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Linguistic and Cultural Problems in Javanese-English Subtitle of CAPCIPTOP! Short Movie

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The presented paper focuses on the Javanese-English subtitle. The data involve a culture-bound short movie entitled "Capciptop!" uploaded on Youtube by Ravacar Film. The samples of this study are fifteen students joining subtitling classes in the even semester of the academic year 2020/2021 at Widya Mandala Catholic University. The research findings show that students face two common linguistic and cultural problems in subtitling Javanese to English. Those problems are crucial as they are closely related to how a translator transfers messages from Javanese to English entirely and minimize the misunderstanding among the viewers. This study is concluded with some suggestions for students in dealing with the problems in Javanese-English subtitling.

Keywords: linguistic problems; cultural problems; subtitling

INTRODUCTION

The current development of audiovisual content industries, primarily available in a foreign language, has increased the need for good translators in the local language (Paramita & Yasmin, 2017). Thus, introducing and preparing the students of the English Study Program to the audiovisual translation (AVT) industry is a must to catch up with today's world. Audiovisual translation is defined by Chaume (2013) as a mode of translation characterized by the transfer of audiovisual texts either interlingually or intralingual. One of the very familiar modes of audiovisual translation in Indonesia is subtitling. Shuttleworth and Cowie (Ghaemi & Benjamin, 2011) defined subtitling as the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue. Recently, subtitling has become the most preferred AVT mode for three reasons. Subtitling is considered the fastest, most affordable, and the most flexible mode of AVT because it is applicable for translating almost all types of audiovisual programs (Díaz-Cintas, 2005).

In a broader sense, audiovisual translation, including subtitling, dubbing, lip-sync, and voice-over can bridge the language differences and the cultural ones (Kendenan, 2019). As part of a translation study, audiovisual translation is essential in communicating and exchanging culture

and knowledge across languages. Abbasi et al. mentioned that language and culture are closely related, and it is essential to consider both in translation (Abbasi et al., 2012). They added that translators should concentrate on conveying the same meaning and attempt to show the dissimilarities between two cultural perspectives.

Audiovisual translation is a unique mode that surpasses the other modes of translation. Cho noticed the uniqueness of audiovisual translation in terms of its complexity and restrictions, commonly called “constrained translation”(Cho, 2014). In this mode, audiovisual translators are urged to consider other elements existing in the audiovisual content, namely the medium of communication and the textual and multimodal restrictions. In practice, these constraints have made learners of audiovisual translation face a difficult choice, whether to be as faithful as possible or to be as easy as possible to be understood by the audiences.

In the language learning context, Gambier noted that subtitled content had helped people to learn a foreign language (Gambier, 2006). Concerning that idea, it is urgent to provide a good translation as a medium of effective foreign language learning. Besides, through audiovisual translation or subtitling especially, students can have a good foundation in producing good translated content that can help others learn a foreign language. Learning to subtitle will also provide students with an environment to develop their linguistic skills as they need to listen to the audiovisual material, read comprehensively through the source subtitle or other text, and write the target translation. It is in line with Gottlieb, who urged every subtitler to have the ability to transfer the dialogue from one sub-code (the seemingly unruly spoken language) to another (the more rigid written language) (Gottlieb, 2004). If this shift of sub-code were not performed well in the subtitling process, the audience would be oddly reading a spoken discourse.

Considering the high importance of providing good audiovisual translation, our study program started subtitling classes for those who have passed translation theory and practice classes. The activities in this class, as proposed by Paramita and Yasmin, are conducted in three stages: analyzing subtitling products from English to Indonesian and vice versa, producing subtitles between the former two languages, and producing subtitles with the help of subtitle editing software (Paramita & Yasmin, 2017). Teaching the students those steps within a semester, I found that students were facing some linguistic and cultural problems along with technical problems, another aspect of the subtitling process. As mentioned by Thawabteh, subtitling requires linguistic and cultural competence but a fully-fledged subtitler also needs to be a computer expert to help them with the technical constraints (Thawabteh, 2011).

This study attempts to find out what kind of linguistic and cultural problems the students face in providing the subtitle for Javanese culture-bound audiovisual text to English. It is, then, concluded with some suggestions for the students to produce the best subtitle despite those problems.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

To gain information about the issue and answer the research questions, qualitative study is applied here as it allows for investigating phenomena in their natural settings (Paramita & Yasmin, 2017). This research data is taken from students' translations for a short movie entitled "CAPCIPTOP!" uploaded on Youtube by Ravacana Film. This short movie was chosen as it contains complex aspects of audiovisual content. Firstly, a dense audiovisual text exists in terms of linguistic dimension. Secondly, in terms of cultural dimension, culture-bound expressions are found excessively. Acting as the research subject are the fifteen student subtitlers joining the subtitling class in the even semester of the academic year 2020/2021 at the English Language Study Program, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya, Madiun Campus.

The research data is collected by comparing the students' translation with the original audiovisual text of the video. Students' translations considered the target language text are submitted in .srt format in which the subtitle is completed with the time-lapse. On the other hand, the video's original text or source text is retrieved manually from it.

The research is done by first transcribing the source language audiovisual text. After that, the source language audiovisual text is compared to the target language audiovisual text made by student subtitlers. The linguistic and cultural problems are found in the translation product by comparing the two languages. After finding out the problems, the last step is to conclude the study with suggestions for student subtitlers to provide better subtitles next time.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This section will show some problems the Javanese-English student subtitlers face in reproducing their subtitling work. For the sake of the research, a taxonomy of the problems is suggested in terms of linguistic and cultural aspects.

Linguistic Problems

It is needless to mention that linguistic problems have caused challenges for translators, including those working in the audiovisual area. In this research, transferring Indonesian text to

English has given specific linguistic problems dealing with the English language grammatical construction, lexical choice, collocation, and idioms. To corroborate this argument, we will discuss the linguistic problems with some examples to illustrate how students deal with such problems.

Noun-Verb Agreement

The noun-verb agreement has already been a classical problem for English learners in Indonesia. It is because of the different grammatical structures between Indonesian and English. The noun-verb agreement is not familiar to Indonesian language users. Therefore, some errors in adjusting this kind of agreement affect students' translation.

- (1) SL: *Wi wong-wongane bludas-bludus, bludas-bludus mlebu neng kono kabeh.*
(*Orang-orang pada ramai keluar masuk mampir ke situ semua!*)
TL: **People comes and goes** to hers.
- (2) SL: *Dikiro meng kowe? Aku rugi Bandar lho, rumangsamu! (Kamu kira Cuma kamu? Aku juga rugi Bandar, lho!)*
TL: You think you are the only one? **I feel the same!**

In sample numbers (1) and (2), there are misunderstandings in using the suffix *-s* after the verbs. In English construction, the singular nouns should be followed by the singular form of verbs that need the suffix *-s* or *-es* right after the verb. The opposite happens to the plural noun-verb agreement, which does not need suffixes. On the other hand, the Indonesian structure does not use that kind of system. There is no specific rule for noun-verb agreement. The suggested translations for the two data are “people come and go...” and “I feel...”.

- (3) SL: *Wong aku teko kok malah lunga.* (*Aku datang kok malah ditinggal pergi.*)
TL: **Why you go when I am come?**

Most student subtitlers face problems when dealing with the Javanese-bound expressions. Javanese expressions have their style, which often confuses students' minds. The expression “wong aku teko kok malah lunga” uses a specific style that Indonesian or English does not have. Besides, there's also a misuse of the linking verb “am”. The linking verb “am” is not needed when there is a real verb “come” after the subject “I”. The subtitler wants to make it progressive by using “I am coming”. The suggested subtitle for this part of the scene is “How could you leave me when I come.”

Syntax

Regarding syntax and translation, Lefevere mentioned that it is the most stringent and least flexible of all the constraints translators must work under since it regulates the order of the words to be translated (Whitfield, 2002). It can be said that the stringent rules that syntax presents have limited the work of translators. They must re-check repeatedly to ensure they have strictly followed specific syntactic rules. Below are some examples of student subtitlers failing to follow English syntactic rules.

- (4) SL: *Gudel wis teko kae, diewangi, dagangan e di dun-dunke (Gudel udah datang, tuh. Bantu nurunin dagangannya dulu sana.)*
TL: **Gudel has arrived**, you can help him put down the goods

The first and mostly found mistake is in the formation of passive voice. However, this one looks a bit different. This part of expression should not be made passive in the target language. It is grammatical but meaningless. Because of this misuse of grammatical rules, the meaning of the original is not delivered well. It should be “Gudel has arrived”.

- (5) SL: *tasih diijolke (Masih ditukarkan (uangnya))*
TL: The money being exchanged.

The ungrammaticality is shown in the missing auxiliary “is” after the word “money”. The combination of auxiliary “is” and the verb “being” shows the progressiveness of the sentence, which means the action is still in progress. Javanese and Indonesian rule does not urge the same structure. In Javanese, the lexis “*tasih*” or “*masih*” in Indonesia shows progressiveness. It can be said that there is a shift from lexical level to grammatical level. This kind of shift is categorized as the level shift in the taxonomy of translation shift (Catford, 1965).

- (6) SL: *Lha kok tekan omah ... (begitu sampai rumah ...)*
TL: When I **tried** at home..

The English system introduces the two kinds of a verb in a sentence. There are transitive and intransitive verbs. A transitive verb needs an object while an intransitive verb does not. This system is also not the same as Indonesian and Javanese systems. Later, all verbs are just the same since Indonesian and Javanese sentences tend to be more nominal than verbal. In this part of the subtitle, the student subtitler translates the part by adding information to the target language to make it more straightforward. This kind of strategy is called the expansion strategy by Gottlieb (Kendenan, 2019). Unfortunately, there is a grammatical issue in the target language in which the student failed to recognize the transitive verb “tried,” which needs an object following it. The suggested translation is “When I tried the food at home...”.

Collocation

Dinçkan defines collocation as the tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language (Dinçkan, 2010). There is no written rule for collocation in a specific language. It is just a matter of naturalness in one language. A native speaker of English, for example, will recognize that it is *pay a visit*, not *perform a visit*. A native speaker will automatically know when an unusual collocation appears.

- (7) SL: *Nggih pun. Kulo bade pamit riyen. (Ya sudah, bu. Saya pamit dahulu.)*
TL: Okay then, **I excuse myself**.

One of the ways Javanese people say goodbye is by saying “*kulo pamit riyen*”. Younger people express this to part with older or higher level people. It is called *basa karma*, a polite variant of the Javanese language. In English, people would generally say “I’ll get going”, “excuse me” or say “bye”. This data shows how student subtitlers fail to transfer the message as naturally as possible in English.

- (8) SL: *Sek sek, tak golekne njero yo. (sebentar ya saya carikan di dalam)*
TL: Wait i’ll **look it**

The other missing collocation is shown in the data (8) above. The expression “*tak golekne*” is a promise that someone will search for something for someone. We could see that the student subtitler wanted to use a particular collocation to replace the word “search” by saying “look”. But, it is not a complete word combination. It should be “look for” which means the same as “search” in English natural expression.

- (9) SL: *Alah. Sek to. Sak game neh iki lo. (Sebentar. Satu kali permainan lagi.)*
TL: No! **Wait** your turn!

The word “wait” in the target language of data number (9) above misses the preposition “for”. When “wait” is followed by an indirect object, the student subtitler should have used the preposition “for” as they collocate each other. It sounds unnatural to say, “wait your turn”. This error will only be noticed by native speakers or those who have practiced English theoretically.

- (10) SL: *Ngono wae ndadak wedi karo ibuku. (Begitu saja takut dengan ibuku.)*
TL: What are you **afraid from** my mom?

As in (9), data (10) also contains the wrong preposition for the word “afraid”. In this expression, the student subtitler should have used “afraid of” rather than “afraid from”. This is because of the interruption of the Indonesian style, which commonly says “*apa yang kamu*

takutkan dari ibuku". In this case also, the collocation has made the translated expression sounds unnatural. The overall expression needs to be revised to "what makes you so afraid of my mom?".

Lexical Choice

Just like collocation which needs native or at least someone with high sensitivity to English usage, the way students choose specific lexis for an expression is judged similarly.

- (11) SL: *Njih bu Tejo, niki kulo pun medal saking bengkel. Pun resign. (Ya, bu Tejo, sekarang saya sudah keluar dari bengkel. Sudah resign.)*
TL: Yes ma'am, but I'm already **out**.. you know, resign..
- (12) SL: *Walah, lha kok ageng men iki lo? (Walah, besar sekali (uangnya))*
TL: It's **too big** the money.
- (13) SL: *Kok malah milih njogo warung ki jane piye to karep e? Lucu banget e dek e ki. (Kok lebih memilih jaga warung itu apa maunya ya? Lucu sekali.)*
TL: How come he chose to guard the shop, what did he want? How **cute** he is.

Data (11), (12), and (13) show the same problems faced by student subtitlers. They are finding difficulties in choosing what lexis should be used to express **the source language** message **in the target language**. In datum (11), **the** word "medal" in Javanese or "keluar" in Indonesian has so many equivalents in English. It might be expressed by "come out", "issue", "exit", "go out", "off", "quit", "retire", "resign", etc. In the case of working, "keluar" should not be transferred into "out". It would be better to say "I've quitted" or "I've resigned".

In datum (12), the word "ageng" in Javanese or "besar" in Indonesian may mean "big" in English when it is used to describe countable nouns like table, chair, building, and others. In the context of this expression, "ageng" is used to refer to the money currency. Here too, the student subtitler missed the lexical choice. It is preferable to say "It's too much money".

As in data (11) and (12), datum (13) is mistranslated by the student subtitler. It can be justified that "lucu" in Javanese can be translated as "cute" in English. However, it is not for this context of utterance. Utterance (13) contains a sense of mocking, while the word "cute" is used to praise something positively. The student subtitler should have translated this part of the utterance into "ridiculous", "stupid", or "dumb".

- (14) SL: **Kok mboten piye?** Wong nyatane ibu weruh dewe kok. (Tidak bagaimana? Nyatanya, ibu tau sendiri kok.)
TL: **Lies!** I see it myself.

The source language "kok mboten piye?" expresses denial towards others' utterances. In this part of a dialogue, the student subtitler might want to simplify the expression with another expression of denial in English. However, this expression is again interrupted by the Indonesian

denial expression “*bohong!*” and the translation becomes “lies!”. The commonly used lexis showing denial in English is “liar!” not “lies!”.

Cultural Problems

Thawabteh mentioned in one of his research on **linguistic, cultural, and technical problems in English-Arabic Subtitling** that most translation difficulties are more germane to the cultural gap between two languages than to linguistic discrepancies (Thawabteh, 2011). The cultural gap will increase considerably when two languages are at the two different levels, as in translating Javanese into English. The following are some cultural problems student subtitlers face in transferring Javanese utterances to English.

- (15) SL: *Cah jaman saiki ki koyo ngono kui yo? (Anak jaman sekarang seperti ini ya?)*
TL: **Kids these days, like that yeah.**

The above target language translation is categorized as literal translation in the terminology of translation technique by Molina and Albir (Molina & Albir, 2002). The expression “*cah jaman saiki ki koyo ngono kui yo?*” is a cultural-bound expression that should not be translated literally. In this case, the subtitler should have adjusted to the English language style by, for instance, transferring this expression into “How could they...?”. By doing so, student subtitlers are preserving the intended meaning and being as natural as they can be.

- (16) SL: *Yo mas, mengko tak ndono. (Ya mas, nanti saya kesana.)*
TL: Yes, **Mr.** I will go there.
(17) SL: *Bu, saiki ndene yo. Nggone warung e bu Karman. (Bu, kemari sekarang ya. Ke warung bu Karman.)*
TL: Please come here, now, **Ma'am.** To Mrs. Karman's stall.

Javanese is known to be a very polite variant of the language. It has three speech levels of politeness with a strict rule on applying those speech levels of politeness. Poedjosoedarmo stated that **the vocabulary at the Javanese speech level includes *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama*. *Ngoko* is a form of speech that is disrespectful or informal; *madya* is semi-polite and semi-formal speech; and *krama* is a polite and formal form of speech** (Atmawati, 2021). Besides vocabulary, politeness is also shown in how Javanese people address each other. The word “*mas*”, in (16) is used to address the superior male persona, while “*bu*” in datum (17) is used to address older women or married women. Student subtitlers will find it difficult to transfer this cultural-specific term since English does not have a similar politeness rule as in Javanese. In English, there is the only formal-informal rule in addressing someone.

As the two terms are cultural-bound and the exact equivalent is not provided, student subtitlers can choose between preserving the source language as proposed by Nida and Taber (2002) as borrowing or replacing those elements with ones from the target culture which technique called adaptation. Using the borrowing technique means the student subtitlers do not need to change the addressing words “*mas*” and “*bu*”. While to adapt means the subtitlers must replace those expressions with “*bro*” and “*ma’am*” respectively.

(18) *Kui ki nek ora mergo penglaris ki opo coba? (Itu kalau bukan karena penglaris lalu apa?)*

TL: If not because the **magic**, so what else?

Undoubtedly, the word “*penglaris*” is a specific term used in Javanese to refer to the magical spirit to help someone sell things. In Javanese believe, *penglaris* will make someone sells better than any other people with the help of that magical spirit. However, *penglaris* is a word with two different meanings. The above explanation is the meaning of *penglaris* in a negative sense. In a positive sense, *penglaris* may also mean the first product sold in a day, which is believed to bring luck to the other sold product of that day. It is appreciated that the students choose the word “magic” to replace *penglaris* as it implies that student subtitlers noticed that *penglaris* mentioned here is the one with a negative implication. In this case, the generalization technique is applied, according to Molina and Albir’s taxonomy (Molina, L., & Albir, 2002). Although, some other student subtitlers choose to apply the borrowing technique in this section without any given explanation of what *penglaris* is in the target language.

CONCLUSION

Subtitling is part of translation study, which has its problems and limitations. For the English learners still struggling with the theory of language and translation simultaneously, subtitling practice will cause specific issues. This research aimed at finding what problems faced by the students when preparing the subtitle for Javanese to English movies. The data analysis showed that the students face two main problems translating from Javanese to English. The two issues deal with linguistic and cultural aspects of the language pairs.

Student subtitlers and those who conduct a Javanese-English translation are suggested to 1) be careful of the culture-bound expressions and choose the best technique to be applied in transferring those expressions, 2) borrowing technique is the best technique to be used if we want to preserve the cultural senses in the target language, 3) other techniques which are closer to foreignization ideology could be used to introduce the bound cultural expressions to the target

audience, 4) student subtitlers must not be interrupted with their mother tongue so that the translation result would be as natural as it can be in the target language.

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