

# LANGUAGE COMPRESSION IN BAHASA INDONESIA SUBTITLES OF *SHERLOCK HOLMES* MOVIE

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## Abstract

This study aims at describing the elements of language that are compressed through language compression technique in *Bahasa Indonesia* subtitles of Sherlock Holmes movie, explaining the factors that trigger translator to compress the language and revealing the implication of language compression on meaning in *Bahasa Indonesia* subtitle of movie subtitles. This study applies a mixed method. It combined both a simple quantitative method and descriptive qualitative method. The former was used to present the frequency of language elements compressed in the target text, while the latter was used to describe and explain the factor and the implication of language compression on meaning. The data sources were the utterances in the movie and their compression results in *Bahasa Indonesia*. The results of the study show that. (1) language compression is found in 4 elements and occurs in 8 patterns involving Clause, Nominal Group, Verbal Group and Adverbial Group, (2) each compression is triggered by either one of the 4 factors; technical restriction, differences in language system, shift in the mode of the text from spoken to written text and the translator's incompetence. (3) in subtitling, language compression is not only implicating the form of the text but also the meaning of the text. The implications on meaning are in the form of generalization, abstraction, lexical metaphor, grammatical metaphor, infusion and ellipsis. It is found that ellipsis is the most frequent technique used by the translator occurring 19 times or 58%, while the most implicated meaning is in the form of abstraction occurring 7 times or 21%

**Keywords:** *language compression, subtitling*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1920s along with the arrival of sound movie in the movie industry in Europe, the dialogue in movie was translated into other languages by using subtitles (Ivarsson 2002:7). Subtitling is a process to convey the message from a source-language text to target- language text. In other words, it is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a message or statement in one language by the same message or statement in another language (Newmark, 1981:7). As one part of Audiovisual Translation (AVT). Subtitle is done to help the audience understands every message or meaning which appears in the foreign language, such as in television programs, films, and video games.

Unlike a body of research conducted on the similar topic that focused on language equivalence, this research shows the facts that language compression implicates meaning, which makes the concept of equivalent need to be revisited. It will change the form and the meaning as well. Language change on subtitle are due to mainly course by several restrictions which appeared in language, as though technical restriction, register and differences in language system.

This research attempts to explore the tendency of linguistic compression used in the process of subtitling. To examine this phenomenon in subtitling, Sherlock Holmes movie is chosen as the data source as the movie withdraws a large number of Indonesian viewers with *Bahasa Indonesia*

subtitles. The dialog on this movie is frequently compressed in its *Bahasa Indonesia* subtitles. This phenomenon is found after comparing the dialog with the subtitles in *Bahasa Indonesia* which is shorter than English dialog. This might have to do with the change in channel from phonic to graphic in addition to the technical restriction of subtitling and the system gap of both languages.

From the focus of the research above, the researcher develops it into three research questions. The first question is about elements are compressed through the language compression in *Bahasa Indonesia* subtitles of Sherlock Holmes movie. The second question is about the factors that trigger the occurrence of language compression in *Bahasa Indonesia* subtitles of Sherlock Holmes movie. And the last question is about the implication of language compression on meanings.

To answer the research questions the researcher begins by understanding the theory from Halliday, an English linguist, is believed as the source of the basic theory of systemic functional linguistics (in Hood, 2007:2). He argues that language is understood as a social semiotic or meaning making potential, and so meaning is not intuited from form or context, but it is intrinsic in the choices of what is said (written or expressed in other semiotic modes) in relation to what could have been said (written, etc.), but was not.

The concept of SFL theory provides a fundamental theory of meaning and its change as the implication of language compression in subtitling. These concepts are, first, meaning is metafunctional, it is not one-dimensional concept, incorporating notions of interpersonal meaning, ideational meaning and textual meaning. Secondly, language is a hierarchical system in which there is a relationship of realization from one level to another or can be understood as multi-stratal. Thirdly, in addition to the hierarchical relationship of realization of one stratum to another, SFL theorizes another kind of hierarchical relationship, that of the hierarchy of instantiation (Hood, 2007:2). This shows the possibility of language change, especially in translation practice through language compression.

Language compression refers to the act of reducing or compressing a text into a shorter form (Wing Bo Tso, 2010: 22). Language compression becomes a need in translating movie, because there are some limitations in duration and space, when translating a dialogue in a movie. These limitations make the translator choose which parts from the source text must be eliminated and which part is dispensable. This method is commonly used in simultaneous interpretation and translation for subtitling.

According to Cintas (2007:146), there are two types of text reduction: partial and total reduction. Partial reduction is

achieved through deletion and a more concise rendering of the source text. Meanwhile, total reduction is achieved through deletion or omission of lexical items. Both processes are very often combined, leading to the rewriting that is so typical of subtitling.

Language compression can occur in several parts of the dialog in the subtitle. Halliday (2004:309) is classifying them in three groups that serve different functions in the clause.

### 1. Nominal Group

The first group is nominal group. Nominal group in clause structure has two roles; in the terms of the modal structure is serving as Subject or Complement. While in the term of experiential structure, it is serving as participant.

### 2. Verbal Group

The next group is verbal group. This is the constituent that has two roles in clause structure. It is serving as Finite and Predicator in terms of modal structure, and has role as Process in terms of experiential structure.

### 3. Adverbial Group

The last one is adverbial group. It has an adverbial as Head, which may or may not be accompanied by modifying elements. In the type of adjunct, adverbial group is classified in two types of adjunct according to the circumstance types. First, adverbial groups as circumstantial adjunct have an adverb denoting a circumstance as a Head, such as; circumstance of time (e.g. yesterday, today, tomorrow), circumstance of place (e.g.

home, upstairs, abroad), or circumstance of quality (e.g. well, badly, fast, quickly). Then, adverbial groups as modal adjunct have an adverb denoting an assessment as head, as example; an assessment of time (e.g. still, yet, already) or of intensity (e.g. really, just, only).

Besides classifying elements based on the groups. The researcher divides the factors of language compression occurrence in several parts according to the data sources. Based on the theory of the causes of language compression, it starts from the technical restriction. Then following by language system, register or transference mode, and last is the translator's incompetence.

### 1. Technical Restriction

Unlike translation on printed media, in the process of subtitling a movie, there are some technical restrictions that should be obeyed by the translator. The restrictions are related to space and duration. The former refers to the subtitle line that is allowed to appear at the bottom of the screen and the size of the fonts used. The latter is related to the time, how long the subtitle appears on the screen. Due to these restrictions, the way translation is carried out is different from translation in printed media. As a result, linguistic compression tends to be taken by translators.

### 2. Language System

Language system meant here is the difference in both language system. For example, Bahasa Indonesia does not have

a plural suffix and uses figurative form frequently than English. Likewise, register is the study of language style in which the situation affects the variations of language

### 3. Register (Mode)

Language compression can also be caused by the shift of the text from spoken to written. This matter can be analyzed through register theory especially in mode. Mode refers to what part language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting language to do for them in the situation: the symbolic organization of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context. (Halliday and Hasan, 1985:12)

### 4. Incompetence

In addition to the factors above, translator incompetence in translating the text can also affect the meaning. Incompetence refers to mistranslation made by the translator and has an impact on meaning that is not related to the source text or does not sound

Besides as the need to understand the parts that language compression is found and the factor of language compression occurs. The researcher also provides some perspectives of meaning change and form change by word reduction. These become the base to understand changes due to language compression and also to answer the third question above. This perspective is related to a reduction in meaning which is understood in ideational terms (Hood, 2007:6). Some specific changes in reducing the word or

meaning are then analyzed to point out the kinds of perspective on changing meaning through reducing the word. Those perspectives are:

#### 1. Generalization

Generalization is a relationship that allows for “the development of extended taxonomic hierarchies” relating individual entities to general classes of entities (Halliday and Matthiesen in Hood, 2007:7). This technique changes the specified words from the source text into a higher level of that word. As example, the term jobs functions as a higher level of generalization as a superordinate term in a taxonomic relationship of hyponymy to coach. Then, Coach in turn is superordinate to a head coach. The relationship between job and coach can be described as one of classifying or de-classifying meaning potential. This then is one relationship that adheres between the meanings instantiated in the different versions of the text.

#### 2. Abstraction

According to Halliday in Hood (2007:8), abstraction is construction process from some aspect of our experience, but it cannot identify all the concrete thing or process. Abstraction has to do with the reconstrual of experience from an everyday commonsense representation of the world to some kind of decontextualized representation. One example of a relationship of a concrete to abstraction realization can be found where the concrete term in the source text of

take a chance when that chance came is further abstracted to courage.

### 3. Grammatical metaphor

Grammatical metaphor is one of resources to consider in analyzing and explaining shifts of meaning from one instance of text to another. (Halliday in Hood, 2007:9) Grammatical metaphor is about lexico- grammatical choice of a process meaning being defined as a thing. Grammatical metaphor does not equate to nominalization, which refers to the morphological transformation from verb to noun.

### 4. Lexical Metaphor

Hood (2007:10) states that lexical metaphor is one change across the version of text. For example, in cut your losses and make a break becoming change. The metaphor in terms of instantiation operating as it is across two fields; one literal and one metaphoric, commits are more ideational meaning potential than the congruent, literal meaning. The lexical metaphor of make a break commits more circumstantial meaning potential than does the more congruent expression change. The circumstance of manner infused in the lexical metaphor also functions evaluatively to provoke an attitudinal interpretation, so the lexical metaphor commits interpersonal meaning where there is none in change.

### 5. Infusion

Infusion is change of meaning relating to relationship or intrapersonal. It is changing

the meaning in terms of Engagement (Hood, 2007,11). The resource of infusion functions also in non-metaphoric instances. As example, the word of reassess was replaced by the writer with consider. Although in this process cannot be explained in terms of de/composition or de/classification. The words of reassess and consider are categorically related as kinds of mental processes depends on our point of view, but we cannot say that reassessing is a kind of considering. So, the relationships between these two words are of specifying more or less circumstantial meaning potential through infusion/ defusion of lexical verbs.

### 6. Ellipsis

According to Quirk (1985:251), Ellipsis is like substitution. It is used to avoid repetition and by omitting some items, the attention will focused on new material. Moreover, ellipsis may occur in many language elements. In English, it commonly occurs in determiners, operator and pronouns. While, ellipsis of subject occurs rarely. Otherwise in Bahasa Indonesia, ellipsis of subject is frequently to occur, either formal or informal situation that can be seen from this research.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used descriptive qualitative approach since it emphasized on defining the phenomenon of language compression in the audiovisual translation. Qualitative approach is a research procedure which

presents the descriptive data, including people's written or spoken words and observable behaviors (Moleong, 2001:3). Moreover, according to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:7-8), qualitative research provides a richer and more- in-depth understanding of the population under study as it produces narrative or textual elucidations of the phenomenon under study. Thus, this approach provided a richer and more- in-depth understanding in researching the phenomena of language compression in audio- visual translation, and explicating it reflected in Sherlock Holmes movie.

The form of the data is the spoken English which is compressed into Bahasa Indonesia subtitle in Sherlock Holmes movie. The spoken English is considered as the source text and the Bahasa Indonesia subtitle is considered as the target text as the whole data sources. Moreover, the data of analysis in this research is the meaning of text which impacted by language compression in the movie subtitles. Meanwhile, the data source is subtitles which compressed by translator in the movie. The data source in this research was the movie directed by Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes in 2009.

In conducting the research, the researcher considered as the main instrument. The researcher planned the research, collected the data, scrutinized and interpreted the data and reported the result of the analysis in accordance with the procedures. Furthermore, the table list was

used by the researcher as the secondary instrument. To make the identification of the data easier, the researcher also arranged the data and the interpretations into the table list, which helps the researcher to scrutinize the data. The table lists contain quotations, pages, category and explanations or meanings.

According Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:179), to ensure the findings, the research must be credible. The researcher must employ that can enhance trustworthiness. Trustworthiness of data includes credibility, dependability and conformability (Moleong, 2001:173). Credibility is concerned with the accuracy of the data. The observation shall deep and detail on performance to achieving the degree of credibility. Dependability refers to the stability and track ability of the changes in data over time and conditions. The process of data collection and data analysis in this research are inspected carefully to ensure that they are in accordance with the research question in research focus and to reach the degree of dependability. Meanwhile, conformability refers to suitability of the findings and interpretations of the data that based on the theory. To get the degree of conformability, the data which have been analyzed were given to some peers to get their reviews including opinions and suggestions about the analysis. Thus, the researcher must employ techniques that improve the readers' belief that the research

was trustworthy.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this part, the discussion is divided into three sections, i.e (1) the elements that are compressed through the language in compression (2) the factors that trigger the occurrence of language compression, (3) the implications of language compression on meaning and form. The objectives are represented through the description and explanation of data findings.

### A. The elements that are compressed through the language compression in Bahasa Indonesia subtitles of Sherlock Holmes Movie

#### 1. Clause

Clause in lexico-grammar is mentioned as the central processing unit (Halliday, 2006:10). This unit is a common form that appears in the subtitles. It occurs 4 times or 13% from the total data. The following datum shows how the clause is compressed.

ST : I can't, but agree.

TT : *Ya, benar.* (Datum 02)

The utterance above contains language compression because the clause "I can't" is translated as "Ya", which has different meaning and level of language with the source language. In this case, it is found that language compression is compressing the form, from clause to group to face the restrictions in subtitling.

#### 2. Nominal Group

Nominal group is the most dominant element compressed. It consists of noun and followed by various other things to explain the noun (Halliday, 2004:312). Language elements compressed in nominal group are deictic, numerative, epithet and classifier.

In nominal group, language compression appears 14 times or 45% and the following datum is an example of language compression in nominal group.

ST : Those days are behind me.

TT : *Itu masa lalu.* (Datum 7)

The translator compressed "Those days" into "Itu" in this case. It consists of 'those' as the deictic and "days" as the thing. The translator compressed this datum by replacing the nominal group using the word "itu" in Bahasa Indonesia that clearly explains the message with a simple form in this clause.

#### 3. Verbal Group

Verbal group is the expansion of a verb. Its structure consists of sequence of words in verb group class (Halliday, 2004:335). Language compression in this group occurs in some parts which are lexical verb, finite verb and auxiliary verb. This element occurs 4 times or 13% from the total data. The examples of language compression in verbal group can be seen in the following datum.

ST : They appear most sinister.

TT : *Dia begitu sinis.* (Datum 3)

The verb "appear" is compressed by the translator by ellipting this word in the target text. This word functions as a linking

verb. The phrase “*begitu sinis*” as the translated text from “*most sinister*” can stand alone without the linking verb.

#### 4. Adverbial Group

Adverbial group has a function as Adjunct in the language structure (Halliday 2003:354). It consists of an adverb as Head usually followed by modifying elements and premodifiers relating to an adjective as the Sub-Head. It occurs 9 times or 29% in this research. The example of language compression in adverbial group is presented in the following datum:

ST: Always nice to see you, Watson.

TT: *Senang melihatmu, Watson.*

(Datum 1)

From this datum, the word “*always*” is compressed. This word that translated literally with “*Selalu*” does not appear in the subtitle. Even though this word functions as an Adjunct of frequency on the clause, the viewer can be understood the main meaning of this sentence.

The second trait, envy, is mainly shown by the neighbors and the doctor. Basically the trait of envy is triggered by the displeasure towards someone’s material possession. The neighbors are envy because of their discontent with Kino’s great pearl and his dreams. This circumstance led them to assume about bad things that will happen to Kino’s family. While the doctor’s envy caused by his displeasure on seeing the great pearl on Kino’s hand. He considers himself much worthy on keeping the great pearl than Kino.

## B. The factors that trigger the occurrence of language compression in *Bahasa Indonesia* subtitles of *Sherlock Holmes* movie

In movie subtitling, language compression is used by the translator because of some factors. The researcher has concluded four factors of language compression. The first factor is the difference in language system. The second factor shows the language compression occurs because the difference in channel or register. The third factor is technical restriction which occurs in subtitling, time and space. And the last factor is the incompetence of translator.

### 1. Technical Restriction

As stated on the background, movie subtitling is different from another translation practice because of space and duration. These restrictions provide the translator used language compression technique to make the translated text shorten and simpler. This factor occurs 3 times or 10% and the following example show the language compression that occurs by the restrictions or mentioned as technically.

ST : Well, Blackwood's had his hand in just about everything that's corrosive to the spirit.

TT : Blackwood selalu berurusan dengan semua hal yang berbau roh.

(Datum 19)

From data above, the translator compresses the utterance because the synchronization constraints in subtitling. Based on rules of subtitling process, the



sentence in source text has more medium and exceeds the limit of characters in subtitling. The characters in source text is 87 and if this sentence translated literary it would be “Ya, Blackwood memiliki tangannya di hampir semua hal yang berhubungan dengan roh”. It has 80 characters in target language. Therefore, the translator did language compression to shorten the medium without losing information in it.

## 2. Language System

English as an international language definitely has many differences with other languages. These differences are found in phonemes, syntax, pronunciation, grammar, tenses and meaning. In the process of movie subtitling, to help people whose native languages are not English, the translator makes some changes in the language structure, one of the changes is compression. Language compression by the differences in language system occurs 4 times or 13% and can be seen in the following example.

ST : They appear most sinister.  
 TT : *Dia begitu sinis.* (Datum 3)

The datum above shows that the language compression occurs because there is a difference in language system between English and Bahasa Indonesia in terms of Being Verb or Linking Verb. The latter does not recognize verb of being to express relational clause. Therefore, the linking verb from source text is deleted in the target text.

## 3. Register (Mode)

Language compression also occurs because of the channel switching. This factor can be learned by using register theory that classifies the context of situation on language into field, tenor and mode. This factor occurs 23 times or 74% and the following example show how language compression occurs because of the difference in channel.

ST : It seems you have lots of rooms  
 to let  
 TT : *Sepertinya banyak sel kosong.*  
 (Datum 9)

The language compression above happens because of the transfer of channel. Mode of discourse changes from spoken to written by seeing the use of language in this context. Spoken language is characterized with ellipsis, by deleting subject or predicate to make it shorter. Although both texts are different in forms, the information can be understood by the viewer.

## 4. Incompetence

Language compression also occurs by the incompetence of the translator. It happens because the translator does not understand the context of the text. This matter makes the translated text shorten than the source language, but the meaning does not related to the source language. It appears once and the example of language compression that occurs because of the incompetence of translator is following.

ST : It can seem a little far-fetched though sometimes.

TT : *Terkadang rasanya begitu menarik.*

The translated datum above is able to understand by the viewer. But if we compare both text, the translated text in target language is not translating the source language properly. It happens by the incompetence of the translator in subtitling. Therefore, in addition to some of reasons mentioned above, the incompetence of translator also causing language compression in subtitling.

### C. The implication of language compression on meaning and form.

#### 1. Generalization and Specification

Generalization means the process that happen by generalizing the entity from specific to general classes. In contrast to generalization, specification means the process of developing the entity relating general entity to the new subclasses. This process implicates the utterance in target text becomes generalized or specified relating to the entity classes. The following datum is the example of generalization and specification which is found in the subtitles.

ST : It seems you have lots of rooms to let.

TT : *Sepertinya banyak sel kosong.* (Datum 12)

The datum above shows that language compression affected the word in the meaning level. The change from general entity into specific is shown in this datum through specification process from “room” into “sel. It helps the viewer sees the

utterance used is relevant with the situation in the movie.

#### 2. Abstraction and Concrete

Abstraction is the implication of language compression by changing the meaning with reconstruction of the word from an everyday commonsense representation into decontextualized representation (Hood, 2007:8). In practice, both words have its own meaning but it is used because they have connection. Its connection can be seen from the similar characters and perspectives. The following is example of abstraction by language compression.

ST : I do have a parting query, Sir Thomas.

TT : *Aku punya pertanyaan, Sir Thomas.* (Datum 18)

The datum above shows that the phrase “parting query” is changed in the target language. This phrase translated literary will be “*beberapa pertanyaan*” is changed into “*pertanyaan*” where the phrase becomes abstract than before.

#### 3. Grammatical Metaphor

In language compression, one of implications that occurs in the text is grammatical metaphor. It happens because the translator changes the meaning in the grammar level, whereas meaning is reconstructed and committed in different grammatical construction. There is not any single grammatical metaphor in this research because the translator did not change the meaning by re-construing the source text in

grammatical metaphor.

#### 4. Lexical Metaphor

Lexical metaphor is one change across the version of text. It commits transference of interpersonal meaning and provoke an attitudinal interpretation from the reader or viewer. The implication of language compression in lexical metaphor is discussed below.

ST : ... for its ability to induce an apparently mortal paralysis.

TT : ... *yang mampu melumpuhkan kehidupan.*

(Datum 30)

The datum above shows that language compression also affects the emergence of interpersonal meaning on the text. The literal text in source language becomes metaphor text. It appears as language shifting across two fields, where the literal one becomes less specified ideational meaning. From the specified words “apparently mortal paralysis” transferred to “*kehidupan*”.

#### 5. Infusion

The implication of language compression also changes the meaning related to interpersonal meaning. Infusion as the change theory happens in verbal processes, where the meaning value turns becomes widespread and opens another view of the sentence used in the text according to the terms of Engagements (Martin & White in Hood, 2009). This change is not found in this research because the change in the process

level does not change the value and open space for other voices.

#### 6. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a change in form level. It is committed to avoid repetition in the translated text. The translator compress the text because the viewer is able to understand the main information although it is not fully translated. Ellipsis can happen in many places in the word level. The following example show how ellipsis occur by language compression in some levels.

ST : I can't but agree

TT : *Ya, benar* (Datum 2)

This example shows the translator ellipted the subject and predicate of the sentence. It changes the phrase “I can't” into “*Ya*” Language compression occurs to make it simpler and do not repeat the previous utterance.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the previous chapter, there are some conclusions related to the objectives mentioned in the first chapter.

1. The language compression can be found in eight groups according to the rank. Those groups are clause to nominal group, clause to verbal group, clause to clause, nominal group to nominal group, nominal group to ellipsis, verbal group to adverbial group, verbal group to ellipsis and adverbial group to ellipsis. From the data above, the transference of meaning from nominal group to ellipsis is the most occurrence group where the language

compression occurs. It occurs 10 times or 32%. Then followed by nominal group to nominal group as the second nominee for most group where the language compression is found.

2. Each language compression has its own reason. Based on the result of analysis, there are four reasons that trigger the occurrence of language compression in movie subtitling. The language compressions are driven by technical restriction, divergent in language system, register and translator's incompetence. Register becomes the most reason why language compression occurs in movie subtitling. It occurs 23 times or 70%. Moreover, it is also found out the data that language compression also can be done by the translator's incompetence. There are 3 times the emergence of language compression by incompetence of researcher that appear equally as same as technical reason.

3. Language compression does not only implicates on the form but also on the meaning. Those changing perspectives are generalization, abstraction, grammatical metaphor, lexical metaphor, infusion and ellipsis. Ellipsis is the most changing perspective that is found in this research. There are 19 times or 58% from the total datum. Meanwhile, the most changing perspective in level of meaning is abstraction that occurs 7 times or 21%.

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