



Understanding Translation Errors in Social Media @Wonderfullindonesia Instagram Captions

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2025-08-18 Revised: 2026-06-11 Accepted: 2026-06-12 Keywords: translations errors, digital tourism promotions, @wonderfulindonesia DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.7834 Corresponding Author: Dewa Ayu Dian Utari ayudianutari@gmail.com Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar	<i>Social media has become a key tool in global tourism promotion, including for Indonesia through its official Instagram account, @wonderfulindonesia. This article analyzes various translation errors found in the English captions translated from the original Indonesian versions. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and translation error analysis model, the study examined 30 Instagram posts from January to June 2025. The findings reveal a range of errors, including grammatical, lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, as well as collocational and idiomatic mistakes. These errors not only affect the clarity of the message but also reduce emotional appeal, hinder cross-cultural communication, and undermine the professional image of the government-managed account. Furthermore, translation inaccuracies decrease audience engagement, create inconsistent branding, and weaken Indonesia's digital diplomacy efforts. The study emphasizes the need for professional translators who understand both cultural context and promotional purpose, to ensure that the language used is not only linguistically correct but also persuasive and communicative. By improving translation quality, Indonesia's digital tourism promotion can more effectively attract international audiences and build a positive global image.</i>

1. Introduction

In the current era of globalization, social media has become an essential platform for promoting tourism and culture. Among various platforms, Instagram stands out due to its visual nature, real-time interaction, and wide international reach. The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, through its official Instagram account @wonderfulindonesia, has utilized this platform as a strategic tool to introduce Indonesia's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tourism spots to a global audience. To effectively communicate with international viewers, captions are often translated from Indonesian into English. However, the accuracy and appropriateness of these translations are crucial in conveying the intended message.

Translation errors in tourism-related social media posts can lead to misinterpretation, misinformation, and even damage to the brand image of a country. As the caption is a key component that supports the image in Instagram posts, it must be accurate, culturally appropriate, and stylistically consistent with the expectations of the target audience. Inadequate translations may lead to confusion or unintended humor, potentially undermining the credibility of the source.

The process of translating captions is not merely a linguistic conversion, but also a cultural one. Language carries with it values, norms, and cultural connotations that may not have direct equivalents in another language. According to Puspitasari and Siregar (2023), translation in digital media must pay special attention to pragmatics and socio-cultural contexts, especially when targeting international readers. Social media translation thus demands more than grammatical correctness—it requires deep cultural sensitivity and linguistic creativity.

Despite the increasing demand for professional translation in the digital sphere, many social media translations are still conducted by non-professional translators or even automated tools. This often leads to literal or awkward translations that fail to capture the nuance and intent of the original message. In a study by Wahyuni (2021), it was found that literal translations dominated Instagram tourism captions, resulting in ineffective communication and diminished engagement from international followers.

Instagram, with its character limits and casual tone, presents additional challenges. Translators must balance brevity with clarity, all while maintaining engagement. These limitations often result in syntactic simplification or idiomatic errors, both of which may alter the intended meaning. The tourism discourse, furthermore, involves persuasive and poetic language aimed at attracting visitors, which can be particularly difficult to replicate in another language.

Translation errors are generally categorized into several types, such as grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic errors. Each of these can significantly impact how the message is received. Agrammatical sentence, for instance, can create ambiguity, while pragmatic errors may cause offense or cultural

misunderstanding. According to Lestari (2022), pragmatic errors in translation are the most difficult to detect and the most damaging in cross-cultural communication.

Research has also shown that social media users are highly responsive to language quality. A study by Ramadhani and Mulyono (2020) showed that posts with well-translated captions garnered more engagement, including likes, comments, and shares. This emphasizes the practical importance of high-quality translation in increasing online visibility and interaction.

Moreover, as the tourism industry is closely tied to a country's image and soft power, poor translation can undermine national branding. The Indonesian government's efforts to promote tourism rely heavily on a consistent and positive image. Errors in the English captions of @wonderfulindonesia can be perceived as a lack of professionalism, thus affecting international perceptions of Indonesia's competence and attention to detail.

There is also a growing academic interest in the study of translation in digital media, particularly in government-run accounts. Scholars have begun to explore how translation affects audience perception, engagement, and trust. However, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis focusing specifically on Instagram captions and their translation accuracy.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining translation errors found in the English captions of @wonderfulindonesia. By analyzing common types of errors and their possible causes, this study seeks to provide insights into the challenges of translating tourism content in social media and to suggest improvements for more effective communication.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on translation error analysis and functional approaches to translation. The concept of Skopos theory, for example, emphasizes that the translation must suit its intended purpose and target audience. In the case of @wonderfulindonesia, the purpose is clearly promotional, and the target audience is international; thus, any translation should be persuasive, accurate, and culturally appropriate.

Data for this study were collected from a series of Instagram posts by @wonderfulindonesia within a specific timeframe. Each caption was analyzed using an error analysis model, categorizing the errors based on their type and frequency. The results of this analysis provide a clearer picture of the most common issues and serve as a foundation for recommendations.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the fields of translation studies, digital communication, and tourism marketing. It highlights the importance of high-quality translation in shaping public perception and influencing travel decisions. In a world where first impressions are often made online, a single poorly translated caption can have unintended consequences.

As Indonesia continues to build its global tourism brand, attention to linguistic and cultural accuracy in its digital promotion strategies is more important than ever. Ensuring that translated captions on platforms like Instagram

reflect both the meaning and spirit of the original message is not only a matter of language, but also a matter of national pride.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with an error analysis approach to identify and categorize translation errors in the English captions of the official @wonderfulindonesia Instagram account. The data were collected from 30 purposively selected Instagram posts published between January and June 2025, focusing on those that included both Indonesian and English captions. The selection aimed to capture a representative sample of posts promoting various tourist destinations, events, and cultural elements. The original Indonesian captions and their corresponding English translations were compared and analyzed to identify linguistic inaccuracies, including grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic errors.

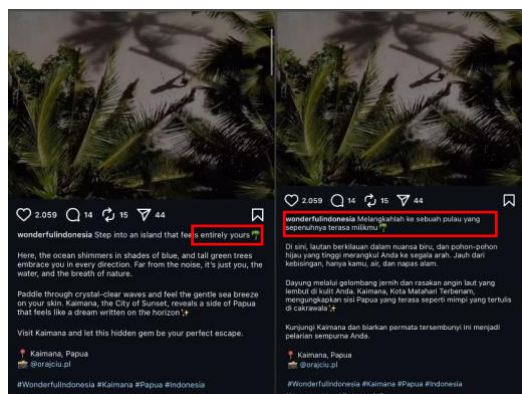
The analysis followed the model of translation error classification proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), adapted for the context of digital tourism communication. Errors were identified, categorized, and interpreted based on their potential to alter meaning or reduce communicative effectiveness. To ensure validity, triangulation was applied by consulting expert judgment from a certified translator and a linguistics lecturer. The study also applied Skopos theory as a theoretical framework, considering the purpose and function of the translated text. The findings were then described and interpreted qualitatively to reveal patterns, causes, and implications of the identified translation errors.

3. Results

Translation plays a vital role in tourism communication, especially on international platforms such as Instagram. The account @wonderfulindonesia, managed by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, features bilingual captions aimed at promoting various destinations and cultural elements to global audiences. However, a qualitative review of selected posts from January to June 2025 reveals several recurring translation issues that affect message clarity and impact.

The most common type of error found in the captions is grammatical error. These include subject-verb disagreement, tense inconsistency, and article misuse. For example, the caption “Indonesia have many unique destinations” should be written as “Indonesia has many unique destinations.” Such errors, though seemingly minor, can affect the credibility and professionalism of the promotional message.

DATA 1



SL: Feels like a dream written on the horizon, **entirely yours**.

TL: Seperti mimpi yang tertulis di cakrawala, **sepenuhnya milikmu**.

The phrase "entirely yours" translates to "feels entirely yours," which diminishes the emotional meaning. In the context of tourism promotion, a more persuasive translation would be "entirely for you" or "as if entirely yours," to maintain the personal tone and invitation.

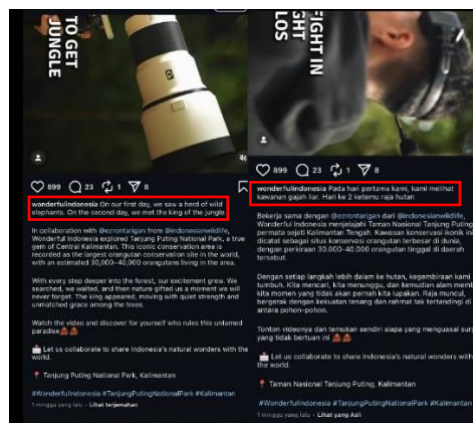
Sumber Data 1:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNijQVVzuxA/?igsh=MXBoN2F1d25scjU2bA==> 9 Agustus 2025

Sumber Data 2:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DM4q7JQhi28/?igsh=bnZpN2FvbXRwbDk3> 3 Agustus 2025

DATA 2

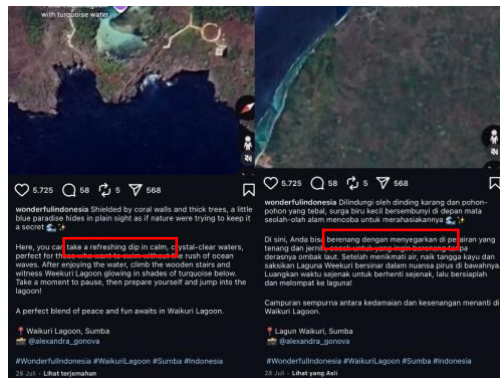


SL: On our first day, we saw a herd of wild elephant. On the second day, we met **the king of the jungle**.

TL: Pada hari pertama kami. Kami melihat kawanan gajah liar. Hari ke 2 ketemu **raja hutan**

The error lies in the literal translation of the idiomatic phrase "the king of the jungle" into "raja hutan." In English, this idiom generally refers to a lion, so without contextualizing the intended meaning (alpha orangutan) can be misunderstood by foreign readers.

DATA 3



SL: Here, you can take a **refreshing dip in calm**, crystal-clear waters, perfect for those who want to swim without the rush of ocean waves.

TL: Di sini, Anda bisa **berenang dengan menyegarkan** di perairan yang tenang dan jernih, cocok untuk yang ingin berenang tanpa derasnya ombak laut.

The error lies in the phrase "berenang dengan segar" (swimming with refreshing), which is a literal translation of "take a refreshing dip." This structure is unnatural in Indonesian and should be adapted to "berenang segar diri" or "berenang dengan segar" (swimming with fresh) to maintain the fluidity and naturalness of the text.

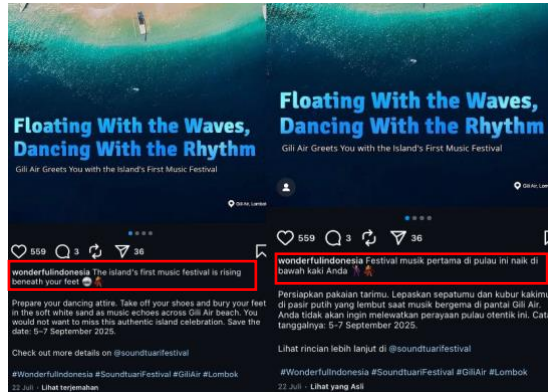
Sumber Data 3:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMPvysACBhGU/?igsh=MXA0aHdnNG41cjBzbg==> 28 July 2025

Sumber Data 4:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DMZ30EGBSwg/?igsh=dHp5cHdjMjZueWJ6> 22 July 202

DATA 4

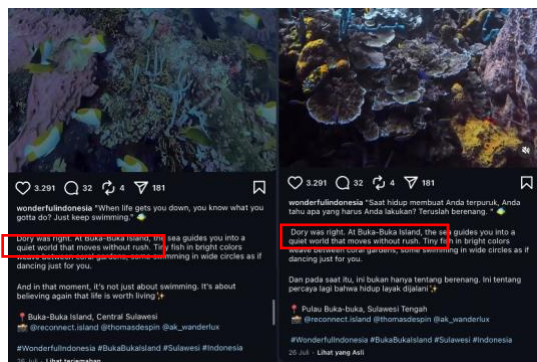


SL: The island's first music festival is **rising beneath your feet**

TL: Festival musik pertama di pulau ini **naik di bawah kaki Anda**

The error lies in the literal translation of "rising beneath your feet" as "up beneath your feet." This expression sounds awkward and non-idiomatic in Indonesian. A more appropriate adaptation would be "mulari terasa di bawah langkah anda" or "mengrema di bawah kaki anda" to maintain the poetic and contextual nuance.

DATA 5



SL: Dory was right, Buka-buka island the sea guides you into a **quiet world without rush**

TL: Dory benar, pulau Buka-buka laut membimbing ke dunia yang **tenang yang bergerak tanpa tergesa**

The phrase “quiet world that moves without rush” translates directly without adjustment to “a quiet world that moves without rush” (in the full context), so it sounds stiff. It would be more natural to adapt it to “a quiet world that moves without rush” or “a peaceful world without hustle and bustle.”

Sumber Data 5:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMkchJhhlYO/?igsh=OTdnb2w3M2F2dG1> 26 July 2025

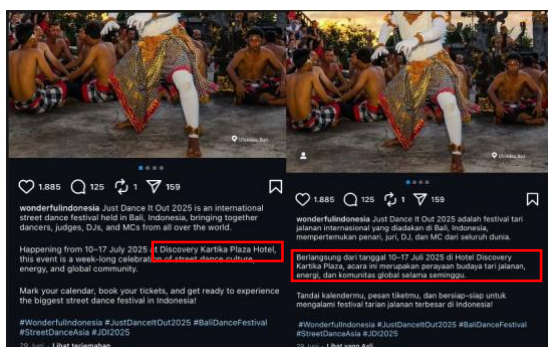
Sumber Data 6:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DLeO9BYB2Jo/?igsh=Z2hibjBteWlpdnd2> 29 June 2025

Another frequent issue is lexical error, which involves the incorrect choice of words or awkward word usage. In many cases, words are directly translated from Indonesian without considering their appropriate usage in English. For instance, translating “wisata kuliner” as “culinary tourism” is grammatically correct, but fails to capture the more natural term in English such as “food tour” or “food experience.” According to Lestari and Wulandari (2022), lexical errors are often the result of poor vocabulary mastery and lack of contextual awareness.

Syntactic errors are also present in several captions. These occur when the sentence structure does not conform to standard English syntax, resulting in awkward or confusing sentences. For example, the caption “Experience you can feel the peacefulness of the nature in Bali” contains a misplaced clause and should be revised as “You can experience the peacefulness of nature in Bali.” Syntactic errors

DATA 6



SL: Happening from 10-17 July 2025 at **Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel**

TL: Berlangsung dari tanggal 10-17 Juli 2025 di **Hotel Discovery Kartika Plaza**

The hotel name “Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel” is translated as “Hotel Discovery Kartika Plaza” (reversed word order). While seemingly minor, in an official or international marketing context, this change could be considered an inaccurate pronunciation of the place name.

often stem from literal translation methods that ignore sentence construction rules in the target language.

Pragmatic errors, while less frequent, have a more significant impact. These errors happen when the translation fails to consider cultural norms or the communicative intent behind a message. For example, using the phrase “enjoy the silence of the village life” may carry unintended connotations in English, as “silence” can suggest lifelessness. A more appropriate expression could be “enjoy the calm and serene village life.” As noted by Yulianto and Rahayu (2021), pragmatic failures can mislead readers or result in messages that sound unnatural or insensitive.

In addition, idiomatic expressions often pose challenges. Translating idioms or culturally specific phrases literally can lead to confusion. For instance, the Indonesian idiom “surga dunia” was translated in one post as “world’s heaven,” whereas a more natural English equivalent would be “a paradise on earth.” As explained by Pradana and Kusumaningrum (2023), idiomatic translation requires creativity and deep cultural understanding to maintain the original tone and meaning.

Another type of error found is collocation error, where word combinations sound unnatural to native speakers. For example, one caption reads “Bali has fresh wind and clear water,” whereas the natural collocation in English would be “fresh air” rather than “wind.” These subtle issues can impact the fluency and attractiveness of the message. Moreover, the use of redundant words and unnecessary repetition in English captions also affects readability. Phrases such as “Let’s enjoy and see and feel the beautiful of Indonesia’s beauty” are verbose and confusing. This redundancy often occurs when translators attempt to retain the poetic repetition common in Bahasa Indonesia, without adjusting for English rhetorical style.

Some captions also display misuse of articles and prepositions, such as “visit the Komodo Island” instead of “visit Komodo Island” or “in the beach” instead of “on the beach.” These small mistakes can interrupt the natural flow of reading and diminish the perceived fluency of the account’s messaging.

In several instances, capitalization and punctuation errors were observed. For example, the use of lowercase in proper nouns or inconsistent punctuation reduces the professionalism of the content. As Rahmawati and Yusuf (2020) pointed out, even minor surface errors can significantly impact the audience’s trust in the credibility of the content. A further issue is the use of direct translation that neglects the promotional tone. For example, “Don’t forget to visit Borobudur Temple that has many reliefs” sounds mechanical. A better alternative might be: “Don’t miss Borobudur Temple, home to centuries-old stone carvings that tell ancient stories.” This problem stems from the absence of localization strategies.

In terms of tone and style, many captions lack the engaging and persuasive quality typical of tourism promotion. The literal tone often fails to evoke the emotional and experiential appeal that tourism captions require. As observed by Handayani (2024), persuasive language in tourism needs to be evocative, sensory,

and emotionally charged. Another issue relates to the inconsistency of language level. Some captions fluctuate between formal and informal tone, using phrases like "Do not miss it guys!" which may sound unprofessional when posted by an official government account. Consistent tone and register are essential to maintaining branding.

A few captions also include ambiguity, where the sentence can be interpreted in multiple ways due to unclear wording. For example, "This place will make your heart beating faster" might imply danger instead of excitement. Such ambiguity could be avoided through better lexical choice and tone adjustment. Lastly, translation omissions are sometimes found, where key elements of the Indonesian caption are not translated at all into English. This results in a loss of context and meaning.

These omissions may be intentional due to space constraints, but they should still maintain the essence of the message for non-Indonesian readers. In conclusion, the captions on @wonderfulindonesia Instagram reveal multiple types of translation errors ranging from grammatical to pragmatic that can hinder the effectiveness of the country's digital tourism promotion. Addressing these issues requires not only language proficiency but also cross-cultural competence and an understanding of persuasive tourism discourse.

4. Discussion

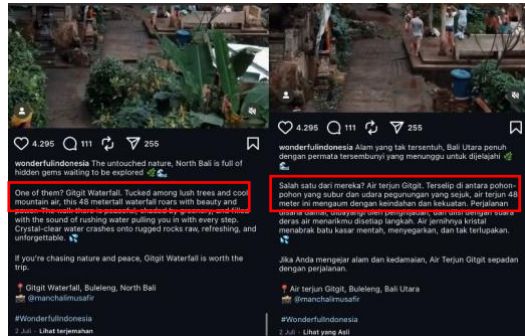
Effective tourism promotion requires clear and persuasive communication, particularly when targeting international audiences. In the case of @wonderfulindonesia, the official Instagram account of Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism, translated captions serve as a bridge between local culture and global travelers. However, translation errors whether grammatical, lexical, syntactic, or pragmatic often distort this communication and undermine the effectiveness of the message.

One of the most direct impacts of translation errors is the loss of clarity. When sentences are grammatically incorrect or poorly structured, the meaning can become vague or ambiguous. For example, a caption such as "Come to visit Indonesia, you will be happy with the view," confuses readers due to missing auxiliary verbs and incorrect word order. This kind of mistake disrupts comprehension and may lead audiences to disregard the message entirely.

Another major consequence is the erosion of credibility. Audiences tend to associate language quality with professionalism. A tourism board that consistently posts poorly translated content might be perceived as careless or untrustworthy. As stated by Putri and Hidayat (2022), language errors in tourism texts can reduce readers' confidence in the advertised destination and lead to negative perceptions of the country's image.

Translation errors also reduce emotional engagement, which is a crucial aspect of tourism promotion. Tourism texts are not just informative; they are designed to evoke desire, imagination, and excitement. Literal translations often fail to recreate the emotional tone of the original language, making the captions sound mechanical or flat. This lack of emotional appeal results in weaker audience connection and lower engagement rates.

DATA 7



SL: Tucked among lush trees and cool mountain air, this 48 metertall waterfall roars with beauty and power
TL: Terselip di antara pohon-pohon yang subur dan udara pegunungan yang sejuk, air terjun 48 meter ini mengaum dengan keindahan dan kekuatan

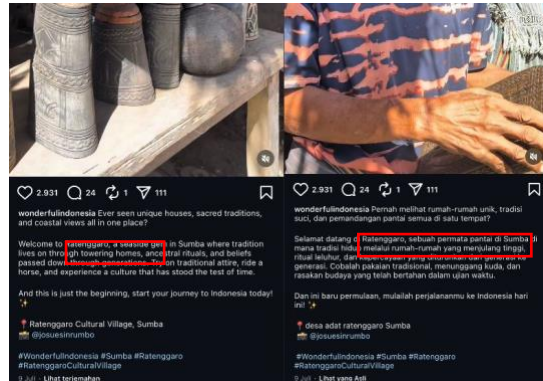
The phrase "tucked among lush trees and cool mountain air" translates to "tucked among lush trees and cool mountain air" without retaining the nuances of the promotional language that convey an exotic and natural impression. This literal translation removes the imaginative appeal built into the original text. Furthermore, the phrase "raw, refreshing, and unforgettable" is changed to "menyeringu, dan tak lupa" by removing the word raw, which in this context serves to convey a natural and authentic impression.

Sumber Data 7:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLm2eklhbA7/?igsh=dWF4dGpvODN0b250> 2 July 2025

Sumber Data 8:

DATA 8

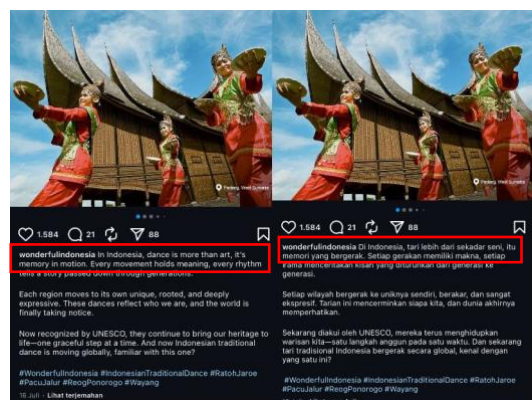


SL: A Seaside gem in Sumba where tradition lives on through towering homes
TL: sebuah permata pantai di Sumba di mana tradisi hidup, melalui rumah-rumah yang menjulang tinggi.

The phrase "towering homes" is translated as "houses that rise high" without retaining the typical cultural elements of Sumba (traditional houses with high roofs). In the context of cultural promotion, it should be adapted into a "traditional house with a high roof typical of Sumba" to provide cultural clarity and stronger promotional value.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DL4wdZCBHq9/?igsh=MWlqdXl2dXFkanozZA==> 9 July 2025

DATA 9



SL: In Indonesia, dance is more than art, **it's memory in motion.**

TL: Di Indonesia, Tari lebih dari sekadar seni, **itu memori yang bergerak**

The phrase "it's memory in motion" translates to "itu memori yang bergerak," which sounds stiff and unnatural in Indonesian. However, this phrase is idiomatic and requires creative adaptation to maintain its emotional impact. Furthermore, the phrase "deeply expressive" translates to "sangat ekspresif" (very expressive), which is too general and doesn't capture the depth of meaning.

Sumber Data 9:

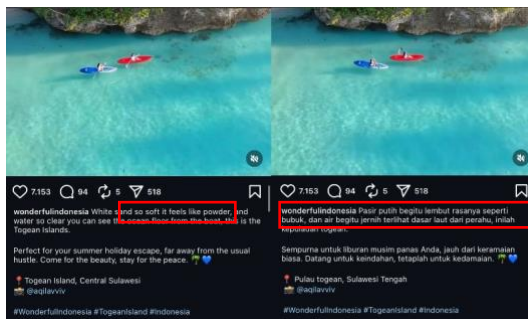
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DMKmyeIBuBZ/?igsh=YzlrZXZmdHRkM2tj> 16 July 2025

Sumber Data 10:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMCpRKvhBBB/?igsh=MThwYTN2bnloOGI6ZQ==> 13 July 2025

Furthermore, cultural misunderstandings may arise from pragmatic translation errors. These occur when cultural references, idioms, or humor are translated without appropriate adaptation. For instance, an Indonesian expression meant to convey warmth, or hospitality might sound awkward or even offensive in English if translated literally. According to Dewi and Santoso (2023), pragmatic failures in translation can lead to misinterpretation, which damages the message's impact and potentially alienates the target audience.

DATA 10



SL: White sand **so soft it feels like powder**, and water so clear

TL: Pasir putih **begitu lembut rasanya seperti bubuk**, dan air begitu jernih

The phrase "so soft it feels like powder" translates to "so soft it feels like powder," which sounds less natural in Indonesian. The use of the word "bubuk" tends to be technical and loses the poetic nuance it's trying to convey. Furthermore, the phrase "far away from the usual hustle" translates to "jauh dari ramai biasa," which is meaningfully accurate but less evocative, as hustle here refers to the hustle and bustle of a city, typically used to attract readers in the context of tourism promotions.

Another issue is diminished persuasive power. Many captions are intended to persuade audiences to visit specific destinations or experience cultural events. If the translation is weak or overly literal, the persuasive effect is lost. Phrases like “you must visit because it is nice” lack the compelling language expected in promotional content. As explained by Raharjo (2021), poor language construction reduces the marketing effectiveness of tourism campaigns on digital platforms.

In some cases, translation errors even result in unintended humor or awkwardness, which distracts readers from the intended message. For example, translating “kawasan penuh warna” as “a full color area” sounds strange and may prompt ridicule rather than interest. Such mistakes can quickly go viral for the wrong reasons, drawing attention away from the destination and toward the linguistic blunder.

Language errors also compromise searchability and discoverability in digital contexts. Well-crafted captions often include keywords or hashtags that help users find content. If the language is incorrect or inconsistent, search engines and algorithms may struggle to categorize the content accurately. This reduces the post's visibility, ultimately limiting its reach to potential international travelers.

Another consequence is the loss of local identity and uniqueness. Translations that omit key cultural elements or simplify phrases too much can strip the message of its richness and context. For example, failing to explain the cultural significance of a traditional ceremony may leave international audiences confused or unimpressed. As stated by Susanti and Wijaya (2020), clear and culturally rich translations are vital for promoting authentic tourism experiences. Additionally, poor translation can create disconnect between image and caption. On Instagram, the caption is meant to complement the image by providing background information or emotional context. If the language is unclear or awkward, the synergy between text and image is broken, weakening the overall storytelling effect.

Translation errors also affect audience interaction, such as likes, shares, and comments. Content that is easy to understand and emotionally appealing tends to perform better. Posts with awkward or confusing language often receive lower engagement, reducing their effectiveness as promotional tools. This is especially problematic for government-managed platforms that aim to showcase the country's best image to a global audience. Moreover, misinterpretations due to translation errors may lead to misinformation. For example, mistranslating event dates, entrance conditions, or geographical details could result in travelers being misled, causing disappointment or frustration. Such situations damage the reputation not only of the account but also of the destinations being promoted.

Another issue is inconsistency in branding. A nation's tourism campaign needs to present a unified, coherent voice. If the English captions vary in tone, quality, or terminology due to poor translation, it creates an inconsistent branding experience for international readers. This inconsistency weakens the overall impact of the tourism campaign.

Translation errors also have long-term consequences, such as undermining national digital diplomacy efforts. In today's interconnected world, social media platforms serve as unofficial ambassadors. When errors are left uncorrected, they can cumulatively damage Indonesia's international image and reduce the effectiveness of its soft power strategies.

Additionally, translation errors can hinder accessibility for non-native speakers or those relying on second-language English. These readers may already struggle with comprehension, and errors in grammar or word choice further complicate their understanding of the message, thus excluding them from fully engaging with the content. In conclusion, translation errors in @wonderfulindonesia captions negatively affect clarity, persuasiveness, and cultural representation.

These issues reduce engagement, hinder digital visibility, and ultimately weaken the effectiveness of Indonesia's tourism communication. Addressing these errors through professional translation and cultural localization strategies is essential for promoting Indonesia as an attractive and credible global destination.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the English captions from @wonderfulindonesia Instagram posts reveals a variety of translation errors, including grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic mistakes. These errors often result from literal translation approaches and insufficient cultural adaptation. Misuse of idiomatic expressions, awkward word choices, and poor sentence structure contribute to reduced clarity and coherence of the intended message. Such linguistic inaccuracies not only disrupt the readability of the captions but also fail to reflect the richness and appeal of Indonesia's tourism offerings.

Furthermore, these translation errors significantly affect the effectiveness of tourism communication to international audiences. Clarity, emotional engagement, and persuasive power are weakened when captions contain errors or sound unnatural. Audiences may misinterpret the message, lose interest, or question the credibility of the source. Poor translation also damages branding consistency and can lead to negative perceptions of the country's digital identity. Therefore, to maximize the impact of digital tourism promotion, it is essential that captions be translated by professionals who understand both the source and target cultures, ensuring that the language used is not only correct but also compelling and contextually appropriate.

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