







Translating English Children's Storybook into Indonesian Context: How should the nominal groups be translated?

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Abstract. Translating children's storybooks has challenges for translators to find the equivalence in meaning and style while still having good readability for the young readers, particularly on the nominal groups (NGs) translation presented in the text. This study aimed to reveal how the nominal groups were translated from English to Indonesian by concerning the forms of the nominal groups either simplex or complex, and how the shifts happened in the translation. This study employed a single case study to investigate how an English storybook "A Man on the Seat of Justice" was translated into Indonesian "Di Kursi Pengadilan". This study found that the source book contained 266 simplex NGs and 6 complex NGs; however, after being translated, the number of the nominal groups decreased with the amount of 264 simplex NGs and 29 complex NGs. Those numbers showed that there were shifts in the translation process that made some changes. They were identified; simplex to complex, simplex to verb, simplex to adjective, simplex to clause, simplex to none, complex to simplex, complex to verb, complex to adjective, and complex to clause. Those changes were made to achieve the high readability and acceptability of the target text. These findings assure that when translating a children's storybook, a translator should put the readability and acceptability of the target text as a concern for there is a difference in cognitive level of the readers from the source text and the target text and the cultural nuances as well.

Keywords: Children's Storybook, Nominal Groups, Shifts, Readability, Acceptability

1 Introduction

Understanding the language characteristics of a text in translating children's storybooks needs to be considered by a translator. Children's storybooks tend to have a diluted spoken language characteristic in order to have a high level of readability for young readers [1]. Readability is defined as the ability to read and understand a well-presented text [2]. While accuracy and acceptability are important in determining the quality of the translated text, they often take a back seat to readability in children's books because

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the primary goal is to make the text approachable for young readers. Adaptations that enhance readability can sometimes involve changes that slightly deviate from the source text but are necessary to ensure that the story is understandable and enjoyable for children. Thus, readability is often prioritized because it directly affects the children's comprehension, engagement, language acquisition, and overall enjoyment of the story. Ensuring that a text is readable allows children to fully appreciate and learn from the story, fulfilling the primary purpose of children's literature [3][4][5][6].

Moreover, readability becomes a priority in translating children's storybooks because it is closely related to the cognitive ability of young readers to accept and understand every word of the text. [7] and [8] also state that the translation of children's literature is a specific translation because the translator must consider the cognitive and language abilities of the target readers; they are the children who have limited understanding but freedom in imagination. In response to this, to obtain high readability, grammatical intricacy plays an important role in translating children's storybooks by looking at the linguistic components of a text. Grammatical intricacy is closely related to the complexity of the text in terms of the use of congruent lexis, simplex nominal groups, and complex clauses [9][1][10][11][12]. Among those three characteristics in the grammatical intricacy, this research focuses on one of them, namely the nominal groups; how they should be translated structurally into the target text (TT) to be easily understood.

Nominal group, as stated by [13] is a group of words which has a noun as the head word and a modifier as the additional information related to the noun. The study of nominal groups in the children's storybook translation is crucial for understanding the structure, meaning, and complexity of the language used. The nominal groups, which consist of a head noun and its modifiers, play a significant role in both written and spoken language, influencing readability, comprehension, and stylistic elements [1][14]. Thus, a research on the translation of nominal groups in children's storybooks is worth undertaking because it addresses critical aspects of readability and cognitive development. By focusing on how nominal groups are translated, this research practically can help the translators to improve the quality and accessibility of children's literature, ensuring that young readers around the world can enjoy and learn from the story.

To make this research clear, in the context of grammatical intricacy using systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach, a nominal group is divided into simplex and complex. The distinction between complex and simplex nominal groups are elaborated as follows [15][16][17][18][19]. The complex nominal group contains,

- a. Thing followed by a post-modifier i.e. qualifier (Q) and one of the pre-modifier elements; and/or
- b. Thing followed only by a complex post-modifier, which contains an abstraction of another Thing as an explanatory element.

On the other hand, a simplex nominal group is a nominal group that contains:

- a. Thing
- b. Thing and a simple/concrete post-modifier
- c. Thing and at least one of the pre-modifiers - epithet (E), classifier (C), deictic (D), numeral (num).

Unfortunately, the research on nominal groups translation has rarely been studied comprehensively with SFL approach that is related to the readability of a translated children's storybook. Previous researches still focused on the nominal groups in adult translated texts that were still mechanical in the elements of nominal groups within and investigated the shifts based on the unit and class [20][21][22][38]. There are gaps that have not been examined in the previous studies which make the novelty of this research to be carried out using the SFL perspective. This research, hence, focuses on the form of how nominal groups are realized in the source text and target text, which has an impact on the linguistic style of the text. The SFL approach on nominal group elements is used to examine the translation of children's storybooks which aims to reveal how the nominal groups were translated from English to Indonesian by concerning on the forms of simplex or complex and to explore how the shifts occurred in the translation from the source text (ST) to the target text (TT).

2 Methods

This study employed single case study research design with the focus on the nominal groups using SFL approach. The data were taken from an English children's storybook "A Man on the Seat of Justice" which was translated into Indonesian language "Di Kursi Pengadilan". The translated book has been published through Penjaring platform managed by the Agency for Language Development and Cultivation of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology that is aimed to give access to the students, teachers, researchers, practitioners to improve the Indonesia literacy, particularly children as the young learners, through literature [24]. This book belonged to level 4 for the ST readers that has a longer text with more than 1500 words and has a nuanced story. Besides, in the context of ST, this book is addressed to the children who are able to read fluently and confidently. However, when the book was translated into Indonesian context, the book level became '*semenjana*' in the TT readers, that children are able to read a text independently without any scaffolding or guidance from the adults [39]. This book was also chosen because of its complexity that contained 266 simplex nominal groups and 66 complex nominal groups. The data were analyzed using Spradely's ethnographic analysis model that included domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis [23].

By seeing the linguistic phenomena, it could be investigated how the translator made any shifts on translating the nominal groups to meet the accuracy, acceptability, and the readability of the target text. The quality of the translated text was measured using a parameter proposed by [2]. To achieve the validity of the research, focus group discussion (FGD) with three experts in translation and SFL fields were also conducted.

3 Results and Discussion

This research found that there were changes in the number of the nominal groups either complex or simplex from the ST into the TT. It is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. The frequency of the nominal groups

Nominal Groups	ST	TT
Simplex	266	264
Complex	66	29

Table 1 showed that actually the book in the ST had already followed the rules of grammatical intricacy which led to the characteristics of language; in this context, it is children's literature that tends to be spoken. It could be seen from the distribution of the numbers of the nominal groups where the simplex nominal groups were provided much more than the complex ones. This was in line with the concept of language characteristics from SFL perspective that to make a text sparser in relation to its readability, the use of spoken language should have been employed in the text; one of which was the use of simplex nominal groups [17][9][1][12]. Therefore, the existence of content words, such as noun, verb, adjective, adverb, matter because they will form the nominal groups to carry the primary meaning within the group, providing the necessary information to convey a clear and specific idea. Besides, they also impart the core meaning, to add the specific details to provide the contextual understanding.

The simplex nominal groups were identified by the existence of 'Thing' only or 'Thing and a simple/concrete post-modifier' or 'Thing and at least one of the pre-modifiers - epithet (E), classifier (C), deictic (D), numeral (num)'. Here are some examples of the simplex nominal groups in ST.

good friends

E T

her property

D T

the same religion

D E T

Whereas, the complex nominal groups were identified by the existence of 'Thing followed by a post-modifier i.e. qualifier (Q) and one of the pre-modifier elements' or 'Thing followed only by a complex post-modifier, which contains an abstraction of another Thing as an explanatory element'. Some examples of the complex nominal groups in ST are shown as follows.

great faith in service to the teacher

E T Q

the peon at the local revenue office

D T Q

his priceless knowledge in the matters of law

D E T
Q

However, what interesting in the table 1 showed how the translator of the book attempted to maintain the structure of the nominal groups to be highly readable for children's by keeping the number of simplex nominal groups from 266 in the ST into 264 in the TT. Also, there was an attempt showed by decreasing the number of complex nominal groups in the ST which was significantly shown from 66 into 29. The data revealed that the changes in the number indicated some shifts made throughout the translation process. They were:

1. The forms of complex nominal groups in the ST shifted into simplex nominal groups in the TT. (Complex → Simplex)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
23	<u>the blessings of the teacher</u> D T Q	<u>berkat guru</u> T C

Back Translation: teacher blessing

The complex nominal group became simplex for the Thing (*berkatnya*) was only defined by a classifier (*guru*) that explained what kind of 'berkat' it was. And it was defined as a '*berkat guru*'. This way of shifting can be called simplification, meaning that changing the complex nominal group into the simplex one. It makes the text more accessible and easier for children to understand, aligning with their cognitive development stage. Complex nominal groups often carry additional descriptive or contextual information which might be too dense for young readers. Thus, this shift into simplex nominal groups can help children to grasp the meaning easily.

2. The forms of complex nominal group in the ST shifted into verbal group in the TT. (Complex → Verb Group)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
22	<u>great faith in service to the teacher</u> E T Q	<u>menjunjung tinggi sosok guru</u> V

Back Translation: upholding the figure of the teacher

The complex nominal group in the ST was shifted into verb group that sounded more light to the young readers. This transformation often aims to make sentences more dynamic and easier to follow. Verbs are generally more action-oriented and can engage young readers more effectively than complex nominal groups. In the context

of SFL, verb functions to convey the meaning that has a central role in the process which directly represents the action [11][[25][26].

- 3. The forms of complex nominal group in the ST shifted into adjective group in the TT. (Complex → Adj Group)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
78	<u>the fear of spoiling your relations</u> D T Q <u>with Jumman</u> Q	<i>takut hubunganmu dengan</i> Adj <i>Jumman akan rusak</i>

Back Translation: afraid of your relationship with Jumman will be broken

The use of complex nominal group might lead to the density of the text. The target text showed making more relatable by changing the Thing as the head from the nominal group into adjective ‘*takut*’. This can streamline the sentence structure, making it more straightforward and relatable for children.

- 4. The forms of complex nominal group in the ST shifted into clause in the TT. (Complex → Clause)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
84	<u>a trick of time</u> D T Q	<i>Jumman merasa diperdaya.</i> Clause

Back Translation: Jumman felt tricked.

Based on the example, the context of the complex nominal group in the ST was an idiom used to represent an implicit meaning. Generally, idiom is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words [27]. Hence, it was translated into a clause in Indonesian language to make it easier to understand by the young readers. The clause can make a clarity and explicitness of the meaning conveyed that it can lead to the better understanding to the target readers.

- 5. The forms of simplex nominal group in the ST shifted into complex nominal group in the TT. (Simplex → Complex)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
258	<u>the argument</u> D T	<u>kata-kata pedas yang dilontarkannya</u> T E Q

Back Translation: the scathing words he threw out

Surprisingly, this kind of shift happened in the nominal group translation. While this was less common than changing of complex into simplex, it could occur if the translation needed to add the details or context that the target language requires to maintain the story clear and get the nuance of the children's literature. The Indonesian language might need additional descriptors to convey the same meaning as the source text.

6. The forms of simplex nominal group in the ST shifted into verb group in the TT. (Simplex → Verb Group)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
7	<u>their farm-work</u> D T	<u>bertani bersama</u> V

Back Translation: doing farm together

This phenomenon not only happened from complex nominal groups to verb group but also from simplex nominal groups too. This kind of shift can often be attributed to emphasize the process to get the clarity and readability of the target text.

7. The forms of simplex nominal group in the ST shifted into adjective group in the TT. (Simplex → Adj Group)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
145	<u>its own importance</u> D E T	<u>memang penting</u> Adj

Back Translation: indeed important

When a simplex nominal group in the ST shifted into an adjective group in the TT, this transformation typically occurred to enhance clarity, readability, and naturalness

in the target language. By transforming the nominal group in the ST to adjective to ST, it can make the young readers to think more vivid. The changes of the abstract noun of ‘importance’ in the example which was translated into ‘*penting*’ realized a concrete meaning; from the physical reality of condition symbolized into an adjective [9].

8. The form of simplex in the ST shifted into clause in the TT. (Simplex → Clause)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
63	<u>your greed</u> D T	<u>Jangan serakah.</u> Clause

Back Translation: Don't be greedy.

This shift, in fact, also happened in this data where the simplex nominal groups in the ST was changed into a clause. This could make the text more explicit, readable, and aligned with the linguistic and cultural norms of the target language. Simplex clauses often describe actions or events directly, which can be more engaging for young readers. They can relate to and visualize actions better than abstract noun phrases.

9. The forms of simplex nominal group in the ST which were not translated at all in the TT. (Simplex → None)

Example:

Datum	ST	TT
4	<u>man's capacity</u> D T	-

Back Translation: -

Redundant or non-essential information can be removed to avoid overwhelming young readers with unnecessary details. However, in the other hand, this kind of omission may produce the translated text which is less accurate. The target readers did not know that some information was missing because they were not translated.

10. There was no grammatical change of the nominal groups from ST into TT. (No Shift)

Example of Simplex to Simplex:

Datum	ST	TT
1	<u>good friends</u> E T	<u>sepasang sahabat</u> D T

Back Translation: a couple of best friends

Example of Complex to Complex:

Datum	ST	TT
10	<u>the basis of their relationship</u> D T Q	<u>dasar dari hubungan mereka</u> T Q (abstract T + D)

Back Translation: the basis of their relationship

No shift in translating the nominal groups from ST to TT put the highest frequency above all. When there is no shift in translating the nominal groups, it often means there is a high degree of equivalence between the source and target languages in terms of meaning, structure, and cultural context. Therefore, the accuracy, accuracy, and readability will be obtained by this strategy because the target text is not only semantically correct but also communicatively enjoyed by the target readers. [28][29][30].

All of those findings revealed that when translating, the shifts did not simply happen by transforming complex into simplex or vice versa like assumed previously, but they also happened into other word groups such as verb group, adjective group, clause or even none that meant the nominal groups from ST were omitted to TT. The resume of the shifts is shown on the table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of the shifts of nominal groups from ST to TT

No.	Nominal Groups Translation	Frequency
1	Simplex to Simplex	233
	Complex to Complex	18
2	Simplex to Complex	9
3	Simplex to Verb	7
4	Simplex to Adjective	3
5	Simplex to Clause	4
6	Simplex to None	14

7	Complex to Simplex	34
8	Complex to Verb	5
9	Complex to Adjective	3
10	Complex to Clause	2
Total		332

Above all, those shifts are strategies taken to make the target text readable to the young readers. The translator might encounter problems in the translation process, either because of a particularly difficult unit, or because there might be a gap in the translator’s knowledge or skills. This is when the translation strategies are activated [31]. Another two aspects of translation quality, which are accuracy and acceptability, surely also become the consideration. However, they take the different portion in the context of children’s literature translation. Thus, it is necessary to investigate how the strategies made in translating the nominal groups affect the quality of the translation viewed from the accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

Based on the componential analysis conducted in order to see the cause-and-effect relationship of all aspects or variables in the study [32], the correlation between the shifts of the nominal groups translation and the quality of the target text translation is shown on the table 3.

Table 3. The correlation of nominal groups translation and the quality of translation

No.	Nominal Groups Translation	Quality of Translation								
		Accuracy			Acceptability			Readability		
		3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1
1	No Shift									
a.	Simplex to Simplex	216	14	3	233	0	0	233	0	0
b.	Complex to Complex	17	1	0	18	0	0	18	0	0
2	Simplex to Complex	9	0	0	8	0	1	8	0	1
3	Simplex to Verb	6	1	0	7	0	0	7	0	0
4	Simplex to Adjective	2	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
5	Simplex to Clause	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1
6	Simplex to None	5	0	9	5	0	9	5	0	9
7	Complex to Simplex	30	4	0	34	0	0	34	0	0

8	Complex to Verb	4	1	0	5	0	0	5	0	0
9	Complex to Adjective	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
10	Complex to Clause	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
<u>Total of Occurrences</u>		<u>297</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>321</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>321</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>11</u>

The table 3 summarizes the findings on the shifts observed in translating nominal groups from English to Indonesian in the children's storybook. The table categorizes the shifts into different types and assesses the quality of translation based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The patterns of the summarized table are elaborated as the following.

1. No Shift

No shift meant that there was no change on the forms of the nominal groups translation from ST to TT. It happened mostly from simplex to simplex (233 data) and few of them were complex to complex (18 data). No shift took the dominant occurrence in the children's storybook translation. And it resulted high acceptability and readability though some of them were less accurate.

2. Simplex to Complex

Shifts from simplex to complex occur infrequently (9 data). These shifts maintain high accuracy but slightly affect acceptability and readability. The translations are generally accurate, though slightly less frequent than no-shift cases. There is a minor decline, with some instances scoring lower, possibly due to the increased complexity of the nominal groups making the translation less natural or harder to read.

3. Simplex to Verb

Simplex to verb shifts are rare (7 data). These translations often retain high acceptability and readability but might slightly affect the accuracy. While all of them are acceptable and readable, the introduction of verbs in replacing the nominal groups may occasionally disrupt the accuracy of the translated text.

4. Simplex to Adjective

This is one of the least common shifts (3 data). When the nominal groups are translated into adjectives, the translations are usually acceptable and readable. Generally high, as adjectives often preserve the meaning without significantly altering readability though in another case it may lead to reduce the accuracy.

5. Simplex to Clause

Shifts from simplex to clause are uncommon (4 data). These translations exhibit a range of accuracy levels. While some translations are highly accurate, others fall to the lowest accuracy level, indicating potential challenges in maintaining the original meaning. Shifts to clauses may introduce complexity, affecting both acceptability and readability negatively.

6. Simplex to None

Omitting the simplex nominal groups from ST to TT happened quite significant (14 data). The translation where the simplex nominal groups are omitted show a significant drop in quality scores, especially accuracy. Many translations in this category are inaccurate, likely due to the loss of information. The omission of nominal groups often leads to lower acceptability and readability; as essential elements of the story might be missing.

7. Complex to Simplex

Shifting from complex to simplex nominal groups is relatively common (34 data). This way of translation usually remains acceptable and readable. Both metrics remain high, indicating that simplification is generally well-received and easier to read. High accuracy is maintained, suggesting that simplifying nominal groups does not significantly distort meaning.

8. Complex to Verb

These shifts are infrequent but maintain good quality scores (5 data). They are generally accurate though there is one data showing less accurate. However, the introduction of verbs does not negatively impact acceptability or readability in most cases.

9. Complex to Adjective

Shifts from complex nominal groups to adjectives are rare but effective (3 data). All metrics of accuracy, acceptability, and readability are high, indicating this type of shift is successful and maintains the integrity of the translation.

10. Complex to Clause

These shifts are the least frequent among all (2 data). The quality scores show all high in accuracy, acceptability, and readability. This could be one of the alternatives to translate the complex nominal groups to a clause which is clear to detect who and what is doing easily for the young readers.

From all the analyzed data, it could be highlighted in some points of translating English children's storybook into Indonesian by the focus of the nominal groups as follows.

- a. The high frequency of no shift appeared in this study and resulted good quality of the translation. This means that between English and Indonesian nominal group probably have an equivalence in the form of structure and meaning. The acceptability and readability were shown high but not for the accuracy. Preserving this no shift sometimes also can create the translation less accurate.
- b. Simplifying complex nominal groups or adding details to simplex nominal groups generally maintained high quality in translations. However, simplification appears to be a practical approach to enhance the readability and acceptability without compromising the accuracy. Although, making the simplex nominal group into

- complex in the TT is sometimes necessary to make the nominal group clearer by the descriptors, but sometimes it will decrease the quality of readability and acceptability.
- c. The existence of shifting the nominal group into verb, adjective, and clause also brought an impact to the quality. This can result an effective way to preserve the quality of the translation if done carefully.
 - d. The omission of the nominal group in the TT often resulted lower quality of the translation. This shift removes essential information conveyed, making the text less accurate, acceptable, and readable. But, in other cases, this omission is sometimes necessary to do by conveying the message into TT in implicit way. Thus, further research needs to conduct to see how the translation techniques play a role towards these findings.

High acceptability and readability achieve the same occurrence in this study meaning that in the context of children's translation, both of them should be taken as a consideration. This is actually in line with the Skopos theory where the translation is to help the young learners in Indonesia to learn other country's culture by not changing the culture conveyed through intercultural message from the text and conveying the message into more comprehensively and easily understood by the target readers [33][34]. This matches with the goal of the Ministry in the beginning to provide as many as possible children translated storybooks which are accessible in order to improve the students literacy and cross-cultural understanding.

In line with the children's cognitive development, the potential of cognitive linguistics in expanding translation theory, suggests ways to leverage synergies between the two disciplines. These studies collectively underline the need for age-appropriate translation strategies that consider the children's cognitive development and cultural context by considering the psychological aspects and using simple language to maintain the children's interest [35][36]. Taking a look at the book being studied, to the target readers, the book is appropriate for 7-11 years old. Meanwhile, [37] stated that children among 7-11 years old would start to think logically about concrete events and understand the concept of conservation. Hence, the translation should still conserve the cultural context being transferred and make it more concrete to the target readers by translating the nominal groups appropriately.

4 Conclusion

This research reveals clear attitude in the translation of nominal groups from English to Indonesian in the children's storybook. The translation without shifts are predominantly found especially in keeping the simplex nominal group into its form in the TT to achieve a good quality of translation. Another effective way also can be done by shifting the complex nominal group into simplex. Shifting the nominal groups to verbs, adjectives, and clauses can be advantageous if managed carefully. However, omissions often lead to decreased quality due to loss of some information in the TT.

This study underlines the nuance of decision-making involved in translating children's literature, where preserving the original meaning and ensuring the translation is engaging and understandable for young readers is paramount. It also reflects a balancing action that the translators must do by staying faithful to the source text and making the translation readable and engaging for children. The principle of semantic and communicative translation should be kept in mind. Shifts that simplify or slightly alter nominal groups can be beneficial, but excessive complexity or omission can detract from the overall quality.

Translating children's storybook requires adapting the text to suit the cognitive abilities and cultural context of the target readers. Any changes made are essential for maintaining the readability and acceptability of the text, ultimately contributing to a positive and educational reading experience for children without much loss of the meaning conveyed from the source text. This research will be more meaningful if the contribution of the translation techniques is also explored in relation to the quality of the translation. This could be an opportunity to conduct the future research. This research further could help the children's storybook translators in doing the translation project as some strategies can be taken to solve the problems particularly in translating the nominal groups.

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