

# Translation Techniques and Equivalence in the Indonesian Translation of Humor in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

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## Abstract

*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* contains some humor and insults. This study was intended to reveal the translation techniques used by the Indonesian translator in translating the novel and how they result in the equivalence of the humor. The study was conducted using descriptive qualitative research and was intended to answer the following questions: (1) What translation techniques are used in the Indonesian translation of humor in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*? (2) How is the equivalence of the translated humor? Text analyses were done to compare the original English and the translated Indonesian humorous texts and to see how they are equally humorous. The analyses were done collaboratively by a native English professor and three Indonesian lecturers. Molina & Albir's classification of translation techniques (2002) was used in the analysis of the texts. To triangulate the data, a simple reader survey was also done to find out how Indonesian readers view the humor in the Indonesian translation. The research findings revealed that the dominant translation techniques used in translating humor were literal translation (35.5%), linguistic amplification (10.7%), modulation (9.9%), generalization (9.1%), and amplification (8.3%). The findings of the text analysis also showed that some of the humor was successfully rendered but some was reduced and/or even gone. Interestingly, the reader survey showed that there was not much humor in the novel and that the novel was more mystical than humorous.

## 1 Introduction

Translating literary texts, especially those containing humor, is challenging. Humor translation is said to “present some extra difficulties not encountered in translating straight referential prose and compare with the difficulties faced in the translation of poetry” (Chiaro, 1992). Humor is also considered as “one of the specific textual aspects which pose the greatest challenge to the translator, and which test the process of decision making to the full” (Sousa, 2002). Also, as Broeder (2007: 3) suggests: “...as simple and straightforward as this every day concept may seem at first glance, it turns out to contain many intricacies and can pose many complex problems to the translator”. It is also believed that “humor translation is possible if you keep in mind that the translation will not always be as humorous as the original” (Raphaelson-West, 1989).

In the literature on humor, a general dichotomy is discerned between playing through language and playing with language, or referential and verbal jokes:

There are two kinds of jokes (...) On one side, we have “referential” jokes, and on the other, we have “verbal” jokes. The former are based exclusively on the meaning of the text and do not make any reference to the phonological realization of the lexical items (or of other units in the text), while the latter, in addition to being based on the meaning of the

elements of the text, make reference to the phonological realization of the text (Attardo, 1994: 95).

Vandaele (n.d.) also states that “humor is what causes amusement, mirth, a spontaneous smile and laughter and that one short way to elucidate the concept of humor is precisely by analyzing its relation to laughter.”

In the process of translation, translators usually use some procedures to solve the specific translation problems. There have been overlapping terms to refer to the procedures, such as 'translation method' and 'translation strategy' as proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, Nida, Taber, and Margot, Vasques Ayora, Delisle and Newmark which were then reviewed and revised by Molina and Albir (2002) to get a better classification consistent in its application and were meant to reach all kinds of texts. Molina and Albir proposed the term 'translation technique' and defined it as "a procedure for analyzing and classifying an effort to achieve translation equivalence".

According to Molina and Albir (2002: 510-511), there are 18 kinds of translation techniques, namely: 1) Adaptation, 2) Amplification, 3) Borrowing, 4) Calque, 5) Compensation, 6) Description, 7) Discursive Creation, 8) Established Equivalence, 9) Generalization, 10) Linguistic Amplification, 11) Linguistic Compression, 12) Literal Translation, 13) Modulation, 14) Particularization, 15) Reduction, 16) Substitution 17) Transposition, and 18) Variation.

Beside the analysis of translation techniques, we also conducted the analysis on the equivalence of humor translation. In relation to this variable, some concepts of equivalence were used to support the analysis. Koller (1995) in Hatim and Munday (2004: 50) views equivalence as a process constrained by the influence of a variety of potentially conflicting SL/TL *linguistic* textual and extra-textual factors and circumstances and by the role of the *historical-cultural* conditions under which texts and their translations are produced and received. Nida (1964) in Leonardi (2000) argued that there are two different types of equivalence, namely *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence*. Formal equivalence 'focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content', unlike dynamic equivalence which is based upon 'the principle of equivalent effect'. Reiss (in Nord, 1997:9) further describes this equivalence as an equivalence in conceptual content, linguistic form and communicative function between source text and target text.

This study was intended to find out the translation techniques that the Indonesian translator of “*Harry Potter: The Sorcerer's Stone*” used in translating the novel. Molina-Albir's (2002) classification of translation techniques was used (Yuliasri and Allen, 2014) considering that it could be used to analyze translation units smaller than sentences. In this paper the discussion specifically focused on the translation of the humor contained in the novel. The objectives of the research were to investigate the translation techniques used to translate humor in *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone* from English into Indonesian language and how the humorous effects in the translated text were like.

To triangulate the data of the equivalence of the humorous effects of the translated texts, not only text analysis was used, but also analysis of questionnaires given to Indonesian readers. The questionnaires were intended for preliminary research before the more in-depth reader-response study was done. Twelve Indonesian university students were the respondents, and were asked some open-ended questions in relation to their response of the humor contained in the novel, relating it with their laughter or smile while reading, if any.

## 2 Methodology

The research method used in this research was Descriptive Qualitative Research (Gay, Mills, and Airasian 2011: 15). The research started from analysis of the techniques used in translating humor in the Novel *Harry Potter: The Sorcerer's Stone (HPTSS)*. Afterwards, detailed analysis was made on how each technique resulted in the rendering of humor. Analysis of questionnaire was then done to confirm the readers' response of the humor.

### 3 Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1 Humor Translation Technique

Results of analysis of the translation techniques used by the translator in translating the humor contained in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* are recapitulated in table 1. Out of the 121 uses of translation techniques in translating humor, the most dominant technique used was literal translation (35.5%), followed by linguistic amplification (10.7%), modulation (9.9%), generalization (9.1%), amplification (8.3%), reduction (5.0%), borrowing (5.0%), transposition (3.3%), linguistic compression (3.3%), adaptation (3.3%), compensation (3.3%), particularization (1.7%), calque (0.8%), established equivalent (0.8%).

#### Effects of the Translation Techniques on the Rendering of Humor

The effects of the translation techniques on the rendering of humor are presented in table 1. As seen from the table, the use of the different translation techniques has caused the humor retained, less/reduced, more, or lost. Also, there were cases where the meanings were shifted/distorted. Of the 35.5% use of literal translation technique, 28.9% resulted in equal humor. An example is presented below:

Data No. H-13

- ST : Dudley's favorite punching bag was Harry.  
 TT : *Kantong-tinju favorit Dudley adalah Harry.*  
 BT : Dudley's favourite boxing bag was Harry.

Besides the equally humorous translation, literal translation also caused shifted/distorted meaning in the translation, but not as much as those resulting in equally humorous translation. Linguistic amplification, amplification, and modulation have also resulted in equally humorous translation.

On the other hand, the generalization technique used mostly caused reduced/lost humor.

**Table 1: Effects of Translation Techniques on Translating Humor**

NO	TRANS LATIO N TECH NIQUE S	FRE QU EN CY	%	RENDERING OF HUMOR									
				same/equal		less/reduced		more		shifted/distorted		lost	
				freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
1.	Literal Translation	43	35.5	35	28.9	5	4.1	0	0.0	2	1.7	1	0.8
2.	Linguistic Amplification	13	10.7	8	6.6	3	2.5	1	0.8	0	0	1	0.8
3.	Modulation	12	9.9	11	9.1	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
4.	Generalization	11	9.1	3	2.5	8	6.6	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
5.	Amplification	10	8.3	8	6.6	1	0.8	1	0.8	0	0	0	0.0
6.	Reduction	6	5.0	4	3.3	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0	1	0.8
7.	Borrowing	6	5.0	1	0.8	5	4.1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
8.	Transposition	4	3.3	5	4.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
9.	Linguistic Compression	4	3.3	4	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
10.	Adaptation	4	3.3	1	0.8	3	2.5	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0

11.	Compe nsation	4	3.3	4	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
12.	Particul arizatio n	2	1.7	2	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
13.	Calque	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
14.	Establis hed Equival ence	1	0.8	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
TOTAL		121	100	87	71.9	28	23.1	2	1.7	2	1.7	3	2.5

Below is an example of the reduced or lost humor in the translation.

Data no. H-10

- ST : I haven't blushed so much since Madam Pomfrey told me she liked my new earmuffs."  
 TT : *Belum pernah mukaku semerah ini sejak Madam Pomfrey mengatakan dia menyukai tutup telingaku yang baru.*  
 BT : Never my face was this red since Madam Pomfrey said she liked my new ear covers.

In the source text (ST), “earmuffs” look comical and Madam Pomfrey is a ridiculous sounding name in English. In the target text (TT) the name “Madam Pomfrey” that was borrowed doesn’t sound funny to Indonesian, and neither does the word “*tutup telinga*” (ear cover/ ear plug) that was generalized from “earmuffs”.

The use of reduction technique, although only in one case, has also made the humor lost in the translation. In contrast, the linguistic amplification as well as amplification techniques have caused the humor even more humorous in the translation as shown below:

Data No. H-61

- ST : a mixture of old socks and the kind of public toilet no one seems to clean  
 TT : *Campuran antara kaus kaki bau dan toilet umum yang tidak pernah dibersihkan.*  
 BT : a mixture of stinky socks and a public toilet that has never been cleaned  
 In the above translation, the use of the word “*bau*” (stinky) has made the Indonesian translation more sarcastic and humorous than the original English text.

### 3.3 Questionnaire Analysis for Readers’ Responses

Open-ended questions were given to 12 Indonesian university students reading the Indonesian translated novel. Responding to the question whether their impression of the novel was spooky, magical, or humorous, most of the respondents commented that the story was magical and mysterious, but not spooky, and only two students perceived that it was spooky. One student commented that it was not magical, but thrilling, and only two others perceived that it was a bit humorous.

Responding to another question whether they found humor in the novel, majority of the students commented that there was little or no humor. They gave examples of the humor such as in the case of misspell, and when Ron and Harry fought against the Troll. They further commented that the story was serious and thrilling. Only one student perceived that there was a lot of humor in the novel, and he commented that the humor was created by exploiting the twins, George and Fred, in their each other’s disguise.

In confirmation of their response to the humor contained in the novel, a further question was asked whether they laughed or smiled when they read the novel. Majority of the students said they did not laugh at all or only smiled a bit. They further argued that the story was serious and thrilling. Only one student claimed that he/she laughed or smiled a lot.

The above responses revealed that the humorous effect contained in the original English novel of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone has been reduced/lost in its Indonesian translation. Despite the reduced/lost humor, the novel was well received by the readers. This was proven from their comments on their general impressions of the novel. Majority of the respondents commented that the story was very interesting and imaginative, and created a lot of fantasies; it has made them feel that they were brought to the story in the novel. They further commented that they were made believe that such

magic depicted in the novel was real and existent. In addition, they also perceived that the novel was suitable for all ages or teenagers and that it was easy to follow. Receptivity of the translated novel was also proven from the 220,000 copies sold, as the publisher claimed. Only two respondents commented that the novel was somewhat confusing and difficult to follow. The same research on the novel but focusing on the translation of vocatives and culture-specific items (Yuliasri and Allen, 2014) also reveals that despite some unequal tone and meaning in the translation of the vocatives and CSIs in the novel, the translated novel is in general well-received by the target audience.

#### 4 Conclusion

The findings of the text analyses reveal that in translating the humor, the translator has used 14 translation techniques, with literal translation as the most dominant one, followed by linguistic amplification, modulation, generalization, and amplification; other techniques with less frequent uses such as reduction, borrowing, transposition, linguistic compression, adaptation, compensation; and those with infrequent uses such as particularization, calque, and established equivalence. They also reveal that the use of generalization technique has caused the most reduced humor. Findings of the readers' response analysis also suggest that the humor contained in the novel is somewhat reduced/lost in its translation. However, despite the reduced humor, the translated novel is well-received.

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