

‘FAR AWAY DAYS’ OR ‘FAR DISTANT DAYS’? ASSESSING TRANSLATION ACCEPTABILITY IN CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH (COCA) AND BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS (BNC)

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ABSTRACT

Translating Indonesian reduplications into English is not an easy matter due to the difference in morphological form, syntactic function and semantic meaning of reduplications in both languages. For example, the phrase ‘jauh-jauh hari’ cannot be translated into ‘far-far day’. This translation is not acceptable since it follows exactly the form of the original text, or only focusing on the morphological form, while the other two factors are disregarded. Thus, in assessing the acceptability of the translation, those three factors should be considered. However, the acceptability of the translation can also be checked by comparing the translations with the corpus. This article analyzes the translations of 3 Indonesian reduplications by 50 university students and compares their translations with similar expressions found in COCA and BNC to find out the degree of acceptability of the translations. The results show which translations are acceptable and which are not based on the frequency of usage.

Keywords: reduplications, translation, morphology, syntactic, semantic

ABSTRAK

Menerjemahkan kata ulang dari bahasa Indonesia ke bahasa Inggris bukan hal yang mudah karena perbedaan bentuk morfologis, fungsi sintaksis, dan makna semantis kedua bahasa. Contohnya, frasa ‘jauh-jauh hari’ tidak dapat diterjemahkan menjadi ‘far-far day’. Terjemahan ini tidak berterima karena mengikuti secara persis bentuk teks asli, atau hanya berfokus pada bentuk morfologis, sementara mengabaikan dua faktor lainnya. Oleh karena itu, dalam menilai keberterimaan terjemahan, ketiga faktor tersebut harus dipertimbangkan. Meskipun demikian, keberterimaan terjemahan juga dapat diperiksa dengan membandingkan terjemahan dengan korpus. Artikel ini menganalisis terjemahan dari 3 kata ulang dalam bahasa Indonesia oleh 50 mahasiswa dan membandingkan terjemahan mereka dengan ungkapan serupa yang ditemukan di COCA dan BNC untuk mengetahui tingkat keberterimaan terjemahan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terjemahan yang dapat diterima dan yang tidak berdasarkan frekuensi pemakaian.

Kata kunci: kata ulang, terjemahan, morfologi, sintaksis, semantis

INTRODUCTION

Reduplication is a morphological process in which the root, stem of a word or a part of it is repeated. In many languages, reduplication is used in inflections to convey grammatical functions and in lexical derivations to create semantic forms (Nadarajan, 2006). There are two kinds of reduplication: full reduplication and partial reduplication. Full reduplication involves the exact repetition of a sound of a word; while partial reduplication involves reduplication of only a part of a word.

Most reduplications in English are partial reduplication which involves consonant ablaut or vowel alternation (i.e. *riff-raff*, *ping-pong*, *chit-chat*, *tip-top*), followed by rhyme reduplication (i.e. *hocus-pocus*) and finally full reduplication (i.e. *boo-boo*) (Minkova, 2002). English reduplications have a certain form class and specific meaning. For example, *chit-chat* is a noun meaning a light conversation, and a verb meaning to talk informally or to gossip. Thus the meaning of English reduplications is not taken from the meaning of the words in isolation.

Similarly, Indonesian also has full reduplication, partial reduplication and imitative (ablaut) reduplication. However, the most prevailing reduplications in Indonesian are full reduplications. Unlike English, the meaning of reduplication may vary even though the form class is the same. For example the meanings of noun reduplications can be to indicate plurality (*buku-buku* = 'books') or to indicate variety (*di antara barang-barang dagangan* = 'among various goods'). Yet, the meaning of Indonesian reduplications still relates to the meaning of the individual words.

Translating Indonesian reduplications into English needs a careful analysis of the morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects so that the translations can convey the meaning of reduplications correctly in English. Larson (1998) devises a framework of translating proses as follows:

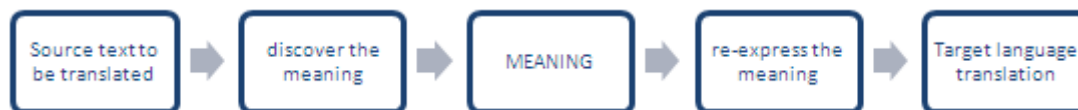


Figure 1 Translation Process

Using this framework, the translation of this sentence can be analyzed as: 'Jangan bicara **keras-keras**'. 'Keras-keras' is formed from two adjectives 'keras' which means *loud*. But if it is translated by repeating this word *loud-loud*, it will produce a literal translation which is unacceptable in English. Thus, Indonesian reduplications cannot be translated into English using the same morphological form, i.e. by reduplicating the word. Syntactically, when 'keras-keras' is attached into the verb 'bicara' *talk* it becomes an adverb. In English translation the slot for 'keras-keras' should also be filled with an adverb (*Don't talk + adverb*). The adverb form of *loud* is *loudly*. Thus, the syntactic function of this reduplication does not change, i.e. an adverb. The last factor is semantic meaning. The word *loudly* can exactly convey the meaning of 'keras-keras'. The final translation of the sentence 'jangan bicara keras-keras' is *don't talk loudly*. This translation is considered acceptable because it conveys the meaning of the source language text into the target language.

Besides analysing the three factors above, the acceptability of the translation can be done by comparing the translations with the samples found in corpus. Two popular corpus sites are used here: COCA and BNC. The aim of using corpora in translation is to describe translated texts, that is to identify difference but not to judge it (Olohan, 2004). Corpus-based search is done to reduce

subjectivity in the part of the researcher (Bowker, 2001). As Baker (2004) puts it, corpus-based search takes textual materials as starting point but it does not mean downplaying human element.

This study aims to check the acceptability of the translations of Indonesian reduplications into English, by comparing the translations with the similar expressions in COCA and BNC. The results showing the frequency of usage for these expressions will determine whether these translations are actually spoken by the speakers of English or not.

METHOD

The participants for this research are 50 students of Bina Nusantara University from all majors. At the time of testing, they were the third semester students taking English Savvy subject. The instrument for the research is questionnaire test in which the participants should translate Indonesian sentences into English. The materials are three Indonesian sentences taken from the newspaper. All sentences contain reduplications of two word classes, i.e. adjective and adverb.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phrase ‘jauh-jauh’ in sentence (i) is formed by reduplicating the adjective ‘jauh’ (far). As an adjective, ‘jauh’ has several meanings: (1) has big distance, (2) big, (3) very, (4) a lot less than, (5) has big gap, and (6) late (about time). However, when ‘jauh-jauh’ is attached to ‘hari’, it forms an adverb of time ‘jauh-jauh hari’ which denotes that something is done *long before* something else happens. The accurate translation for this phrase in the above context is *far in advance*. Beside this phrase, there are some other possible translations such as *many days before, long before, days before, days apart from, ages away before, very early and earlier*. However, it turns out that phrases such as *days apart from, long days before, far away days, far distant days* and *ages away before* are not found or have less than three occurrences in COCA and BNC. This shows that these phrases are acceptable for English speakers. In the case of *far away and far distant*, the word ‘days’ does not collocate with both phrases. In concordance search, the phrase *far away* collocates with words such as *countries, land and places*. Similarly, the phrase *far distant* collocates with words such as *capital, countries, future, galaxy, homeland, places, territory, time, stars, village, and world*.

- (i) *Penumpang bisa mendapatkan harga murah untuk penerbangan kuartal pertama tahun ini, namun harus beli jauh-jauh hari.*

Table 1 Translations of ‘jauh-jauh hari’

Phrase	Students' translation	Frequency	COCA	BNC
Jauh jauh hari	Days apart from	11	1	1
	Ages away before	13	-	-
	Far in advance	8	149	32
	Many days before	4	11	1
	Long days before	4	3	-
	Far away days	1	1	-
	Very early days	1	46	30
	Days away	1	588	46
	Far distant day	1	-	-

The phrase ‘habis-habisan’ in sentence (ii) is formed by reduplicating the adjective ‘habis’ (finished). As a reduplication, this phrase becomes an adverb meaning *terlampau, sangat* (very, overly). In this context, the phrase ‘habis-habisan’ follows the verb ‘diserang’ (attacked). The collocation ‘diserang habis-habisan’ describes the condition that the team was attacked overmuch. Thus, the translation should be one that conveys the message of being attacked *overmuch, too much, or in excessive quantity*. The translation of this phrase should also function as an adverb, since it modifies the verb ‘attack’. Most students, however, translated this phrase as ‘all-out’. This is a common term used in Indonesian media in the field of sport. According to Oxford dictionary, ‘all-out’ means using or involving every possible effort and done in a very determined way. It is an adjective which can only collocates with a noun. The phrase ‘all-out attack’ is possible by this definition. However, when ‘all-out’ is used as an adverb modifying the verb ‘attack’ as in ‘attacked all-out’ or ‘all-out attacked’, this phrase is unrecognized by the English speakers. Only COCA has one token of this phrase, while BNC does not. The other phrase ‘heavily attacked’ is recognized by COCA and BNC, even though only 3 samples found.

(ii) *Kalah jumlah pemain membuat pasukan Roberto di Matteo itu semakin **diserang habis-habisan** oleh Barcelona.*

Table 2 Translations of ‘diserang habis-habisan’

Phrase	Students’ translation	Frequency	COCA	BNC
Diserang habis habisan	All out attacked	20	1	-
	Heavily attacked	6	2	3
	Attacked endlessly	1	1	-
	Attacked out	8	4	1

The phrase ‘semata-mata’ in sentence (iii) is formed by reduplicating the noun ‘mata’ (eye). However, the meaning of ‘semata-mata’ is not related to ‘mata’. This phrase is an adverb meaning *hanya, melulu, belaka, sama sekali* (only, merely, solely, just). In Indonesian, the collocated words ‘semata-mata hanya’ is actually redundant, since ‘semata-mata’ and ‘hanya’ has the same meaning. The accepted translations, thus, are the ones that carry the meaning of ‘only, solely, just or merely’, which also function as an adverb. The corpus search in COCA and BNC for ‘only/merely/purely/solely + [v*]’ provides a lot of samples as can be seen in the above table, while only 2 students used this pattern in their translation. In an attempt to be faithful to SL text which used synonymous words (semata-mata = hanya), some translations used additional phrases ‘not only’ or ‘no longer’. Interestingly, these collocates appear in both corpuses, yet samples found in COCA are exceeding those found in BNC. An excessive use of adverbs is found in 5 students’ translations to emphasize the meaning of ‘semata-mata’ and ‘hanya’. The phrase ‘no longer purely just’ is not found either in COCA or BNC. This means that native speakers do not use this triple adverbs in one sentence, the maximum number of adverbs in sequence is two.

(iii) *Ke depannya, strategi pemasaran tidak lagi **semata-mata hanya** menjual produk, tapi juga harus mengkomunikasikan sebuah nilai.*

Table 3 Translations of ‘semata-mata hanya’

Phrase	Students’ translation	Frequency	COCA	BNC
Semata mata hanya	No longer purely just	5	-	-
	Not only just	2	9	-
	No longer merely	2	43	9
	No longer only	-	15	3
	No longer simply	-	83	25

No longer just	6	324	27
Merely	2	8297	3007
Purely	-	169	50
Only	-	>100.000	31.986
Solely	-	323	82

CONCLUSION

Translating Indonesian reduplications into English is not as easy as it looks like. To be able to translate them accurately, the translator should first analyze the form, function and meaning of the SL reduplication, then working on the same procedure on chosen possible equivalents in TL (Tognini-Bonneli, 1996). The findings above show that an acceptable translations of Indonesian reduplications are those that do not keep the SL form in the translation (not literal translation), maintain the syntactic function and convey the meaning of the SL text.

However, some translations which have followed the above criteria for accepted translations, turn out to be 'unacceptable' according to COCA and BNC. These two corpora do not record the usage of the expressions such as 'far away days' or 'far distant days'. This means that the English translations of Indonesian reduplications are not recognized by English speakers.

The results show that there is still a discrepancy in the way of thinking between Indonesian and English people. In the future, corpus will still be a valuable source for a translator who attempts to make the most naturally idiomatic translation.

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