



The Impact of Translation Techniques towards the Accuracy of Sarcasm Expression in Television Series the Big Bang Theory

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Abstract

This research aims at mapping out the translation techniques applied in translating sarcasm expressions and describing the impact of translation techniques toward the translation quality in terms of the accuracy aspect. This descriptive qualitative research used documents (i.e. subtitle of television series *The Big Bang Theory* and its translation in bahasa Indonesia) and informant (i.e. raters) as the data sources. To collect the data, the methods that were applied are document analysis and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). As a result, there are 15 translation techniques applied by the translator in translating the sarcasm expressions. The application of appropriate translation techniques extremely affects the translation quality. The translator tends to apply established equivalent in dealing with sarcasm expressions. Consequently, the sarcasm expression translations tend to be rendered accurately. Meanwhile, reduction, discursive creation, literal techniques tend to produce less accurate and inaccurate translation.

Keywords: *Sarcasm; Linguistics; Translation Techniques; Translation Quality; Accuracy*

Introduction

Essentially, a translator has a role as a bridge between two languages and two cultures who are required to have adequate competences. Levy (in Ordudary, 2008) points out that translation is a communication process whose objective is to import knowledge of the original to the foreign reader. In this case, translator plays a major role in the dissemination of knowledge. Translator helps conveying a message from source language to those who speak different languages. Hence, translator helps to connect and fill the gap between different languages and cultures.

Presently, there are tons of translation products that are easily to find, for instance books, movies, a variety of documents (i.e. legal, technical, research, scientific, literary, and educational), and website translation. As a matter of fact, in translating different kinds of products, translators surely find several difficulties. Hence, a translator is required to have five major competencies, namely linguistic competence, textual competence, subject matter competence, cultural competence, and transfer competence. By mastering these five competencies, translators are expected to produce qualified translations.

Aside from the one mentioned before, subtitle translations are also attainable and obtainable, especially in documentaries, films, debates, news, variety shows, and television series. Television series depict the social and situational context closely with social identities that display the reality of life. Each character has their respective roles in building and developing stories. Each character portrays strong and prominent characters that are seen in visual and verbal aspect. As in verbal aspect, a character builds his/her character by uttering messages implicitly and explicitly. In uttering implicit messages, the speaker usually conveys it in sarcasm expressions.

According to Chen & Boves (2018), sarcasm refers to the process in which speakers use words to express an intention opposite to the literal meaning of those words. They also highlight that sarcasm expressions are used to emphasize a criticism or soften a critical intent, and to harmonize the effect of a praise. Translating sarcasm expressions in subtitling come across as a challenging task for translator, in other words, it creates probable problems since its nature that represents the implicit and contrary of what the speakers say. Additionally, in producing subtitle translations, a translator often encounters various difficulties, that is how to convey the expressions in target language as accurate as possible but by considering the standardization of subtitle itself.

Translators are required to have competencies and skills in acknowledging the appropriateness of meaning and form of sarcasm. It is also crucial to understand the linguistic markers in sarcasm expressions, so that the message and effects can be transferred accurately into target language. This obstacle is inseparable from the translation techniques applied by the translator. Accordingly, assessment of translation product is also considered as necessary, since it provides the idea that the product will be delivered to the target readers. Therefore, the purposes of this research are to find out the translation techniques used by the translator in translating sarcasm expressions found in television series *The Big Bang Theory* and to describe the impact of translation techniques toward the translation quality in term of accuracy.

Research Methodology

This research belongs to a descriptive qualitative research. Two data sources of this research are documents and informants. The documents used in this research are subtitle of television series *The Big Bang Theory* season 1 and 2 that are taken from *Netflix* (a digital platform of movies), besides the informant in this research is raters. Raters helped the researcher in validating the data and assessing the translation quality. In assessing the translation quality, raters gave the scores based on the scale which have been determined by the researcher.

The data in this research are divided into two, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data include the sarcasm expressions in the form of clause and sentence found in television series *The Big Bang Theory* season 1 and 2 both in English (as source language) and bahasa Indonesia (as the target language) and information which are collected through the process of validating the data and assessing the translation quality with the informant. The secondary data include additional information and review which are relevant with television series *The Big Bang Theory*, as well as several results of previous studies that are focusing and discussing sarcasm expressions and translation.

Concerning the nature of qualitative research, this research used purposive sampling technique to determine the data sources, specifically the document and informant. In collecting the data, the researcher used document analysis and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The techniques used by the researcher in analyzing the data are proposed by Spradley (in Santosa 2017: 64), namely domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis and cultural theme.

Result and Discussion

Summarizing the results, it is necessary to point out that there are 204 sarcasm expressions found in television series *The Big Bang Theory*. Exploring those 204 sarcasm expressions by applying translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002), the researcher found 15 translation techniques applied by the translator in translating sarcasm expressions. It is possible to state that the most frequent technique used by the translator when dealing with sarcasm expression is established equivalent. Followed by variation, implicitation, pure borrowing, explicitation, paraphrase, and modulation. While the rest of the data are distributed evenly into the other techniques. The explicit result regarding the distribution of translation techniques is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Data distribution of translation techniques

No.	Translation Techniques	Number	Percentage (%)
1.	Established Equivalent	630	67.31
2.	Variation	104	11.11
3.	Implicitation	56	5.98
4.	Pure Borrowing	35	3.74
5.	Explicitation	32	3.42
6.	Paraphrase	26	2.78
7.	Modulation	20	2.14
8.	Transposition	8	0.85
9.	Reduction	6	0.64
10.	Literal translation	6	0.64
11.	Compensation	4	0.43
12.	Discursive creation	3	0.32
13.	Generalization	3	0.32
14.	Addition	2	0.21
15.	Naturalized borrowing	1	0.11
Total		936	100

Equally important, the representation of each translation technique mentioned in Table 1 will be explained briefly below:

1. Established Equivalent

The first translation technique that is dominantly used by the translator when dealing with sarcasm expressions is established equivalent technique. In established equivalent technique, the translators use expressions that are already familiar in language in use in target language as the equivalent meaning. Here is the example of established equivalent technique

018/TBBT/LLE/SC/EE

ST: **A well-known folk cure for insomnia** is to break into your neighbor's apartment and clean.

TT: *Obat insomnia tradisional terkenal* adalah menyusup ke apartemen tetanggamu dan membersihkan.

The context of situation in the datum above is when Sheldon greets Leonard and he confides to Leonard that he slept very well after they successfully cleaned Penny's apartment noiselessly last night.

The phrase *a well-known folk cure for insomnia* is translated using established equivalent technique into *obat insomnia tradisional terkenal*. The translation conveys the equivalent meaning from the source text message which is recognizable in target language.

2. Variation

The second translation technique that is frequently used by the translator is variation technique. Using variation technique, the translator tends to change the linguistic elements that affect aspects of linguistic variation. It is shown in the example below.

007/TBBT/LLE/SC/C

ST: **You** think with your penis.

TT: **Kau** berpikir dengan penismu.

Sheldon is questioning Leonard's intention to help Penny, their new neighbor whom Leonard was attracted to. The word *you* above is used to address Leonard. The word *you* is translated into *kau* in target text. The translator decides to apply variation of *kau* as the equivalent word of *you*.

3. Implication

Implication technique is used when the translator intentionally unexpressed the information on the source text because the situation is already indicating the information explicitly.

030/TBBT/LLE/SL/C

ST: **Sounds like** a breakthrough.

TT: *Itu terobosan*.

Sheldon narrates to Leonard about his thought of his last night dream. The idiom *sounds like* is translated by impliciting the phrase of source text into target text. The message has been described in the target text without changing the message.

4. Pure Borrowing

Clearly, the application of pure borrowing technique is when the translators take the expression straight from source text. The expression is taken purely without any change in the target text. This can be shown in the example below.

044/TBBT/LPH/SC/

ST: Waitress don't yell at you at **Big Boy**.

TT: *Pelayan tak meneriakimu di **Big Boy***.

The context above illustrates when Sheldon expresses his annoyance to remind Penny of her impolite behavior as a waitress. When Penny takes a note of the order, she yells at Sheldon. This happens since Sheldon always denies Penny's advices. The phrase *Big Boy* refers to a hamburger restaurant in America where is Sheldon's favorite restaurant. The translator decides to keep using *Big Boy* as it is without any change.

5. *Explicitation*

This technique is the opposite of the implicitation technique. In the application of explicitation technique, the translator introduces information from the source text that is implicit from the context or the situation of the source text. The example below is one of the cases.

022/TBBT/LLE/HA/C

ST: You could power down.

TT: *Kau bisa mematikan dirimu.*

Sheldon, Howard, dan Raj discuss the possibilities if Sheldon was a robot. Shortly, Leonard backs home and tells them about his sadness because of a woman. Sheldon responds it by complaining about Leonard's confusion phase which makes him uncomfortable. Raj responds it with sarcastic utterance that Sheldon could power down himself like a robot. In the target text, the translator decided to clear-cut the pronoun *mu* that refers to *kamu* in order to clarify the message in the target text without changing the meaning.

6. *Paraphrase*

The translator uses paraphrase technique by paraphrasing or interpreting the message or the meaning of the source text into target text based on the context in target text. The lexical change makes the target text longer than the source text but does not change the meaning. The application of paraphrase technique is shown as follows:

124/TBBT/PLL/SL/RQ

ST: **Well, what was it called** "I Hate My Son and That's Why He Can't Have Cake"?

TT: *Judulnya "Aku Benci Anakku, Jadi Dia Tak Boleh Dapat Keik"?*

The situation context in the datum above is when Leonard tells the reason he never celebrates his birthday. Sheldon explains to Penny that the deal was based on the theory that Leonard's mother published a paper on it. Penny responds it sarcastically by questioning the title. The expression *well, what was it called* is translated by applying paraphrase technique, that is lexically changing the expression in the source text, but not changing the message and meaning in the target language. The intention is to make the translation does not feel rigid and does not seem like a translation.

7. *Modulation*

Modulation technique also found as one of the techniques that is applied by the translator when dealing with sarcasm expressions. Modulation technique means by changing the point of view, focus or cognitive category in relation to the source text.

009/TBBT/LLE/HA/D

ST: **Not to mention** imaginary.

TT: *Serta khayalan.*

Leonard imagines his future with Penny, his beautiful neighbor. He imagines that their babies will as smart as him, and as beautiful as Penny. Sheldon responds it sarcastically by emphasizing that everything Leonard imagine is only an imagination and could not happen in real life. The translator applies modulation technique to change the point of view *not to mention* into *serta*.

8. Transposition

Applying transposition technique, the translator changes a grammatical category. It means the semantic elements are transferred to a grammatically different group of words.

008/TBBT/LLE/SC/C

ST: It's just a privilege to watch your mind **at work**.

TT: *Suatu kehormatan bisa melihat pikiranmu **beraksi**.*

Leonard has no idea how to infiltrate to Kurt's apartment while Sheldon chooses to give up. Leonard breaks down the main door of the apartment.

9. Reduction

Reduction technique is applied by partially eliminating or suppressing a source text information item in the target text.

049/TBBT/LLE/HA/C

ST: Your old Tuesday hamburger will be **so** brokenhearted.

TT: *Hamburger Selasamu yang lama pasti akan patah hati.*

The situational context of the datum above is Sheldon has a plan to change his hamburger-eating schedule. The translator applied the reduction technique when dealing with the intensifier *so* from the source text. The word *so* has been omitted entirely in target text.

10. Literal Translation

Applying literal translation technique means to translate a word or an expression word for word. In this case, the translator does not considerate the context of the source text in the translating process.

042/TBBT/PLH/SD/TQ

ST: **You don't hunt, do you?**

TT: *Kau tak berburu, 'kan?*

Sheldon's mom explains to Leonard, Howard, Raj, and Penny how to approach Sheldon when he is angry. Sheldon's mom emphasizes that we have to approach him slow as like hunting a deer fawn or baby deer. However, Leonard is fed up with Sheldon's attitude and he suddenly approaches Sheldon while yelling. The sarcasm expression above is translated word for word by applying literal translation technique without considering the context.

11. Compensation

The translator uses compensation technique if there is an element from the source text that cannot be reproduced and reflected on the same place in the target text. It can be replaced by adding a compensated source language element somewhere else in the target text.

177/TBBT/PLE/SC/D

ST: Yeah, and I never wanted to kick Albert Einstein **in the nuts**.

TT: *Aku tak pernah mau tendang **zakar** Albert Einstein.*

Howard and Penny drive Sheldon to DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) to get driver license. Applying compensation technique, the translator conveys the message using different style in target language. However, the message of the source text remains the same.

12. Discursive Creation

Discursive creation technique uses temporary equivalence that is unpredictable out of context. The application of this technique is done to allure the readers. Here is one of the examples found in this research:

029/TBBT/LLE/HA/RQ

ST: **Did you hit a roadblock with invisibility?**

TT: *Kau bermasalah dengan tak kasat mata?*

As Sheldon prepares to attend the welcoming party of the new Head of Department, he shares his ideas about time traveling with Leonard. Leonard assumes it as absurd as usual. However, Leonard responds Sheldon's thought with sarcasm expressions. In the datum above, the translator decides to use temporary equivalence of the source text.

13. Generalization

Generalization technique is used when the translator translates by using a term or expressions that are more general or neutral in the source text. The example below explains the application of generalization technique.

137/TBBT/LLL/SC/D

ST: By the way, **a 6-year-old** could hack your computer.

TT: *Anak kecil pun bisa meretas sistem komputermu.*

Penny drives Sheldon to buy a birthday present for Leonard. Instead of choosing the gift, Sheldon preoccupied himself by helping other customers to choose their needs. He even successfully accesses the employee's computer to look for customer's products. The sarcasm expression above is uttered by Sheldon to one of the employees. In the datum above, the translator decides to use more general term of *a 6-year-old* into *anak kecil*. This is possibly happening since the translator dealing with screen translation that they have to deal with the limited space in a subtitle.

14. Addition

Applying addition technique, the translator introduces unjustified stylistic elements and information that are not mentioned in the source text. This is used to clarify an elliptic expression and to avoid ambiguity in target language.

002/TBBT/LPE/SC/EE

ST: Well, that's interesting.

TT: *Sungguh menarik.*

When Penny acquaints with Leonard and Sheldon, she describes about herself and narrates her past. Penny also tells them that she is a vegetarian, except for fish and the occasional steak. She makes the

exception because she likes steak. The sarcasm expressions above is uttered by Sheldon in response to Penny's statement that she is vegetarian but still eating meat. In the example above, the translator adds *sungguh* word in the target language to emphasize the message in the source language.

15. Naturalized Borrowing

In the naturalized borrowing technique, the words or expressions are taken directly from the source text by naturalizing the spelling rules in target language. Here is the example of naturalized borrowing found in this research.

036/TBBT/LLE/HA/C

ST: I look forward to your work with **bacon**.

TT: *Ku nantikan karyamu dengan **bakon**.*

Sheldon has been fired from his job. Since he is unemployed, he makes odd experiments. One of his experiment is to test his hypothesis about the separation of water molecules from the egg proteins and its impact to the taste. The sarcasm expressions above is uttered by Leonard because he thinks Sheldon starts to act strange again. The translator takes a word *bacon* from the source text straight to fit the spelling rules in the target language. The word *bacon* is translated into *bakon*.

Furthermore, a translation can be determined as a qualified translation if the messages in the source text are transferred the same or resemblant into target language. A translation is also considered as qualified translation if the product is easy to understand, or the product seems like not a translation. Therefore, in order to find out whether a translation is qualified or not, it is necessary to assess the translation quality. Assessment is an important element of translation research intended to find out the quality of a translation and to identify whether a translator can produce a qualified translation or not. In accordance with Nababan *et al.* (2012), a good translation should fulfill three aspects; accuracy, acceptability, and readability. However, this research only focuses on the accuracy aspect.

Translation products are expected to convey the same message from source language to target language. In other words, the translations are expected not to have a loss message. To sum things up, the sarcasm expressions of television series *The Big Bang Theory* is translated accurately. In evaluating the translation quality in terms of the accuracy aspect, a translation product can be determined into three categories, namely accurate, less accurate, and inaccurate. Out of 204 sarcasm expressions found in television series *The Big Bang Theory*, the average of accuracy assessment is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of data comparison in accuracy aspect and the average of accuracy assessment

Translation Quality in Terms of the Accuracy	Scale	Σ data	Percentage	The Average of Accuracy Assessment
Accurate	3	192	94.12 %	2.9
Less Accurate	2	8	3.92 %	
Inaccurate	1	4	1.96 %	
Total data		204	100 %	

From Table 2, it can be clearly seen that sarcasm expression translations tend to be rendered accurately. This is supported by the result of the average of accuracy assessment of sarcasm expression translation in *The Big Bang Theory* is 2.9 of 3. It means most of the sarcasm expressions are transferred

into target language equivalently. The following table presents several data of sarcasm expressions together with the result of their accuracy assessment.

Table 3. Example of Sarcasm expressions and their accuracy assessment

No.	Source Text	Target Text	Accuracy
1.	Oh, I hope that scratching post is for you.	Kuharap tiang garukan itu untukmu.	Accurate
2.	The Mandelbrot set of complex numbers is a little messy.	Set Mandelbrot angka kompleks bisa dibilang agak berantakan.	Less accurate
3.	Did you hit a roadblock with invisibility?	Kau bermasalah dengan tak kasat mata?	Inaccurate

According to Fiederer & O'Brien (2009: 54), the first obvious tests of the translation quality is fidelity or accuracy. They state that accuracy as the extent to which the translated text contains the same information as the original. Moreover, as stated by Nababan *et al.* (2012), a translation is accurate if the meaning in the source text is conveyed accurately in the target language, and there are no distortions in meaning. The first example in Table 3 is a sarcasm expression that is accurately translated into target language. In this datum, the translator applies implicitation to imply the interjection *oh*, variation, and established equivalent techniques. Those techniques give a positive impact on the result of translation. The message of the source text is perfectly transferred into the target text with no distortion meaning found. Both source text and target text convey the same idea.

In contrast, the second and third example in Table 3 are rated as less accurate and inaccurate translation. The second example is less accurate because there is a distortion meaning in the target language. It leads to the ambiguousness. The term *the Mandelbrot set of complex numbers* is translated into *set Mandelbrot angka kompleks* by using literal translation technique. The translator translated the term word for word without considering the equivalents that are already commonly used in target language. In line with Nababan *et al.* (2012), a translation is less accurate if there are still distortions in meaning in terms of ambiguity or deletion that distracts the meaning. Furthermore, the third example is inaccurate translation. The translator applied discursive creation technique in translating the sarcasm expressions. The meaning is not conveyed accurately in the target language. It might happen since the translator failed to catch the sarcasm expression in the source text. Thus, the message in the source text is not transferred into target language.

As it turns out, translation techniques that are applied by the translator when dealing with sarcasm expressions affect the accuracy. Result shows that the application of established equivalent, variation, pure borrowing, implicitation, explicitation, paraphrase, modulation, transposition, compensation, generalization, addition, and naturalized borrowing in translating the majority of sarcasm expressions tend to give a positive impact in the accuracy aspect. The translator also tended to apply established techniques in translating sarcasm expressions. It is caused by the majority of the expressions have the same concept in target language. Therefore, the use of the equivalent expressions that render the same concept in target language tends to produce accurate translation. In contrast, the application of reduction, literal translation, and discursive creation tend to produce less accurate and inaccurate translation. By using those techniques, there are parts of message in source language cannot be fully conveyed in target language. The translator also might misinterpret the sarcasm expressions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the application of appropriate translation techniques extremely affects the translation quality. The sarcasm expression translations in the television series *The Big Bang Theory* tend to be rendered accurately. The most frequent technique used by the translator when dealing with sarcasm expression is established equivalent technique. It means most of the sarcasm expressions are transferred into target language equivalently. The application of established equivalent technique tends to give a positive impact in the accuracy aspect. By contrast, the application of reduction, literal translation, and discursive creation techniques tend to produce low level in accuracy aspect. In order to produce qualified translation, improving competence along with knowledge can help a translator in translating sarcasm expressions. Translators are expected to be knowledgeable in selecting and applying appropriate translation techniques in order to reduce the misconception of sarcasm expressions translation. Moreover, translators are also expected to understand the concept and context of sarcasm expressions both in source language and target language. Hence, translators will be able to produce qualified translation and be a bridge between two languages and two cultures. A suggestion is proposed to conduct further research and particularly in analyzing sarcasm expressions translation that is in relation to the present research. A wider scope in varying data sources, for instance novels, debate, movies, news articles can be an option in order to do future research. Other than that, since this research is a product-oriented study, the future research can be focused on the translation strategies.

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