Translation within Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

Cultural untranslatability poses one of the most difficult challenges for translators. No single culture is exactly similar to one another because the culture itself is affected by a large number of factors. Culture in one region can hardly be found in another region. The culture is reflected in a language and this is where cultural untranslatability occurs. Language is an inseparable aspect between culture and translation process where the culture serves as a critical aspect in forming a language. In other words, culture cannot be separated from the process of translation. Culture is a part of human life that appears in our daily lives in the forms of words, actions, or certain habits. As a means of communication, language is used by interlocutors for the purpose of exchanging information, minds, ideas, experiences, feelings, and others. When communicating, people reflect various perspectives and norms applicable in their community. Translation as a form of communication not only faces linguistic obstacles but also cultural obstacles. The process of translation can be carried out depending on its translatability level. The translatability of a text is determined by (A) similarities or differences in the structure of the SL and TL; (b) levels of contacts of both languages; (c) levels of similarities between SL and TL; (d) the meanings underlying the production of translated text. Practical implications caused by the cultural gap is reflected in the application of a certain strategy or procedure in translation. Notwithstanding that there are various applicable alternatives, there is one equivalence method highly determined by the typological closeness of language and cultural differences between the source and the target language. There is a tendency of meaning equivalence model culture context from Indonesian into English, namely: (1) Borrowing; (2) decentralization and (3) adaptation or cultural substitution.

Keywords: culture, translation, translatability, borrowing, deculturalization, adaptation.

Introduction

Language as an inseparable aspect between culture and the process of translation cannot set aside culture as an important aspect in forming a language. In other words, language is the product of a culture itself. Culture is a part of human life that we can find in daily life in the forms of words, actions, or certain habits. Language reflects a culture of a certain region and shapes the mindset and the way of life of its users. A translator must consider this cultural aspect in each of his translation processes as the culture reflected in the source language may differ significantly in the target language. If the translation is not performed by considering such an important aspect, then it is highly unlikely that the translation is acceptable.

Culture poses a challenge for a translator when it comes to translating a text. Culture as an important aspect of human life is aimed to regulate behavior systematically. Source language can have a culture that may not exist in the target language. Or, culture in the source language has some similarities with the culture in the target language. The term frequently used to describe this problem is a cultural equivalence. One of the tasks of a translator is to find proper equivalence for a message or information contained in the source language. This often what makes The process of translation it difficult. To deal with this difficulty, a translator may do his work by considering the culture and the context in order to get the meaning in the source language delivered completely without subtracting any single meaning. Below are several words with strong cultural elements along with their translation examples.

Translation holds a key role in the present especially in the era of globalization. Translation is an access to the innovation of science and technology (SCIENTECH) and serves as a media to introduce and appreciate cross-cultures. Globalization with its characteristics of openness, competition and interdependence among nations have made the translation as an important and necessary communication media in the years to come. Advances in science, technology and art sourced from references in foreign languages and the introduction of regional and national culture in foreign languages to the world civilization have made translation and translation studies a complex matter. However, despite the difficulties and the complexity of the problems and the process of translation, the importance of translation in transferring science and technology especially for developing countries has gained recognition and felt by various parties. In addition to that, this study is aimed at the following objectives:

1. Translation as an important communication media in the future
2. The importance of translation in knowledge advances.
3. To investigate the relationship between language and culture in translation.
4. To investigate translation within a cultural context and to investigate what cultures are reflected in translation.

The present study is also aimed to:

1. Add insights about cultural perspective in translation.
2. Attract other researchers to further explore the translation process from a cultural perspective.
3. Translation is important in knowledge advances.

4. Add insights about translation reviewed from a cultural perspective.

II Theoretical Studies and Discussion

I. Cultural Concept in Translation

•   The process of translation is the disclosure of a meaning communicated in the source language into the target language.

•   General features in a translation include:

(A) language transfer (SL-TL); (b) *content* transfer; and (c) finding equivalences that maintain its original features.

Language is part of the culture, therefore translation is not only be understood as form transfer and meaning transfer but also culture. Translation as a form of communication not only faces linguistic obstacles but also cultural obstacles. The process of translation can be carried out depending on its translatability. The translatability of a text is determined by:

(A) similarities or differences in the structure of SL and TL;
(B) levels of contacts of both languages;
(C) levels of similarities between SL and TL;
(D) meanings underlying the production of translated texts.

In the process of translation, it is quite difficult to find lexical equivalence. A target language used by a speaker with his own culture is often different from other speakers' culture (source language). This cultural differences according to Nida (1964) and Larson (1988) can be solved through *adjustment*. The relationship between cultural and linguistic aspects is intertwined. The sustainability of both of these aspects is interdependent on each other.

LANGUAGE EXPERTS OPINION

o   The content of every culture is not only revealed in its language. (Edward Sapir)

o   The mutual relationship does not only occur between mind and language but also between language and culture, between language and ethnic behavior as well as between language and changes that occur in the culture. (Boas)

o   Such a strong cultural tie to language reflects the cultural richness or destitution through language. (Bloomfield)

Culture in a language is not only reflected in the levels of vocabulary but also on a wider level such as a rhetorical aspect. (Wahab)

I. The concept of translation within a cultural perspective

Translation is not only understood as a linguistic, forms and meaning transfers but also cultural transfer. Translation does not only face linguistic obstacles but also cultural obstacles. Translation is not merely how to search for words or other expressions that have

the equivalents but to find appropriate ways to express things in other languages. Culturally contextualized meaning is tied to language texture.

For example:
Source language: Pecel
Target language: *Salad*

Pecel is a traditional food which is made of raw vegetables and spices. This food is quite popular in rural areas and is commonly consumed without rice. The salad is food which is made of a variety of raw vegetables and has gained popularity in other countries. Both of these foods reflect the culture in its respective language. The ingredients and the concept of making that food are relatively alike. To facilitate the process of translation, a translator can translate the word "pecel" into "salad" without detracting the meaning.

Another example :
Source language: Shalat
Target language: *Prayer*

Salat (Bahasa Indonesia) is a standard form of the word that describes compulsory acts of worship for every Muslim which must be performed five times a day. The word "Salat" itself is derived from the Arabic word which means to perform prayers and this word is absorbed in Bahasa into "salat". In English vocabulary, there is no word "salat". However, "salat" can be understood as an act of worship in which a servant worships and prays to the Lord. Therefore, "salat" is a special word for an act of worship which is only obligated to Muslims. A translator can use the word "*prayer*" to translate the word "salat".

A translator must be aware of the two different cultures and be able to make the readers outside the source language culture to understand the translated text. The cultural implication in translation can be *lexical content* and syntax as well as an ideology and *way of life* in a particular culture. It is very important for the translator to consider not only the lexical impact on target reader but also how cultural aspects in the source language can be understood, for instance:

1) Basic words such as *tidur (sleep), makan (eat), mati (die), bintang (star)* and even nouns such as meja (*table)* or cermin (*mirror)* are universal that when they are translated, these words cause no problems since all cultures have the language to express those concepts.

2) But the words such as *ngaben"* and "*banjar"* have cultural aspects (only belongs to the culture of Hindu society of Bali) which make it difficult and complex to translate into another language due to differences in understanding the concepts.

Translation is an attempt to transfer the mandate from the source language by finding an equivalence, i.e. a form in the target language viewed from the semantics aspect must be in accordance with the form in the source language. Translation does not merely eliminate inequivalence gap by finding other words which have similar definitions but rather to find appropriate ways to express things in other languages.

1. A concept in a specific language may not necessarily belong to other languages, for example:

✓ The concept of "TELUBULANAN" in Balinese will never be found its equivalent in English, even in the closest language concept such as that of Javanese can not be found.

2. A number of similar concepts in one language have a *different* linguistic sign. For example:

✓ The concept of "*SEPAK BOLA*" in British English is "*football*" but in American English, it is *"soccer"*.

3. On the contrary, similar concepts owned by two languages are not necessarily stated in one linguistic *sign* or differentiated.

For example:

✓ The concept of "RICE" in English is not differentiated but in bahasa, it has a linguistic *sign alternative* "padi", "gabah or "beras" in the cultural domain (agriculture) and "nasi" in the food domain.

✓ The concept of "SALJU (SNOW)" which is not known in Arabic is highly differentiated in the Eskimo language.

4. In translation theory, a common issue faced by translators is *ambiguity*. For example:

✓ *He is a book worm*, which in bahasa Indonesia has 3 meanings, namely:

> a.'Dia (laki-laki) adalah sebuah/seorang cacing buku'.
>
> b. 'Dia (adalah) orang yang suka membaca buku'.
>
> c. 'Dia kutu buku'.

The English phrase "*book worm" can not be literally translated* into "Dia (Adalah) (Seorang/ seekor) cacing buku" in bahasa Indonesia. From point of view of logical perspective, there is no relationship between "Dia (He) and cacing (worm) (or both can be equated) in the source text.

The contextual meaning of the phrase "*book worm"* is 'orang yang suka membaca buku (someone who likes to read a book)' (as in transla*tion* b). Cultural equivalent of the English phrase "*book worms"* in the above example is 'kutu buku (a geek)' since the linguistic culture in Indonesia forsimilar expression is expressed as 'kutu buku' (as in translation c) instead of 'cacing buku'.

Practical implications caused by cultural gap is reflected in the choice of certain strategies or procedures in translation.

Notwithstanding that there are various applicable alternatives, there is one equivalence method highly determined by typological closeness of language and cultural differences between the source and the target language.

There is a tendency of an equivalence model culturally contextualized from Indonesian into English, namely:

(1) *Borrowing*,

For example:

> SL : Ia mengerti. Shamans have already started to invited to smite his heart.

> **TL : She knew what was happening, They had asked <u>a dukun - a medicine man -</u> to try to influence her feelings.**

> SL : Dulu, mati ditabrak di jalan raya memang aib besar. Peristiwa semacam itu disebut *mati salah pati.*

> **TL : In earlier times, to be killed on the roads was a terrible misfortune. There was even a special term for it: <u>Mati Salah Pati – Death by Misfortune</u>.**

(2) *Deculturalization*

Deculturalization can be defined as an activity to transfer the meaning of cultural context in the source language by neutralizing or generalizing these words or using *culture free words* and sometimes using new specific expressions.

<u>For example:</u>

> SL : Perempuan dan anak-anak gadis berkerumun di ledeng umum mengambil air. Perkumpulan gong di <u>balai banjar</u> .

> **TL: The women and children who crowded around the public water-tap to get water, groups playing the gamelan in the <u>neighborhood meeting halls.</u>**

(3)   Adaptation or cultural substitution

This translation technique aims to replace cultural elements of the source language with cultural elements that have similar characteristics in the target language and the cultural elements should be familiar to target reader.

For example:
The phrase "*as white as snow"* for example is replaced with "**seputih kapas"**, instead of "*seputih salju".*

Cultural untranslatability poses one of the most difficult challenges for translators. No single culture is exactly similar to one another because the culture itself is affected by a large number of factors. Culture in one region can hardly be found in another region. The culture is reflected in a language and this is where cultural untranslatability occurs. Below are several examples Of Cultural Untranslatability In Some Contexts.

Conclusions

1. Translation does not merely involve linguistic transfer, or transfer of meaning but also involves a cultural transfer.

2. According to the linguistic experts, Boaz and Edward Sapir, language and culture cannot be separated as language exists as a result of culture.

3. Practical implications posed by the cultural gap between SL and the culture in TL leads to translation strategies that tend to follow the pattern:

   1) The more abstract the source language cultural entity is and the more foreign (unknown) the concept of the source language in the target language is, the more the borrowing strategy is used in the target language;
   2) The more concrete the meaning/concept in the source language and the more known/shared the meaning/concept in the source language by the target speakers, the more the strategy of adaption and explication is used.

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