The target readers would fail to understand the translated words.

e. On Cultural background

Under the cultural perspective, translator was supposed to be the messengers whose task is to convey a message from one language to another in anything but an alien/strange way that may cause confusion to target language readers. Based on the data analysis, there was no data in this research which can be categorized into unnatural translation of cultural background. Therefore, there was no analysis can be shown in this type of unnatural translation.

The data in this research can be displayed in form of figure as follow:

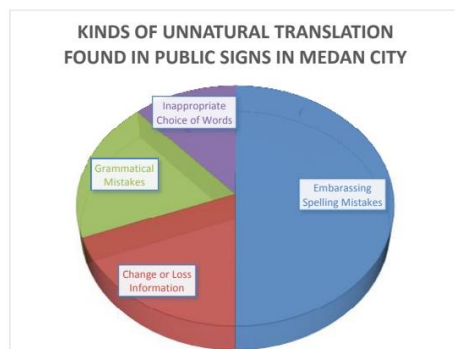


Figure 1. Kinds of Unnatural Translation Found in Public Signs

Based on the Figure 1 it was known that the most frequent type of unnatural translation found in Indonesian – English translation of public signs in Medan city was embarrassing spelling mistakes which showed the percentage of 50%. It meant that the half of the unnatural translation found in public signs was caused by the spelling mistakes. Then, the second most frequent type of unnatural translation found in this research were caused by change or loss information and grammatical mistakes. Both types showed the same percentage of 19% which meant that each type occurred in five data found in this research. The least frequent type of unnatural translation found in Indonesian – English translation of public signs was inappropriate choice of words which showed the percentage of 12%. It meant that this kind of unnatural translation occurred in three data of this research.

After analyzing the data in this research, there were some translation techniques that can be used in order to avoid the unnatural translation. They were borrowing, adaptation, and transposition. These techniques were suggested after the causes of the unnatural translation

found from the analyzed data. By suggesting these three translation techniques, it did not mean that the other translation techniques would not be required. However, the suggested techniques in this research can be considered as the alternative techniques that can be applied in translation of public signs. The translation techniques which should be used to avoid the unnatural translation can be seen from the following figure.



Figure 2. Translation Techniques to Avoid the Unnatural Translation of Public Signs

It can be seen from the Figure 4.2 above that, firstly, embarrassing spelling mistakes can be avoided by applying borrowing technique. Borrowing technique permit the translator to take a word straight from another language. It meant that the target language text would be exactly same as the source language text. For examples: The word '**blezer**' which supposed to be translated as 'blazer'. The word was borrowed from the target language (English) because the source language (Indonesian) had no equivalent word to describe a kind of jacket worn for casual wear but still pretty neat. So, the translator can use borrowing technique to avoid the unnatural translation.

Secondly, to avoid the change or loss information, adaptation technique can be used because this technique permit the translator to replace the source text cultural element with the target text cultural

element. For example, **'Make Wisuda'** was unnatural translation because there was the change or loss information. It can be avoided by using adaptation technique. The translator adapt the culture of the target language to translate the text. So, the translation would be more natural if translated into 'Make up for Graduation' or 'Graduation Make up'.

Thirdly, transposition technique can be applied to avoid the grammatical mistakes in the translation because this technique permitd the translator to apply changes in the grammatical category. For examples: **'Waffle Street Medan'** was categorized as the unnatural translation since it did not follow the grammatical rule. 'Medan' and 'Street' were the adjectives, so it should be written first and followed by the noun. This kind of unnatural translation can be avoided by using transposition technique in translating the phrase. The translation would be more natural if translated as 'Medan Street Waffle'.

Fourthly, to avoid the unnatural translation caused by inappropriate choice of words, borrowing technique can be used because this technique permitd the translator to use the exact same words which would sound more natural. For examples: **'Taylor'** was categorized as unnatural translation because there was an inappropriate choice of word. The word 'Taylor' was no longer used (obsolete word) in the target language (English). In order to avoid the unnaturalness of translation, the borrowing technique can be applied. 'Taylor' would sounded more natural if translated as 'Tailor'.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, the findings and the discussion in this research, there are some points that can be concluded:

1. There are four kinds of unnatural translation found in Indonesian – English translation of public signs in Medan city. They are embarrassing spelling mistakes, change or loss information, grammatical mistakes, and inappropriate choice of words.
2. There are three translation techniques can be used to avoid the unnatural translation found in Indonesian – English translation of public signs in Medan city. They are borrowing, adaptation and transposition technique. However, in order to apply those techniques correctly and optimally, the translator should have sufficient lexical, grammatical and cultural knowledge in both source and target language.

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