

## Case Marking Forms in Indonesian With Reference to Its Translation into English



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### Abstract

This paper aims at clarifying case marking forms in Indonesian and how the forms are translated into English. Case marking is the mechanisms that involve morphological forms (e.g. affixes or function words (e.g. ad position) which express the semantic roles or grammatical relations of the NPs in the clause (Song, 2001). The discussion of case marking in this paper include possessive marking, transitive and intransitive, Indonesian affixed verb based on noun, active and passive voice. Since there are loads of affixation processes in Indonesian which do not seem exist in English, case marking forms in Indonesian are worth analyzing in terms of how transfer of meaning takes place. Having done the analysis, it is found that case marking form in Indonesian is transformed into another form in English to transfer the meaning. The finding demonstrates clearly that languages in the world have their uniqueness that makes translation a challenging and interesting activity.

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### 1. Introduction

Indonesian is a language that is rich in its morphology. Word-building processes in Indonesian require affixation processes that express the semantic roles of noun phrases (NPs) in the clause. The sentence unlike for example;

(1) Organisasi ini beranggotakan seribu orang.

Organization this member one thousand person

This organization has one thousand members

has a noun *anggota* that is verbalized through an affixation process *ber.....kan*. The prefix *ber-* marks it- and the suffix *-kan*, then, the word *beranggotakan* in this sentence serves as a verb and means *mempunyai* (to have).

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- (2) *Rudi melempar bola itu. Bola itu dilempar Rudi*  
 Rudi throw ball that That ball is thrown Rudi  
 Rudi throws that ball That ball is thrown by Rudi

The prefix *me-* and *di-* mark the same verb *lempar* to indicate consecutively active voice and passive voice. The two examples of explicit marking posed above are widely known as case marking.

From the examples above we can see how the three words are expressed in English through another process. The word *beranggotakan* is translated into *has* while the word *melempar* into *throws* and *dilempar* into *thrown*. This shows that despite case marking is evident in Indonesian; it does not seem to be evident in English.

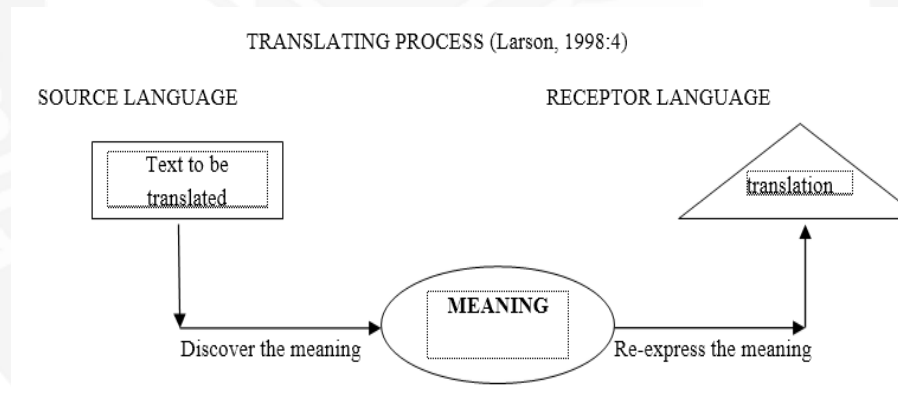
Based on the examples of case marking in Indonesian and their translation in English above, this paper aims to elaborate how case marking forms in Indonesian are translated into English. This paper, however, will focus on how the four case marking forms (including the two forms exposed above) are expressed in English.

## 2. Research Method

The data, which indicated possession marking, transitive and intransitive marking, verbalization *ber.....kan* of a noun marking, and active and passive marking, were collected from field and library observation. The specific simple and standard sentences that indicated those forms of marking in Indonesian as SL and their translations in Standard English as TL was chosen as the data that were going to be analyzed. The data, then, were analyzed based on how such forms of marking in Indonesian are translated into English.

## 3. Results and Analysis

Larson (1998, 3) states that translation is the transfer of meaning in the source language into the target language, which is done by going from the form of the source language to the form of the target language. Translation, then, involves studying of the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the target language and its cultural context.



Larson (1998, 41) continues that to translate accurately, one must be aware of the fact that there are various kinds of meaning. Not all meaning is stated overtly in the forms of the source language text. Discovering the meaning of the text to be translated includes consideration of both explicit and implicit information. Song (2001, 138-9) states that case marking is the mechanisms that involve morphological forms (e.g., affixes) or function words (e.g., ad position) which express the semantic roles or grammatical relations of the NPs in the clause.

### 3.1 Possessive Marking

As other languages do, Indonesian has possessive form, and it is marked by the suffix *-nya* as exemplified as follow:

- (a) *Rumahnya mahal*  
 his/her/their/its house is expensive
- (b) *Rani akan menjual rumahnya*  
 Rani will sell her house

- (c) *Rani akan menjual rumah bapaknya*  
 Rani will sell her father's house

The SL sentence in 3(a) needs an obvious identification of possessor. Otherwise, it is impossible to translate it into English because its possessive pronouns need an obvious identification of possessor to refer to. The noun *rumah* is marked by the suffix *-nya* indicating that it is owned by the possessor *his, her, their, or its* in English. Since there are four options of its meaning in English, the suffix *-nya* must have an explicitly stated possessor to refer to like in the sentences in 3(b) and 3(c).

The suffix *-nya* in the sentences in 3(b) and 3(c) obviously refers to Rani as the possessor. However, the suffix *-nya* that mark *rumah* in 3(b) refers to Rani as the possessor of *rumah* while the suffix *-nya* that mark *bapak* in 3(c) refers to Rani as the possessor of *bapak*, and *bapak* in 3(c) refers to itself as the possessor of *rumah*.

*Rumahnya* in SL is now translated into *her house* in TL and *rumah bapaknya* into *her father's house* since it is already obvious that the possessor of *rumah* and *bapak* is a female named Rani. *Rumahnya*, which is one word, is translated into two words in English and the possessive pronoun or the possessor is placed before noun while the possessor *-nya* is attached as the suffix or after the noun. The NP *rumah bapaknya* consists of two words while the NP *her father's house* consists of three words. The suffix *-nya* in 3(c) indicates that Rani is the possessor of *bapak*, which is translated into two words *her father* while *rumah bapak* is translated into *father's house*.

- Rani akan menjual rumahnya/rumah bapak*  
 Rani will sell father's house

The use of the suffix *-nya* in (4) is optional in Indonesian, and both *rumahnya bapak* and *rumah bapak* are translated the same into English. The suffix *-nya* that marks *rumah* in this sentence indicates that *bapak* is the possessor of *rumah*. In English, apostrophe 's is attached after *father* to indicate *father* as the possessor of the *house*. From these four examples, we can see that the head noun, in this case, in Indonesian is placed at the beginning of NPs while in English it is placed at the end of NPs.

### 3.2 Transitive and Intransitive Marking

It has been mention at the beginning of this paper that Indonesian word-building process is full of affixation process. This is important because verbs in Indonesian are formed in such a way to indicate they are transitive or intransitive.

- (a) *Mobil berhenti di depan rumah*  
 The car stops in front of the house  
 (b) *Polisi menghentikan mobil di depan rumah*  
 The policeman stops the car in front of the house

In the sentence 5(a) the root *henti* is marked by the prefix *ber-*. The noun *henti*, then, becomes an intransitive verb *berhenti*. It is translated in an intransitive verb *stops* in English. The root *stop* is added with *-s* so that the intransitive verb agrees with the third singular subject in simple present. In the sentence 5(b) the root *henti* is added with the prefix *me-* plus *ng* before *h* and with the suffix *-kan*. The noun *henti*, then, turns into a transitive verb *menghentikan*. It is translated with the same verb *stops* functioning as a transitive verb.

From the sample above we see that a noun is verbalized into an intransitive verb by the prefix *ber-* and into a transitive verb by the affixation *me.....kan*. Moreover, an adjective can also be verbalized into an intransitive verb by the prefix *ber-* and into a transitive verb by the affixation *me.....kan*, as in:

- (a) *Dia berduka*  
 She mourns  
 (b) *Dia mendukakan ayahnya*  
 She makes her father mourn.

The root *duka* in 6(a) is an adjective that is verbalized by the prefix *ber-* and translated into an intransitive verb *mourn* added with *-s*. Unlike the verbs in (5) that are translated with the same verb, the verbs in SL in (6) are translated differently; *berduka* with *mourns* and *mendukakan* with *makes*. Even though sentence 6(b) does not explicitly state *membuat* (or *make* in English), but it implicitly states it and the implicit meaning stated in that sentence (SL) must be stated explicitly in TL sentence to reach accuracy. Note that the SL sentence in 6(b) is rarely used by the Indonesians yet it is grammatical.

Based on the examples above, it is evident that while Indonesian needs affixation processes to show intransitive and transitive, English does not seem to need them, and implicit meaning in Indonesian may be stated explicitly in English.

### 3.3 *Ber.....kan* Verbs Based on Nouns

Most verbs with the circumfix *ber.....kan* are based on nouns. Those verbs are followed by a noun phrase, as in:

- (1) *Mereka bersenjatakan senapan*  
They are armed with a rifle
- (2) *Dia beristerikan seorang penyanyi*  
He is married to a singer
- (3) *Organisasi ini beranggotakan seribu orang*  
This organization has one thousand members

The noun *senjata* in the sentence in (7) and the noun *isteri* in the sentence in (8), which are verbalized by the circumfix *ber.....kan*, are shifted to passive voice *are armed* and *is married* in TL while the noun *anggota* with the circumfix *ber.....kan* in the sentence in (9) is not shifted to passive voice in TL, but it is translated with *has*. If we look at their roots, then we get *senjata* translated with *arm*, *isteri* with *marry* and *anggota* with *have*, and when they are used in such sentences, they are processed according to the system in SL and TL. This shows that one needs to know that Indonesian and English have their structures and cultural contexts in which both explicit and implicit meaning can be grasped so that one can do the translation from SL (Indonesian) into TL (English) accurately.

### 3.4 Active and Passive Voice

Sneddon (1996:247) explains that some grammars of Indonesian do not use the terms active and passive, instead of using such terms as subject and object construction or subjective and objective focus. This is because there are differences between Indonesian and the active and passive in European languages such as English, both structure and function. Nevertheless, there are also important similarities, and the relationship between the two constructions is often similar to the relationship between active and passive in English, allowing the same terms to be used to describe them. The structure of a passive clause can be described regarding a transformation from the corresponding active.

From the syntactic point of view, in general Indonesian active and passive voice are compatible with the English construction in which an actor that functions as subject carrying out the action in active construction can be an agent in passive construction which optionally marked by *oleh* in Indonesian while in English agent is very often not mentioned but when it is mentioned, it is preceded by 'by' (Thomson and Marinet, 1986; Sneddon, 1996).

*Active voice* is used when the focus of attention is on the subject who performs an action, i.e., the agent. The verb has the prefix *me-* and is followed by the person or thing that undergoes the action, i.e., the patient. *Passive voice* is used when the focus of attention is on the patient. Only a transitive verb with an object can have a passive form. Passive verbs have the prefix *di-* or *ter-*. The examples are as follows:

- (a) *Kami menjual sebuah buku*  
We sell a book
- (b) *Buku dijual oleh kami*  
The book is sold by us

The root *jual* in sentence 10(a) is marked by the prefix *me + n*. The transitive verb *menjual*, then, indicates the agent *kami* as the doer of the action. Even though it has already gone through an affixation process, the verb *menjual* is translated with base form of the verb *sell* that does not go through any affixation or inflectional process. The root *jual* in sentence 10(b), which is marked by the prefix *di-*, indicates the patient that undergoes the action done by the agent. The word *dijual* and its equivalent *sold* are both not the base form of the verb.

- (a) *Rudi memukul Rani*  
Rudi hits Rani

- (b) *Rani dipukul Rudi*  
Rani is hit by Rudi
- (c) *Rani terpukul Rudi*  
Rani is accidentally hit by Rudi

The root *pukul* in sentence 11(a) is marked by the prefix *me-* to indicate Rudi as the doer of the action, i.e., the agent. *Memukul* is, then, translated with *hits* in English, which agrees with the third person subject in simple present tense.

In the passive voice, we can see that the root *pukul* in sentence 11(b) is marked by the prefix *di-* and in sentence 11(c) it is marked by the prefix *ter-*. Both indicate the patient that undergoes the action done by the agent. However, there is a difference in meaning between the two sentences. In 11(b) the agent *Rudi* does the action on purpose while in 11(c) the agent *Rudi* does not do the action on purpose. The TL sentence in 11(c) states explicitly that the action is done not on purpose by the agent while the SL sentence states it implicitly.

#### 4. Conclusion

Case marking in Indonesian significantly plays semantic roles. Since there are loads of affixation processes in Indonesian, at least one meaning that emerges from a word comes from the affixation process of word-building. However, such loads of processes do not seem to exist in English, and it means a translation from Indonesian into English requires reconstruction and also the deep consideration of cultural context to transfer both the explicit and implicit meaning from Indonesian into English accurately. In other words, case marking in Indonesian is not necessarily translated by using case marking in English to transfer the meaning. It is done by transforming one form in Indonesian into another form in English. There are, of course, other examples of case marking forms in Indonesian than the ones in this paper. However, this paper is hopefully relatively beneficial for other studies examining the same kind of topics and for the Indonesian-English, or vice versa, translators.

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