

Cultural Transfer and Procedures in Poetic Translation

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing cultural transfer and procedures applied in poetic translation. Literary works, especially poem is written for aesthetic value of the language expressions from the authors to the readers. In translation of a poem there are several matters should be concerned such as: the transfer of image, theme, and the figure of speech from SL (source language) poem to the TL (target language) poem and cultural background of the SL in order to retain the message of SL in the TL. While on one hand the equivalence of the figure of speech of SL may be expressed by figure of speech in TL and in another may be not; this is due to the differences of cultural background of SL and the TL.

The data were taken from an Indonesian Poem that portrays Balinese cultural background entitled '*Namaku Dirah*' and its translation in English '*My Name is Dirah the Witch*'. The theory applied is theory of translation proposed by Newmark (1988: 81-111) related to culture and procedures of translation. The research is qualitative and the data were analysed descriptively. The findings show that the translator applied the procedures of expansion, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, modulation and some combination of the procedures in transferring cultural aspects of the poem.

Key words: translation, literature, poetic, cultural transfer, and procedure

1. Introduction

Literary works (prose, poem and fiction) regarded as art forms of writing which convey the writers' idea to the readers. They use various kinds of connotative meanings associated to the works in order to create the imaginations of the readers to perceive them as a real life situation. Poem as one forms of literary works it has dense message conveys by the writer in an aesthetics way in limited words. Newmark (1988:163) states that poetry is a personal and concentrated form of writing with no redundancy, where as a unit the word has greater important than in any other type of text 'and poetry presents to convey the feeling in particular, the behaviour as well as the view of life.

Translation involves the transfer of meaning of the SL to the equivalent meaning of TL, the translator tries to find the closest equivalents for each word, phrase and sentence in the target language. Newmark (1981: 7) emphasizes that "translation is a craft in which the translator tries to substitute a written message in the source language for another written message in the target language." He also adds, during the act of translation, translator must take into account a number of constraints such as context, the syntactic rules of the two languages, their writing conventions, and the figurative language of them. Beside language which is the significant issue, there are other important elements involved in the act of translation such as the creativity of the translator, faithfulness, choice of words, form, content and etc.

In poetic translation, the emphasize lies on the artistic and the subjective side. In order to find equivalent image of the original poem in the TL, therefore trans-creation, transformation, and transposition form an important role in it. The outcome not only the semantic information of the original poem conveyed but also its aesthetic information including the shape, the construction and the aesthetic state of it.

This research deals with translation of a poem entitled *'Namaku Dirah'* from Indonesian in which it portrays Balinese cultural background into English *'My Name is Dirah the Witch'*. The poem is a narrative poem comprises of seven stanzas and sixty four lines. Viewing the translation of the title, the translator had modified the title by adding the NP *the witch*. This is done due to the SL the name *Dirah* is well known as a widow who can spell magic on other person, to cover the image and sense of the original title of the poem in the TL.

2. Problems of Study

Based on the background of study this paper discusses two problems in poetic translation:

- a) What are the cultural specific terms found in the poems and their equivalent from Indonesian into English?
- b) What are the procedures of translation applied in defining the equivalences from Indonesian into English?

3. Literary Review and Theoretical Framework

Several previous researches are reviewed in order to get better understanding of the study under concerned and the theory that is applied in the analysis of the data of the research are discussed in the following section.

3.1 Literary Review

In regards to the approaches applied in this study, several literatures are reviewed related to previous studies on poetic translations. Those studies are from:

(1) Chan (2003) on her Article *'Some Crucial Issues on the Translation of Poetic Discourse from Chinese to English'* discusses the analysis of Chinese poems translated into English. In her analysis she describes that equivalence at word level including word for word relationship, propositional meaning, expressive meaning, and evoke meaning as well as the strategies dealing with non-equivalence. At word level as the smallest unit that holds an individual meaning. If inexperienced translator tends to find the exact word of SL in the TL, but there is hardly any one-to-one relationship between words meaning (Baker, 1992:11). Propositional meaning of a word or an utterance arises from relationship it and what it refers to. Related to expressive meaning she found out that the same propositional may have different expressive meaning as an example the English *'famous'* and *'notorious'* both meaning *'well-known'* the former conveys positive expression but the later negative. Evoked meaning occurs from dialect and register variation, the English say *'lift'* and the Americans say *'elevator'*.

The strategies dealing with non-equivalence at word level related to culture-specific concepts, SL concept is not lexicalized in TL, and SL word is semantically complex are: can be done by substitution, translation need to rephrase it using transformation technique or transformation by rephrasing, addition and creation.

(2) Aiwei (2005) on her article *'Translatability and Poetic Translation'*, states that translators who translate poems or literary works have different concern in dealing with the work of translation. She compares the type of scientific text and literary text; the former has denotative adequacy, logical expository, argumentative progression, precision, intellect, reason and truth to particular and the later has unbridled connotation, lack of argumentative progression, vagueness, imagination or intuition, emotion and truth to the ideal and universal. She describes that the function of literary translation as aesthetic value, it means the target receiver takes the translators interpretation for the intention of the sender (writer). In order to achieve the faithfulness of the intention there are some prerequisites should be done by the translator; the interpretation should be identical to the sender's intention, the sender intention should be verbalized in such a way that the target text is able to achieve the same function as the target culture, the target receiver should understand the text world of translation in the same way as the source receiver understood the text world of the original, and the effect of the translation has on its readers should be the same as the source text has on its readers.

(3) Kolahi (2012), on his article entitled 'Application of Lefevre's Seven Strategies in English Translation of Sohrab Sepehri's Poems' states that in analysing poetic translation the application of the seven strategies proposed by Lefevre is inclusive enough since they cover all poetic features: formal and contextual. The seven strategies are: (1) phonemic translation: reproducing the SL sound in the TL, (2) literal translation: word for word translation, (3) metrical translation: reproducing the SL meter, (4) verse to prose: distorting the sense, communicative values and syntax of the SL, (5) Rhymed translation: transferring the rhyme of the original poem into target language, (6) Blank/free verse translation: finding just the proper equivalent in the TL with a proper semantic result, and (7) interpretation: version and imitation. Version occurs when the absent of SL text is retained and the form is changed. Imitation occurs when the translator produces the poem of his/her own. From the analysis for three translators works in the translation Sohrab Sepehri's Poems; he found out that: none of the translator applied strategy 1st (phonemic translation), the 2nd strategy (literal translation) are the most chosen by the translators, the 3rd strategy was the less frequent due to the Sohrab poems do not have fix meter. The 4th strategy named poetry into prose translation, is the fourth frequent used by the translators, in this strategy the translation product is fairly elegant in language, as it is closer to the SL and it is liberated from the limitation of word for word strategy. The fifth strategy was not apply due to Sohrab Sepehri's Poems are free -rhymed. The sixth strategy is the second frequent used strategy - blank/ free verse translation, this strategy could be a good proper choice for translator because by applying it the translation can have accurate equivalent in the TL.

The reviewed literatures above are used as guidance to the analysis of this writing; some of the ideas in regards to the analysis are related though some differences are also occurred.

3.2 Theoretical framework

In this study the theory proposed by Newmark (1988) was applied to analyse the equivalent, he proposed several procedures related to cultural bounded literary works those procedures are:

- a. Transference when the translator has to decide whether or not to transfer a word unfamiliar in the TL, which in principle should be a SL culture word whose referent is peculiar to TL culture. In this stage the translator transfer the SL word in TL normally when related to cultural object or concept related to small group should be transferred.
- b. Naturalization is a procedure succeeds transference and adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation then the normal morphology (word form) of the TL.
- c. Cultural equivalent is an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word.
- d. Functional Equivalent this is common procedure applied to cultural word, requires the use of culture-free word, sometimes with a new specific term; it therefore naturalises or generalises the SL word.
- e. Descriptive equivalent, in translation description has to be weigh against it function. Thus for *machete*, the description is a 'Latin American broad, heavy instrument, the function is cutting or aggression; description and function are combined in 'knife.
- f. Synonymy is a procedure used in the sense of the near equivalent to a SL word in a context, or when a SL word has no clear one-to one equivalent in the TL. A translator cannot do without synonymy; he has to make do with it as a compromise in order to translate more important part of the text.
- g. Shift (Catford's term) or transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet) is a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar of SL to TL. One type the change from singular to plural example English to French 'furniture' to 'des meubles'
- h. Modulation as defined by Vinay and Darbelnet is a procedure to define variation through change of point of view, or perspective and often of category thought.
- i. Compensation is said to happen when loss of meaning, sound effect, metaphor or pragmatic effect in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part, or in a contiguous sentence.
- j. Paraphrase is an amplification or explanation of the meaning segment of the text. It is used in an 'anonymous' text when it is poorly written, or has important implication and omission.
- k. Couplet is couplet, triplet, and quadruplet's combine of two, three or four the above mentioned procedures.

Newmark (1981:104-108) states that in relation to translation of metaphors (include figurative expressions), the transfer of sense of particular words, personification of abstraction, a word or collocation to what is not literally denoted, to describe one thing for another, all polysemous words and most phrasal verbs are potentially metaphorical words. He also emphasizes that in poems translation the tendency of metaphor exists to give a commutative effect which needs particular perception. The meaning of the SL metaphor should be understood by the translator before it is being transferred to TL. In line with metaphor translation Newmark (1988) proposed some procedure can be applied, i.e.: (1) reproducing the image in the TL, (2) replacing the image in the TL with the standard form of TL, (3) translating metaphor to simile, (4) translating metaphor to simile with sense, (5) conversion of metaphor with sense, (6) using the same metaphor combined with sense and (7) deletion.

In translating metaphor, the translator can transfer the meaning with the possible procedure that can be applied and adjusted to the cultural background of the TL. The main problem that is faced by him/her lies on the word meaning. There is no exact equivalent of word from one language to another, so the transfer of word meaning from SL to TL can be avoided by the existence of shift of meaning, extension, narrowed meaning, up to total changes related to figure of speech which often occurs in poem. This is due to each language using different reference for figure of speech which has the same meaning. As in the English idiom *'don't cry over a spilled milk'*, this idiom in Indonesian is equivalent to *'nasi telah menjadi bubur'*. In which both idioms in English and in Indonesian have the same meaning that is: *it is no need to regret of what had happened*.

4. Discussion and Result

In regards to the discussion of the data from the SL poem to the TL poem, the analysis of the meaning of each stanza and lines are explored in terms of their equivalent transfer in the TL related to cultural terms and the application of procedures. The discussions are divided into several categories as the following. The poem was written by Cokorda Istri Sawitri and translated by Vern Cork (2000) an Australian who lives in Bali. The poem is a narrative which represents the complaint of a widow to the situation she is blamed about.

4.1 Cultural Specific Words and Their Equivalents

The cultural specific words found in the SL poem, related in the title of the poem *'Dirah'* in Balinese culture is a name well-known for a widow who can spell magic on others, the translator converted the word *Dirah* by paraphrasing it as an amplification in order to keep the sense of the message carries in SL to the TL. The title *'Namaku Dirah'* is transferred into *'My name is Dirah the Witch'*. The paraphrase of the *'Dirah'* to *Dirah the Witch* gives certain impression to the reader in TL culture that *'Dirah'* is not a common name but it has a specific intention in mentioning the name. In this transfer the translator applies descriptive equivalent.

In Balinese culture, if woman is happened to be a widow, people always put the blames on her. Being a widow either because the death of the husband or as a result of a divorce, people look down on her. This image does not happen in the TL (English). The first and second lines on the 1st stanza in the following data describe how people look down at a widow. The statement on the 1st line of the 1st stanza in the SL *'Ketika wanita menjadi janda'* which is equivalent in the TL to *'When a woman becomes a widow'*; then continued to the 2nd line *'Mulailah sudah prasangka'* and the translation is *'Prejudice begins'*. In the 2nd line is emphasized that prejudice begins when a woman becomes a widow. The 3rd line in the same stanza of the TL is *'Melucuti kemurnian rahim'* and it is translated into *'Stripping her womb of its purity'*, the poet expresses how hard is for a woman to be a widow if all the judgements fall to her. It is stated by emphasizing on the word *melucuti* which conveys the meaning is not just merely expressing how sad it is to be a widow by the expression of stripping the womb of its purity but also of the state how people look down on her. The translator is able to convey the sense that is being evoke in the SL to TL by expansion of the structure of TL. The translation emphasizes the sense in the TL into *'stripping her womb of its purity'*.

The 3rd line of the 1st stanza: *Rumah-rumah menanam padan di pintu'* was translated into *'Households plant pandanus trees in their doorways'* this line is a personification which implies human

like acts *rumah-rumah menanam* which is in English *households plant* means that in every doorways of the house the owner plants pandanus tree to prevent from the spell of magic if they have an infant in the house. The translation of the word *pandan* (SL) was translated into *pandanus tree* the translator translated the word *pandan* (Noun) into pandanus trees (Noun Phrase) to emphasize that in the SL culture *pandanus* is common planted in every Balinese house, if the member of the family has a new born infant, which is believed to protect the infant from illness that is caused by magic spell.

The 2nd line of the 4th stanza *tubuh ramping berbalut kain putih itu* expresses the thin body of the widow being wrapped in white cloth (this condition describes a woman/witch before transforming herself into another form /*leak* a transformation of a person either into form of an object or animal like). And the 3rd line of the 4th stanza *luruh tersangga batang pohon kepuh* was translated to *Laid on the three trunk*. The meaning expresses in the line is the way the widow (*Dirah*) bends her body by leaning it on the trunk of a certain type of tree that is only exist near the graveyard/or cemetery, it pictures that the widow goes to the cemetery usually mid-night by wrapping her body in such a way and then she leans her body down under the tree. The translator translated *Tubuh ramping berbalut kain putih itu* into *The slender body wrapped by white cloth* and the 3rd line *luruh tersangga batang pohon kepuh* into *laid on a tree trunk*. The translation of *pohon kepuh* of the SL into the TL *tree*, there is an omission of the specific tree that is only found near a cemetery.

4.2 Translation Procedures in Defining the Equivalence

There are several translation procedures applied in the analysis of the data which are proposed by Newmark (1981, 1988). The analysis is presented as follows:

4.2.1 Procedure used in defining equivalence of figurative expressions

Line twelve of second stanza *Kematian suaminya menjadi aniaya* was translated into *The death of my husband tortures me* the SL text has the meaning *because the death of her husband and now she became a widow as if torturing her*. It is a personification and it was translated into personification. The death of my husband (Noun –Event) did the tortures to me (*Dirah* as a widow) the expression of sorrow from the widow because of being a widow she suffers. The meaning of the SL in line twelve was retained by the translating it into a personification in the TL.

Line thirteen of the second stanza is *Kesendirian itu menjadi kamar hukuman* is translated into *Loneliness is a prison cell*. The SL carries the meaning *the state of being alone made her as if she is being in a prison* was translated into a metaphor *Loneliness is a prison cell* The translator emphasizing the state of being lonely in the TL.

Line seventeen of the third Stanza *Sia -sia bila kukirim pertanyaan : apa salahku* was translated into *It's useless for me to ask what I have done*, and then followed by line eighteen *kekuasaan telah menasibkan kekhawatiran* was transferred in *some power has destined me to fear*. The poet expresses that the authority made her feel in fear due to her condition in the SL, the translation emphasizing that power made destiny for her to face fear. Both TL and the SL are synecdoche.

Line twenty of the third stanza is *Penjaga-penjaga tak lagi memiliki mata* was translated to *The guards who no longer have eyes*. Both the SL and the TL are hyperbole emphasizing more than what was expressed. That the guards in the palace are not looking at anybody as if they were just focussed merely on their duties.

4.2.2 Procedure of Couplet (Couplet, Triplet and Quadruplet)

Personification is translated into personification with descriptive equivalent in the translation of the fourth line of the first stanza *Rumah-rumah menanam padan di pintu* into *Households plant pandanus trees in their doorways* and also level-shift in the translation of word *pandan* into *pandanus trees*. Here the translators applied the procedure couplet, applying more than one procedure.

Line nine of the second stanza *Hujan telah mengirim hati dan jantung ke tanah* of the SL is a personification which also translated into personification *The rain had send heart and soul to the ground* the personification was translated to personification with modulation or shift of point of view of the word reference used in the SL culture to express the meaning. The reference *hati* was translated into *heart* and the reference *jantung* was translated *soul*. This happened as the TL culture use different referents from the SL.

Line twenty eight of the third stanza is *Tanah yang telah berakar buah*, and it is translated into *The earth has roots which bear fruit*. The transfer of the hyperbole *Tanah yang telah berakar buah* to the TL hyperbole *The earth has roots which bear fruit* with changes of point of view *berakar buah* which means *root which has fruit* into *root which bears fruit* in the TL

Line forty nine of the sixth stanza *Ribuan prajurit terpuruk* was translated into *Thousands of soldiers are buried*. The SL line carries the meaning that thousands of soldiers were dead while the TL focussing the message the thousands of dead soldiers are buried. The emphasized in the TL is related to the following line (fifty) of the stanza is *memblalak menyambut kematian* was translated to *staring wide-eyed in death*. The transfer the line fifty *memblalak menyambut kematian* though the eyes were not mentioned in the line; but the verb *memblalak* in the SL representing *staring-eyes*, the transfer of the hyperbole SL into TL hyperbole with descriptive procedure, by describing that *staring wide-eyed in death*

Line fifty two of the sixth stanza is *Kekuasaan tidak melindungi nyawanya* was translated into *No power had been able to protect them*. Both the SL and the TL are synecdoche, in which in the SL *kekuasaan* was translated to *power* that indicates the power of the authority does not protect them. The placing of the negation *No* in front of the line is to emphasize there is no power that is able to protect them from the death.

5. Conclusions

Based on the previous analysis of the SL poem *Namaku Dirah* and its translation *My Name is Dirah the Witch* some conclusions can be drawn out i.e.:

First, the cultural specific terms found in the poem are *Dirah* the name refers to a witch widow, *pandan* (pandanus tree) which is believe in the SL culture to protect infant from evil spirit spell, *kain putih* (in the line *tubuh ramping berbalut kain putih*) was transferred into white cloth, in the SL it refers to special white cloth that is used by a female who is suspected can transformed herself into other form of living being, and *pohon kepuh* is a type of tree that only exists near the cemetery or graveyard but it was only transferred into *tree*.

Second, various types of procedures that are applied in defining the equivalents of the SL figurative expression into the TL: personification was translated into personification with compensation, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent and procedures of couplet in which the translator applied more than one procedure.

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