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ACCURACY AND MEANING SHIFT IN MACHINE TRANSLATION OF INDONESIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE INTO ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how neural machine translation (NMT) handles Indonesian political posts on X during the 2024 general election. It focuses on translation shifts, which in meaning occur between languages. The research also looks at functional equivalence, or how well a translation preserves the original purpose or effect, and pragmatic force, which is the intended meaning or impact of a statement in context. Catford's (1965) framework is used to classify translation shifts, while Nida and Taber's (1969) concept of functional equivalence and House's (2015) model for assessing translation quality guide the analysis. The study uses a qualitative method to analyze short political posts, which often include cultural references, metaphors, slang, and sarcasm. The dataset consists of 100 pairs of Indonesian and English texts, selected from popular posts and comment threads. The Indonesian texts are compared with their English versions produced by Google Translate. The findings show that unit and structural shifts are most common, especially when sentence structures are standardized or when there is no direct English equivalent for cultural concepts. Functional equivalence is generally maintained in formal political texts that use broad terms. However, informal and emotional posts often lose some meaning and tone, mainly due to word choices and missing cues about meaning or attitude. The analysis also reveals that messages often shift from focusing on relationships or attitudes to simply presenting facts. These changes can make criticism, sarcasm, and political opinions less clear. The study emphasizes the importance of considering context and intent when using NMT to analyze political language across languages.

Keywords: *Neural Machine Translation (NMT), Translation Shifts, Functional Equivalence, Pragmatic Force, Political Discourse, Social Media Analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Indonesian General Election highlights a shift in political communication, with more public debate now taking place on social media rather than in traditional public spaces. X (formerly Twitter) has become a central platform for quick, interactive political conversations that use short messages, everyday language, sarcasm, and context-dependent meanings. Unlike traditional media, which follows editorial guidelines and standard language, political discussions on X often use informal speech, mix languages, and include cultural references that make translation more challenging (KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014; Wodak, 2021).

With growing international interest in Indonesia's democracy, machine translation (MT) tools like Google Translate are increasingly used to track political conversations across languages. Since they can process large amounts of data quickly, MT tools have become important in computational social science and media studies (Boumans & Trilling, 2016; Mohammad, 2022). However, political discussions on social media are difficult for neural machine translation (NMT) to handle because they often include sarcasm, opinions, metaphors,

abbreviations, and local cultural references that go beyond simple sentence meaning (Burchardt et al., 2017; Hovy & Spruit, 2016).

Most MT research has focused on formal domains such as legal, medical, and technical translation, where accuracy and consistency are most important (Koehn, 2020; Castilho et al., 2022). There has been less focus on political social media, where understanding meaning and ideology is crucial. Standard evaluation metrics such as BLEU and METEOR do not capture changes in meaning or attitude in sensitive political texts (Läubli et al., 2018; Freitag et al., 2021). This reveals a gap in how we study shifts in political meaning caused by algorithmic translation, especially on social media. To address this, the study uses Catford's (1965) translation shift framework, Nida and Taber's (1969) functional equivalence approach, and House's (2015) model for assessing translation quality and covert translation. These frameworks are well known in Translation Studies but are rarely applied to neural translation of political microblog posts, making this approach valuable for this research. The study analyzes Indonesian posts and comments on X during the 2024 election. Through qualitative analysis, it examines translation shifts, functional equivalence, and pragmatic force in texts with political neologisms, sarcasm, ideological markers, and evaluative language. By comparing Indonesian texts with their English versions from Google Translate, the study shows how algorithmic translation can change pragmatic force, evaluative meaning, and ideological stance in online political discussions.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Recent translation studies have moved beyond just focusing on formal equivalence and now examine the functional, pragmatic, and social aspects of translation. This change is especially important in technology-driven communication, where translation quality extends beyond mere word accuracy and structure. Catford's (1965) framework helps identify structural shifts between source and target texts, while Nida and Taber's (1969) idea of functional equivalence highlights the need for effective communication. House's (2015) model builds on this by emphasizing pragmatic adequacy and the link between language choices, context, and the text's purpose. Together, these frameworks help us analyze how small language changes affect meaning in important social contexts.

Research shows that translation shifts can be helpful in some genres but may cause misunderstandings in others. For example, Zhang and Li (2024) found that unit shifts in Mandarin–English documentary subtitles are often influenced by space and time constraints, leading to simpler technical terms. Pedersen (2023) also notes that platform restrictions affect how structural shifts are defined. In technical writing, O'Brien et al. (2021) discovered that unit shifts in multilingual instruction manuals can make instructions easier to read, though their real-world effects are not fully known. These studies suggest that structural shifts are not always

problematic; their impact depends on the genre, purpose, and the audience's expectations.

However, in fields where accuracy is especially important, translation shifts can have bigger practical effects. Wu and Huang (2024) found that level shifts in clinical machine translation can obscure cause-and-effect relationships in diagnostic texts, potentially affecting how professionals interpret them. In legal translation, Prieto Ramos (2023) notes that conflicts between formal and functional equivalence can lead to category shifts that alter legal meaning across different regions. Baker and McEnery (2022) also show that inconsistent translations of new technical and financial terms can confuse readers who are not experts. These studies show that when a text has institutional authority or social impact, translation shifts can change not just the wording but also how people understand and use the information.

The situation is even more complicated in political and ideological texts, where meaning often comes from tone, metaphor, irony, and implied viewpoints. Building on House's (2015) focus on pragmatic adequacy, recent research stresses the need to keep the intended force of statements in texts with strong opinions. For example, Kranert (2024) found that if translations of political speech lose this force, they can change how self-image and legitimacy are presented. Similar issues come up in creative and persuasive fields. Mangiron (2023) shows that category shifts in game localization can change how characters are seen, and Valdés (2021) notes that word choices in multilingual ads are often adjusted to balance persuasion and legal rules. While these examples differ from electoral texts, they show that translation shifts can alter tone, emotion, and how audiences connect with the message.

Previous research suggests that translation shifts can be useful in technical or restricted genres but may cause problems in texts where tone, opinion, and meaning are key. However, most studies still focus on formal genres, long texts, or professional translations and pay little attention to short, informal, and politically sensitive social media posts translated by neural machine translation systems. This study addresses that gap by examining how neural MT handles political meaning in Indonesian election-related posts on X, using structural shift analysis, functional equivalence, and pragmatic evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design with a qualitative content analysis approach to examine translation shifts (changes during translation from one language to another) and pragmatic implications (effects on intended meaning and social context) in neural machine translation (NMT) outputs. This approach was selected to enable an in-depth analysis of how structural linguistic changes (modifications in grammar or sentence structure) affect functional equivalence (how well the translation serves the same function as the original), pragmatic force (the intended effect or strength of the message), and ideological positioning (how political or

social perspectives are presented) in digital political communication. Rather than measuring translation accuracy statistically, this study investigates how meaning, interpersonal function, and political stance are reconstructed across Indonesian source texts and English machine-translated outputs.

The data were drawn from Indonesian-language political posts on X directed at Prabowo Subianto's official account during the 2024 Indonesian election campaign and post-campaign period (January–April 2024). The analysis focused on bilingual text pairs: the Indonesian original and its English version as rendered by Google Translate. Using the official political account ensured that the data reflected institutional electoral communication, with special attention to texts on self-image, persuasion, ideological identity, and legitimacy.

Data were collected through purposive sampling based on four criteria. First, texts had to contain political evaluation, ideological positioning, sociocultural terminology, or institutional metaphors. Second, the texts needed non-standard or context-dependent linguistic features. These included colloquial expressions, religious references, cultural terms, metaphors, or implicit evaluative meanings. Third, posts had to demonstrate higher engagement than the account's other posts during the observed period. Engagement was measured by the number of likes, reposts, replies, or comments. Fourth, the selected texts had to produce observable translation shifts or potential pragmatic changes when translated into English using Google Translate. These criteria ensured the analyzed data were both politically and pragmatically salient. The selected texts were also vulnerable to distortions in algorithmic translation.The final dataset comprised 100 Indonesian–English text pairs. Each pair was documented in a source–target table that included categories such as translation shift type, semantic change, pragmatic force, functional equivalence, and ideological implication, supporting systematic analysis and coding.

No human participants were involved; all analysis units were publicly available digital texts. Ethical considerations were observed by preserving communicative context, avoiding unnecessary personal identification, and focusing solely on relevant linguistic and translational features. Identifiable information from ordinary users was excluded unless part of publicly visible institutional discourse.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages aligned with the research questions, with each stage building upon the results of the previous one. The first stage involved identifying structural shifts using Catford's (1965) taxonomy. These shifts included level shifts, structure shifts, class shifts, and unit shifts. This stage aimed to map dominant patterns of linguistic change in the NMT outputs. Building on these mapped patterns, the second stage involved analyzing meaning distortion through semantic comparison of Indonesian source texts and English target texts, with a focus on sociocultural terms, political metaphors, ideological lexicon, and evaluative

expressions. The identified distortions were categorized as cultural meaning loss, evaluative shift, conceptual reduction, or ideological reframing. The final stage, informed by findings from the previous analyses, evaluated pragmatic force using House's (2015) model of translation quality. Particular attention was given to interpersonal function, persuasive force, self-image construction, and symbolic legitimacy. Each translation shift was examined to determine if the illocutionary force of the source text was preserved, weakened, neutralized, or reconstructed in the target text.

To enhance analytical consistency and credibility, all data were coded using a structured coding instrument (a checklist of specific features to identify). This instrument contained linguistic (language-related), semantic (meaning-related), and pragmatic (contextual or effect-based) variables. The coding process was conducted iteratively, allowing categories to be refined as recurring patterns emerged. Analytical reliability was supported through peer checking (validation by other experts) with researchers familiar with translation studies and pragmatics. Differences in interpretation were discussed until consensus was reached. This process aimed to reduce individual interpretive bias and strengthen the credibility of the qualitative findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings by examining how Indonesian political and social media texts are reconstructed in English via Google Translate. The analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions: translation shifts, meaning distortion, and pragmatic force. Instead of treating translation changes solely as linguistic, this section shows how structural changes in the translated text affect functional equivalence, evaluative meaning, interpersonal positioning, and ideological stance. The discussion has four subsections: dominant translation shifts in institutional political discourse, meaning distortion in colloquial and evaluative microtexts, pragmatic force and ideological reframing, and a synthesis of the findings. The data in this section comes from Indonesian source texts and their English machine-translated versions.

1. Dominant Translation Shifts in Institutional Political Discourse

The analysis indicates that unit shifts and structure shifts are the most prominent patterns in the machine translation of Indonesian political discourse into English. These shifts occur particularly in expressions containing sociocultural meanings, institutional metaphors, and political-administrative terminology. The shifts do not function merely as formal linguistic changes. Instead, they affect how political identity, institutional authority, and relational meaning are reconstructed in the target text.

Transcript Data	
SL (Bahasa Indonesia):	**TL (Google Translate):**

Alhamdulillah, hari ini saya berkesempatan kembali bersilaturahmi dengan rekan-rekan Pimpinan Redaksi (Pimred) serta tokoh-tokoh senior media di Padepokan Garuda Yaksa, Hambalang, Bogor, Jawa Barat. Setelah hampir 20 bulan sejak pertemuan terakhir pada 18 Juni 2023, akhirnya hari ini kami kembali bertemu dalam suasana penuh kehangatan dan kebersamaan selama enam jam. Kami berdiskusi dan bertukar pandangan mengenai berbagai isu serta kebijakan strategis, di mana media memegang peran penting sebagai ujung tombak penyampaian informasi yang utuh dan terpercaya kepada masyarakat. Semoga pertemuan ini semakin memperkuat sinergi dan kontribusi media dalam membangun bangsa.	*Alhamdulillah, today I had the opportunity to meet again with fellow Editor-in-Chiefs (Pimred) and senior media figures at the Garuda Yaksa Padepokan, Hambalang, Bogor, West Java. After almost 20 months since the last meeting on June 18, 2023, finally today we met again in an atmosphere full of warmth and togetherness for six hours. We discuss and exchange views on various strategic issues and policies, where the media plays an important role as the spearhead in delivering complete and reliable information to the public. Hopefully this meeting will further strengthen the synergy and contribution of the media in building the nation.*

Table 1 Data 1

Data 2 :

Transcript Data	
SL (Bahasa Indonesia):	**TL (Google Translate):**
Paragraf 1: *Hari ini adalah tonggak sejarah. Setelah hampir 80 tahun, kini tiba saatnya bagi generasi kita untuk mewujudkan visi para pendiri dan pendahulu bangsa memastikan bahwa kekayaan Indonesia dikelola secara optimal dan manfaatnya benar-benar dirasakan untuk peningkatan kesejahteraan rakyat.* ***Paragraf 2:*** *Danantara bukan sekadar badan pengelola investasi. Lebih dari itu, Danantara harus menjadi instrumen pembangunan nasional yang mampu mengoptimalkan pengelolaan kekayaan Indonesia dengan standar transparansi dan akuntabilitas yang tinggi.* ***Paragraf 3:*** *Kita memasuki era baru di mana BUMN beroperasi dengan standar tertinggi dan tata kelola terbaik. BUMN harus mengedepankan inovasi, visi besar, transparansi, serta kemajuan teknologi, sambil tetap menjaga disiplin, kehati-hatian, dan komitmen terhadap tata kelola yang baik serta pengelolaan yang bertanggung jawab.* ***Paragraf 4:*** *Danantara adalah solusi strategis dan efisien dalam optimalisasi BUMN. Dengan menginvestasikan dividen BUMN ke industri-industri yang mendorong pertumbuhan jangka panjang dan penciptaan lapangan kerja, Danantara akan menjadi pilar utama dalam mewujudkan Indonesia yang lebih maju dan berdaya saing global.*	***Paragraph 1:*** *Today is a milestone. After almost 80 years, now is the time for our generation to realize the vision of the founders and predecessors of the nation to ensure that Indonesia's wealth is managed optimally and its benefits are truly felt for improving the welfare of the people.* ***Paragraph 2:*** *Danantara is not just an investment management agency. More than that, Danantara must become a national development instrument that is able to optimize the management of Indonesia's wealth with high standards of transparency and accountability.* ***Paragraph 3:*** *We are entering a new era where SOEs operate with the highest standards and best governance. SOEs must prioritize innovation, big vision, transparency, and technological advancement, while maintaining discipline, prudence, and commitment to good governance and responsible management.* ***Paragraph 4:*** *Danantara is a strategic and efficient solution in optimizing BUMN. By investing BUMN dividends into industries that drive long-term growth and job creation, Danantara will be a key pillar in realizing a more advanced and globally competitive Indonesia.*

Table 2 Data 2

The analysis shows that unit shift and structure shift are the dominant patterns in the translation of digital political discourse. These shifts most often appear in sociocultural lexicon and institutional metaphors.

SL	**TL**	**Shift Type**	**Functional Impact**
bersilaturahmi	meet again with	Unit shift	Reduction of cultural-religious meaning

media memegang peran penting	the media plays an important role	Structure shift	Informational stability, but more institutional
ujung tombak	spearhead	Structure shift	Shift in metaphorical nuance

Table 3 Translation Shifts in Sociocultural Political Discourse

In the first dataset, the expression bersilaturahmi is translated as meet again. This translation demonstrates a unit shift because a culturally dense Indonesian term is reconstructed into a more general English phrase. Although the propositional meaning of meeting is retained, the cultural-religious value embedded in *silaturahmi* is reduced. In Indonesian political discourse, bersilaturahmi does not simply refer to meeting someone; it implies relational maintenance, respect, social harmony, and, in some contexts, religiously inflected interpersonal ethics. The English translation, therefore, preserves the informational content but weakens the affective and sociocultural dimension of the source text.

A similar pattern can be observed in the translation of media *memegang peran penting*, as the media plays an important role. The translation is structurally acceptable and semantically stable, but it normalizes the expression into a more institutional register. The source text conveys a relational, collaborative tone, especially given its broader context of political engagement with senior media figures. In the target text, this relational nuance is only partially maintained, as the expression becomes more formal and administrative.

The metaphor *ujung tombak*, translated as spearhead, shows a relatively successful metaphorical transfer. However, the translation still slightly changes the rhetorical nuance. In Indonesian, ujung tombak is a common political and institutional metaphor that emphasizes strategic centrality, frontline responsibility, and collective contribution. The English term spearhead captures the idea of leadership or leading force, but it may sound more aggressive or militarized depending on the target-language context. This indicates that metaphorical equivalence is not only a matter of lexical matching but also of pragmatic resonance.

In the second dataset concerning *Danantara and BUMN*, the translation shifts are less disruptive. Terms such as badan pengelola investasi, transparansi, akuntabilitas, tata kelola, and pertumbuhan jangka panjang are rendered into relatively stable English equivalents. This suggests that NMT performs more reliably when the source text uses formal, institutional, and globally circulated terminology. In such cases, the translation maintains the core conceptual meaning because the lexicon of economic governance and development policy is more standardized across languages.

Overall, the findings suggest that NMT is relatively stable in translating formal institutional discourse but less stable when the source text depends on culturally embedded relational meanings. The most significant shifts do not necessarily occur at the level of basic propositional content, but at the level of cultural density, interpersonal orientation, and rhetorical

nuance.

2. Meaning Distortion in Colloquial and Evaluative Microtexts

Meaning distortion in the data rarely results from factual mistranslation. Instead, it appears as shifts in evaluation, affect, stance, or morality. This is clear in social media texts, where meaning comes from pragmatic particles, intensifiers, informal words, and cultural expressions. Google Translate often normalizes these, making the translation understandable but losing evaluative and interpersonal effects.

Data 1 :

Transcript Data	
SL (Bahasa Indonesia):	**TL (Google Translate):**
TOLONG BANTU REPORT 🙏 Aku ga ikhlas bgt video aku di ss dan dipost tanpa izin ku trus dijadiin bahan post org lain. Kenapa sih jadi orang suka bgt ngurusin tubuh orang lain?	*PLEASE HELP REPORT 🙏: I really can't stand my video being ssed and posted without my permission and then used as material for other people's posts. Why do people like to care about other people's bodies so much?*

Table 4 Data 1 Meaning Distortion

Data 2 :

Transcript Data	
SL (Bahasa Indonesia):	**TL (Google Translate):**
💚 *AJAKAN UNTUK AKSI Mari perjuangkan hak kita, untuk umum juga boleh, karena kemungkinan besar CPNS 2025 ditiadakan juga. PPPK 2024 dan CPNS 2024 jangan diam lihat kezoliman di depan mata. Tidak ada p4ndemi tapi pengangkatan secara sepihak dibatalkan!!*	💚 *CALL TO ACTION Let's fight for our rights, for the public too, because it is likely that CPNS 2025 will also be abolished. PPPK 2024 and CPNS 2024 should not remain silent when seeing injustice before our eyes. There is no p4ndemi but the unilateral appointment is cancelled!!*

Table 5 Data 2 Meaning Distortion

SL	**TL**	**Distortion Type**	**Pragmatic Effect**
ga ikhlas bgt	I really can't stand	Evaluative shift	Weakening of moral demands
Kenapa sih…	Why do people…	Interpersonal reduction	Social criticism is weakening
ngurusin	care about	Reversal of connotation	From negative → positive

In the personal complaint data, the phrase *ga ikhlas bgt* is translated as I really can't stand. Both phrases convey emotional discomfort, but their impact differs. In Indonesian, ga ikhlas bgt goes beyond mere irritation and expresses moral disapproval, especially when someone uses someone else's content without permission. It points to a sense of violated rights and emotional injustice. On the other hand, I really can't stand sounds more like a personal reaction. So, the translation changes the meaning from a complaint based on morals to a more personal feeling of annoyance.

The rhetorical question *Kenapa sih jadi orang suka bgt ngurusin tubuh orang lain?* also loses strength in translation. The words sih and suka bgt ngurusin show the speaker's frustration and social criticism. In English, why do people like to care about other people's bodies so much? keeps the question but sounds less confrontational and critical. Also, ngurusin has a negative

meaning of being intrusive, while care about can sound positive or caring. This changes the meaning, making the criticized behavior seem less intrusive and possibly more acceptable in English.

In the political appeal data, changes happen when the mobilizing language is translated. The phrase *Mari perjuangkan hak kita* becomes Let's fight for our rights. While this is a common translation, the word 'fight' can make the message sound more confrontational. In Indonesian, perjuangkan can mean working together for rights and solidarity, not always in conflict. The English version, though, can make it seem more aggressive. This shows that translation can sometimes make a political message stronger, not just weaker.

Another example is translating *ditiadakan* as abolished. In Indonesian, ditiadakan can mean an administrative cancellation or removal, but abolished sounds much stronger and more final in English. This change makes the issue seem more officially or permanently ended than the original wording suggests.

The spelling *p4ndemi* is another challenge. In the original text, this spelling change might be used online to avoid moderation, signal distrust, or signal resistance to official messages. If this spelling is kept in translation without explanation, its meaning is unclear. Readers may notice the odd spelling but not understand what it means in Indonesian digital conversations.

These findings show that NMT is better at preserving the basic meaning of words than their emotional or social meanings. In casual or emotional texts, changes often happen because important words or tones are lost, meanings are reversed, strong feelings are weakened, or political messages are changed. So, the main issue is not that Google Translate completely fails, but that it often changes or softens the social and moral messages in the original language.

3. Pragmatic Force and Ideological Reframing

An analysis of pragmatic force shows that NMT works differently depending on the type of language used. In formal institutional settings, pragmatic force is usually preserved because the original text uses clear rhetorical structures and familiar political terms. However, in more casual or sarcastic language, pragmatic meaning is often lost since it relies on implied meanings, shared cultural knowledge, and social cues.

Data 1 :

Transcript Data	
SL (Bahasa Indonesia):	**TL(Google Translate):**
Prabowo: Koreksi Saya Bila Ada Tanda Tidak Setia kepada Rakyat.	*Prabowo: Correct Me If There Are Signs of Disloyalty to the People.*

Table 6 Data 1

Data 2 :

Transcript Data	
SL (Bahasa Indonesia):	**TL (Google Translate):**
sama2 hobi bacot sama2 produk tukang kayu	*both have the same hobby of talking nonsense, both are carpentry products*

Table 7 Data 2

SL	TL	Pragmatic Status	Interpretation
Koreksi Saya Bila Ada Tanda Tidak Setia kepada Rakyat	Correct Me If There Are Signs of Disloyalty to the People	Preserved	Accountable self-image is maintained
sama2 hobi bacot sama2 produk tukang kayu	both have the same hobby of talking nonsense, both are carpentry products	Lost	Sarcasm and delegitimization collapse

In the institutional phrase *Koreksi Saya Bila Ada Tanda Tidak Setia kepada Rakyat*, meaning Correct Me If There Are Signs of Disloyalty to the People, the primary pragmatic force is preserved. This statement invites correction and presents the speaker as accountable and humble. The English version maintains the intent, focus on public loyalty, and openness to criticism. Since the rhetorical structure is similar in both languages, the translation creates a comparable effect for readers.

However, the outcome changes when sarcasm is involved. The phrase *sama2 hobi bacot* sama2 produk tukang kayu is translated as both have the same hobby of talking nonsense, both are carpentry products. While the translation keeps some of the original words, it does not capture the source's sarcastic, undermining tone. The term *hobi bacot* is more than just saying someone talks too much; it is mocking and informal, and it can threaten someone's reputation. The phrase *"produk tukang kayu"* is a metaphor that makes sense only in its cultural context. When translated word-for-word as carpentry products, it sounds strange and loses its intended meaning.

This example shows sarcasm may fail when translated literally. The target text makes sense, but it loses the sarcasm. The translation is awkward and lacks ridicule, viewpoint, or social criticism. Readers may not notice the mockery or strong tone. The audience connection is weaker due to a lack of cultural context. The issue is not just word choice—the translation does not retain the social action the utterance performs.

In summary, the analysis shows that in translations of political social media, meaning alone is not enough. NMT can miss the deeper impact of informal, sarcastic, or emotional language. Effective quality assessment must include not just accuracy but also the successful transfer of intent, viewpoint, and audience connection. Without this, key political effects may be lost.

4. Synthesis of Finding

The findings show that NMT performance is primarily influenced by genre, register, and

pragmatic density. Formal and institutional political texts are translated more stably, due to standardized terminology, explicit syntax, and widely recognized concepts. In these cases, translation shifts occur but usually do not cause major functional changes.

By contrast, informal, sarcastic, and culturally embedded microtexts are more vulnerable to meaning distortion and pragmatic weakening. The core finding is that the most significant problems occur not in basic information transfer but in preserving evaluative meaning, interpersonal stance, and ideological positioning. Specifically, expressions involving moral complaint, sarcasm, political mobilization, and culturally specific metaphors are frequently normalized, softened, intensified, or rendered opaque in the target language.

The findings, therefore, suggest that translation shifts in NMT should not be treated as purely structural phenomena. In politically sensitive digital discourse, even small lexical or syntactic changes can affect how speakers construct authority, criticize others, mobilize audiences, or position themselves ideologically. However, these effects should be understood within the limits of the analyzed dataset rather than generalized to all NMT behavior. The evidence indicates that Google Translate can provide a useful initial rendering of Indonesian political discourse, but its outputs require pragmatic validation when used for cross-linguistic political monitoring, media analysis, or discourse interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the performance of neural machine translation (NMT) in translating Indonesian political and social discourse on X is strongly shaped by domain, register, and pragmatic density. Drawing on Catford's (1965) framework, the findings reveal that unit shifts and structure shifts are the dominant patterns, particularly in the translation of sociocultural lexicon, institutional metaphors, and syntactically normalized target texts. These shifts function as technical mechanisms for bridging interlingual gaps; however, they may also reconstruct relational, evaluative, and ideological meanings in the target language.From the perspective of Nida and Taber's (1969) functional equivalence, equivalent effect is relatively maintained in formal and institutional discourse characterized by universal terminology, explicit rhetorical structure, and normative register. In such contexts, NMT is able to preserve political legitimacy, institutional self-image, and core propositional meaning. Conversely, in colloquial, sarcastic, and affective microtexts, functional equivalence is more vulnerable to disruption due to lexical normalization, connotative shifts, and the omission of pragmatic markers.In line with House's (2015) concern with pragmatic adequacy, the analysis further indicates a recurrent shift from interpersonal to referential function in informal texts. This shift may weaken criticism, reduce sarcasm, obscure moral stance, and neutralize ideological positioning. Therefore, the findings suggest that NMT should not be evaluated only in terms of lexical accuracy or grammatical acceptability, particularly

when applied to politically sensitive digital discourse.Theoretically, this study extends shift-based and functionalist approaches to the context of algorithmically mediated translation in social media discourse. Practically, it highlights the need for pragmatically informed validation when NMT is used for cross-linguistic political monitoring, media analysis, or public sentiment interpretation. However, this study is limited to 100 Indonesian-English text pairs taken from political discourse on X during the 2024 Indonesian election period. Future research may expand the dataset, compare multiple NMT systems, include other language pairs, or combine qualitative pragmatic analysis with corpus-based and user-response methods.

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