

The Translation of Oreo TV Commercial: It is not a Piece of Cake!

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Abstract. Oreo is a brand of cookie that is still a favourite after a century. It shows beyond doubt that Oreo can adapt around the world. The TV commercials created in different language versions have helped this product to expand internationally. Remarkable as well as marketable skills are required to translate the advertisements. For that reason, this study set out to examine the translation strategies, particularly concerning the song translation and how it can blend in harmony with the video. Oreo TV commercials entitled “Play with Oreo” was analyzed with its Indonesian version entitled “*Nikmati Oreo Sesukamu*” to fulfill the research objective. The findings show that the translator modified some original lyrics in an attempt to maintain the advertisement singable. Further, the video illustrating the lyric must also be adjusted following the translation.

Keywords: TV Commercial, Multimodality, AVT, Translation, Strategies

1 Introduction

Oreo is people’s all-time favorite. This cream-filled cookie is vastly popular among children and teenagers. It has been able to dominate the cookie market for a period of hundred years. One of the key successes of Oreo's longevity is its marketing strategy. The Oreo company has successfully magnetized its target market with its enticing TV commercial. The advertisement is attractively presented in the form of a short cartoon video clip accompanied by fun music and catchy song. It has been a runaway success not only in the country of origin but also in other countries where the product is launched. In Indonesia specifically, the Indonesian version of the Oreo TV commercial theme song is widely popular. It catches the attention of thousands of viewers when uploaded on the YouTube channel.

Behind every great translation there stands a great translator. A strenuous effort must be devoted to creating such work. Rodríguez [1] states that “The oral and visual nature of television ads demands greater efforts from translators, who have to transfer the content and the effects of an audio-visual source text into a new text in the target language and for a target audience”. It all points to a premise saying that an audio-visual translation task is more complicated than it seems. On that account, the paper aims at scrutinizing the challenge that might put the translators into a difficult situation and how they succeed in dealing with the obstacles.

Most previous researches in the field have concentrated on particular components of the advertisement, such as the language and the strategies in translating advertisements. Related to the language, the researchers are mainly focused on the meaning equivalence between two languages. Rodríguez [1] researched the coherence in translated television commercials. Further, Limesa [2] had conducted a study on the video commercial of Oreo waterfilled series

pinpointing the denotative and connotative meaning contained in the verbal and visual expression. The results of the studies are fairly comprehensive since the non-verbal elements of the advertisements are not their focus of attention. Strategies and techniques in advertisement translation are also becoming a popular topic of research recently. Christelle [3] had evaluated the strategies used to translate persuasive text in print advertisements across cultures from the framework of semiotics and symbolism. Further, Dan [4] conducted a study on the techniques for translating advertising slogans, revealing that the absence of a similar equivalent of the source text element in the target text requires most of the time adaptation, paraphrase or literal translation. Likewise, Bo [5] carried out a study on advertisement translation based on the theory of Eco-translatology suggesting that adaptation and selection technique could make a good conversion in terms of language, culture, and communication. Nonetheless, a study on the translation strategies applied in advertisements broadcasted in the form of song and video animation is apparently rare to conduct. Hence, the translator's efforts in achieving the 'singability' and the visuality of the translated TV commercial within the framework of multimodality is taken to be the topic of this study to occupy the research gap.

2 Methodology

This is a descriptive qualitative study. One of Oreo TV commercials entitled "Play with Oreo" was selected to be analyzed with its Indonesian version under the title "*Nikmati Oreo Sesukamu*". The English and Indonesian song lyrics were transcribed and compared to identify the shift occurred between the two versions; both in terms of form and meaning. Furthermore, a multimodality framework was applied to evaluate the synergy between the verbal and non-verbal elements of the advertisement, specifically the animated video clips illustrating the song lyrics. This is to figure out the remarkable resemblance between the English and Indonesian versions of the Oreo TV commercial. Furthermore, the strategies applied by the translator can be drawn from the results of the analysis.

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 The Translation of Oreo TV Commercial Song

This subchapter discusses the results of the analysis of the translated song in which the translation strategies are formulated and explained as follows.

Table 1. The Evaluation of Oreo TV Commercial Song

VERSE	English Version	Ind Version	Number of Syllables		Song Translation Strategies		Meaning
			SL	TL	Rhythm	Rhyme	
1	Show me how you	Tunjuk-kan caramu	4	6	Speeding up the rhythm	Keeping the rhyme	conveyed
2	Twist it	Diputar	2	3	Keeping the rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
	Lick it	Jilat	2	2	Keeping the rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed

	Dunk it	Celupin	2	3	Keeping the rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
	Munch it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
3	Tell me how to	Katakan caramu	4	6	Speeding up the rhythm	Keeping the rhyme	conveyed
	Roll it	Gulung	2	2	Keeping the rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
	Stack it	Tumpuk	2	2	Keeping the rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
4	Flip it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
	Crunch it	Atau kunyah	2	4	Merging with the previous rhythm	Unrhymed	shifted
5	Show me how you	Lihatkan padaku	4	6	Speeding up the rhythm	Keeping the rhyme	shifted
	Snack it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
	Pack it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
	Crack it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
6	Cream it	Caramu mainkan krimnya	2	8	Merging with the previous rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
7	Tell me how to	Jangan ragu	4	4	Keeping the rhythm	Keeping the rhyme	shifted
	Share it	Untuk bagi	2	4	Merging with the next rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
	Dip it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
8	Dare it	-	2	-	deleted	deleted	lost
	Dream it	Dan impikan	2	4	Merging with the previous rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
9	It's an Oreo and you can eat it anyway	Nikmati Oreo sesuka hatimu	13	12	Slowing down the rhythm	Unrhymed	conveyed
10	If you want it, you can do it different every single day	Temukan cara yang berbeda setiap harinya	15	15	Slowing down the rhythm	Unrhymed	shifted
11	It's so easy to let your imagination go	Imajinasikan cara yang kamu mau	13	13	Keeping the rhythm	Rhymed but different from the original	shifted
12	When you play with Oreo	Nikmati Oreo-mu	7	7	Keeping the rhythm	Rhymed but different from the original	shifted

Oreo is advertised on television in the form of cheerful song and illustrated with animation video. The original soundtrack consists of 12 verses which are also translated into Indonesian in 12 verses. However, the analysis tabulated in Table 1 discloses that there some changes made by the translator in an attempt to produce a singable song translation. The evaluation focuses on the number of syllables contained in the English lyric compared to the ones found in the Indonesian song lyric. The result shows that the Indonesian version song is mostly made up of words having more syllables than the English version. Hence, some creative adjustments should be made as a consequence of the alteration. The form of the TV commercial compelled the translator to consider the audio as well as the visual aspect. A singable translation in this study is examined from the delivery of the rhythm and the rhyme, specifically when the lyric contains different syllables. The following are the comprehensive explanation of the research findings.

The soundtrack of Oreo advertisement comprises 12 verses communicating five main messages as seen in verses 1,3, 5,7, and coda in the last four verses. Verse 1, 3, 5, and 7 are conveyed in the form of request-making expressions; 1. "Show me how you...", 3. "Tell me how to...", 5. "Show me how you...", 7. "Tell me how to...", Verse 1 is repeated in verse 5 and verse 7 is the repetition of verse 1. All the expressions contain four syllables which are translated longer in the Indonesian version becoming 1. "*Tunjukkan caramu...*", 3. "*Katakan caramu...*", 5. "*Lihatkan padaku...*", 7. "*Jangan ragu...*". No repetition is found in this version. The Indonesian verses 1, 3, and 5 are equivalent in meaning and rhyming with the English version, but verse 7 is slightly different from the original, as it means 'don't hesitate' when back-translated. Finding different expressions but keeping the number of syllables the same is an improvement made by the translator to meet the 'singability' of the translated song.

The translation strategies found in verses 2, 4, 6, 8 appear intrinsically interesting to examine. Verse 2, for example. The English song lyric "Twist it, Lick it, Dunk it, Munch it" is partly translated into "*Diputar, Jilat, Celupin*". The absence of "Much it" in the Indonesian version is theoretically assessed lost in meaning, but it is not a dreadful mistake since people are familiar with the Indonesian oreo tag line "*Diputar. Dijilat, dan Dichelupin*". Furthermore, the translation of verse 6 also catches attention. There are four expressions conveyed in one verse saying "Snack it, Pack it, Crack it, Cream it". Surprisingly, only one of the expressions is translated. The only expression translated is "Cream it". It is sometimes impossible to avoid omission in translation, particularly because English has a richer vocabulary than Indonesian. The word, 'cream' specifically, can be used as a noun and a verb in English. But in Indonesian, it is equivalent to the word '*krim*' which can only be applied as a noun. Accordingly, it demands a considerable effort to translate 'cream' as a verb. The source language of two words containing two syllables, "Cream it", are rendered and extended into three words containing eight syllables becoming "*Caramu mainkan krimnya*" (the way you 'play' with the cream). Consequently, some deletions should be made to maintain the total number of syllables in one verse. The lyric of "Snack it, Pack it, Crack it, Cream it" in verse 6 has eight syllables which can only be rendered in "*Caramu mainkan krimnya*" which already contains eight syllables. It is capable of being sung despite the fact that it fails to deliver the precise rhyme and meaning of the source lyric.

Omission can also be found in verse 4 saying "Roll it, Stack it, Flip it, Crunch it" translated into "*Gulung, Tumpuk, atau Kunyah*". The translator deletes all the words "It" and the lyric of "Flip it" which can actually be conveyed equally in the word of '*Balik*'. The translator intentionally skips translating one of the expressions to match the number of syllables contained in the verse. Both the English and Indonesian versions are equal in the number of syllables but the meaning. The translator can actually meet the accuracy and musicality of the translated song

by inserting the word *'balik'* and deleting the conjunction *'atau (or)'* becoming *"Gulung, Tumpuk, Balik, Kunyah"*. Even so, it is barely possible to keep the rhyming verse as found in the original.

When dealing with the lyric having different syllables, a set of strategies must be pursued by the translator to bridge the gap. Speeding up the rhythm when singing is implemented to the lyric having more syllables as seen in the translation of verses 1, 3, and 5. Otherwise, the lyric containing a smaller number of syllables should be pronounced slower than the original. The translation of verse 9, for instance. The original lyric "It's an Oreo and you can eat it anyway" contains 13 syllables translated into Indonesian "*Nikmati Oreo se//suka hatimu*" containing 12 syllables. The word *'sesuka'* is the part of lyric vocalized slower to match the rhythm of the original song.

3.2 The Synchronization Between the Song Lyrics and the Scenes

The translation strategies aimed at maintaining the musicality of the original song lead to an inevitable consequence concerning the synchronization between song and scene. The making of video clips purposes to support the messages emerged from the song lyric. Hence, the video sequence must match the words of the song. When part of a song is modified, added, or deleted, the video images must also be adjusted. The following are the customizations made by the translator as an effort to make the translation of the Oreo Tv Commercial singable and compatible.

3.2.1 Keeping the Original

This is applied to the fully translated lyrics having the same number of syllables, as seen in the translation of verses 10, 11, and 12. Further, the translator also keeps the original video clips for the lyric translated having more syllables, as seen in verses 1, 3, 5, and 7. No modification is needed for these scenes since the adjustment is already made in the song translation. Figure 1 is the example taken from the translation of verse and clip 1.

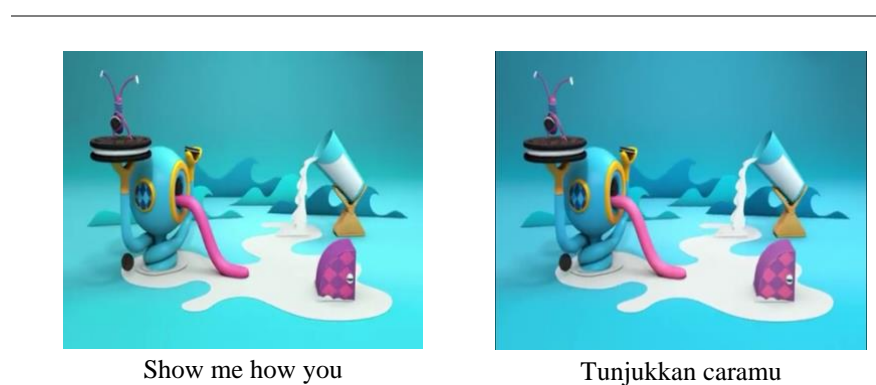


Fig. 1. The Translation of Verse and Scene 1.

Although the number of syllables is different in the lyrics, we can see no difference between the pictures in the English and Indonesian versions. The translator successfully conveys the message by speeding up the beat of the song and maintaining the original image.

3.2.2 Making Deletion and Slow-motion Video

This strategy is implemented in the verses which are partly deleted in the translation, as can be found in verse 2 and 6. Figure 2 is an example drawn from verse 6.



Snack it



Pack it



Crack it





Cream it



Caramu mainkan krimnya

Fig. 2. The Translation of Verse 6.

As some lyrics are missing in the translated version, an adjustment is necessarily taken to synchronize the song with the scene. The video clips are deleted following the omission of the lyric, and leaving only one clip picturing the lyric of “Cream it”. It triggers a time gap between the two versions. Hence, making the only clip left slow motion seems effective in filling the overall verse duration.

3.2.3 Changing the Clip to Adjust the Lyric

The results of the song analysis found part of a lyric that is different from the original. It is shown in the translation of “crunch it” becoming “*atau kunyah*” and visualized in figure 3.



Crunch it



Atau kunyah

Fig. 3. The Changed Lyric and Adjusted Image.

As can be seen in figure 3, the translator is genuinely creative in synchronizing the Indonesian lyric with the image. A modification is made in the clip cropping. The part of the picture, specifically the picture of the wide-opened mouth is taken and adjusted to create an image of ‘crunching’ conveying the original message. In Indonesian, all activities of processing food in the mouth are called ‘*kunyah*’, which literally means ‘chew’. Unlike English, It does not distinguish the terms based on which part of mouth working and the sound it makes. For that reason, the video clip illustrating the English lyric of “crunch it” is not maintained in the

Indonesian version since it does not represent the activity of chewing. Nevertheless, it is considered a compromise that is acceptable to both sides.

The success of an advertisement is determined by the widespread acceptance of the consumers. Oreo is one of the brands known worldwide due to its effective communication strategy. It could expand internationally with its catchy TV commercials. Fernandez [6] reported that this cookie is present in more than 100 countries and much of this success without question lies in the role of a professional translator. Oreo TV commercial is sort of advertisements that need exertion to translate. It is launched in a form of song which must be dubbed in the language the advertisement is broadcasted. On top of that, the synchronization between the translated song and the video clips should become the prime concern for the translator. A singable, visible, acceptable, and marketable new version of the advertisement must be set for a profit target.

The results of this study demonstrate that the hard work of the translator has been a runaway success. The song translated can be easily sung and enjoyed following the well suited animated video. Franzon [7] suggests that translator may have five options in translating song: not translating the lyric, translating the lyric without considering the music, writing new lyrics, adapting the music to the translation, and adapting the translation to the music. The Indonesian translator of the Oreo TV commercial only applied two of the options considering the marketing value that must be maintained. Not translating the lyric is taken as one of the strategies to match the number of syllables of the original lyrics. Whereas, customizing the translation to the music has opted as a way to fit the rhythm. Furthermore, the scrutiny of the synchronization between verbal and non-verbal elements in a TV commercial is the newness of this study. Concerning with non-verbal elements, some studies had demonstrated the role of multimodality in an advertisement. However, only a few of the researches correlated it with translation studies and it was done only on printed advertisements. One of them was [8] who examined some bilingual billboards in Hong Kong aimed at disclosing the role of non-verbal elements and the need for the translator to contextualise the linguistic messages in advertisement translation. Hence, the results of this study could be taken as a necessary complement to enrich the analysis of advertisement translation, both printed and audio-visual.

4 Conclusion

The findings of this study led to the conclusion that translation Oreo TV Commercial is definitely not a piece of cake. The translator has to maintain the ‘singability’ of the original soundtrack by considering the number of syllables of the lyrics. Adjusting the rhythm is considered as an effective way to bridge the syllable’s gap. Besides, some omissions must be made to meet the naturalness of the translation. Consequently, the translator has to formulate viable strategies aimed at synchronizing the verbal and non-verbal elements of the advertisement, such as keeping the original lyric, making deletion and slow-motion video, and changing the clip to adjust the lyric. To sum up, it takes great skill to accomplish such a work.

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