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Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah



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“The Role of Indigenous Languages in Constructing Identity”

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NOTE

This international seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift V (LAMAS V for short) is a continuation of the previous LAMAS seminars conducted annually by the Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University in cooperation with *Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah*.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the seminar committee for putting together the seminar that gave rise to this compilation of papers. Thanks also go to the Head and the Secretary of the Master Program in Linguistics Diponegoro University, without whom the seminar would not have been possible.

The table of contents lists 92 papers presented at the seminar. Of these papers, 5 papers are presented by invited keynote speakers. They are Prof. Aron Reppmann, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, USA), Prof. Yudha Thianto, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, USA), Dr. Priyankoo Sarmah, Ph.D. (Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, India), Helena I.R. Agustien, Ph.D. (Semarang State University, Indonesia), and Dr. M. Suryadi, M.Hum. (Diponegoro University, Indonesia).

In terms of the topic areas, the papers are in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, theoretical linguistics, antropolinguistics, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis.

NOTE FOR REVISED EDITION

There is a little change in this revised edition, which as the shifting of some parts of the article by Tatan Tawami and Retno Purwani Sari entitled “Sundanese Identity Represented by the Talents of *Ini Talkshow* A Study of Pragmatics” on page 166 to 167. This has an impact on the change of table of contents.

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"The Role of Indigenous Languages in Constructing Identity"**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2015					
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TRANSLATION AND CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING (CCU)

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Abstract

Translation and Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) are two compulsory subjects given in the English Department. The two courses are closely related to each other since both skills may improve the students' language competence, especially those who want to be a professional translator. Mastering the source language (S-L), i.e. a foreign language (English), the target language (T-L), e.g. Indonesian, and mastering the text materials to be translated will not make a good translator if we do not have enough practice and experience. The paper aims to elaborate some concepts, techniques of translation and those of cross cultural understanding and to discuss some problems in translation practice and cross cultural understanding.

Keywords : translation, source language, target language, cross cultural understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Translation and Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) are two compulsory courses which are given in the English Department. The two courses are closely related to each other since both skills may improve the students' language competence, especially those who want to be a professional translator. Mastering the source language (S-L), i.e. a foreign language (English), the target language (T-L), e.g. Indonesian, and mastering the text materials to be translated will not make a good translator if we do not have enough practice and experience. (Machali, 2000) In addition, mastering both source language (S-L) and target language (T-L) and having practice is not enough, a translator is required to be knowledgeable about the cultural backgrounds of the S-L and T-L.

In this regard, Nababan (1984: 50) quoted by Silzer (1990: 1) states as follows :

“ language as a system of communication has a meaning in the context of culture”. For instance, ‘he shook his head’ may show sadness, or disagreement, or admiration. In English idiomatic expressions such as “a Herculean task” or “ a red herring” should be perceived in the context of Western/European culture. In relation to the language and culture it can be traced from two aspects: interpreting and transfer of meaning. In the process of interpreting, a translator is supposed to decode every expression in the cultural context. After interpreting, he or she can transfer it in the target language. The problem arises when words or phrases in the source language do not have synonyms in the target language. For example, the word “gado-gado” whether it should be translated “mixed vegetables” or “ a dish made of steamed vegetables covered with a spicy peanut sauce” (a longer phrase). Or the translator just writes as it is “ gado-gado’ with a note in bracket. In this paper, I would like to discuss some problems in translation in relation to the cultural background (cross cultural understanding).

SOME PROBLEMS IN TRANSLATION

Since translation is not an easy business some experts suggest some procedures in doing translation. Nida & Taber (1974) propose three steps in translating: (1) analysis (understanding the texts), (2) transfer (decoding), (3) synchronizing (in relation to cultural aspects). While Newmark (1988) suggests four levels in doing translation : (1) text (understanding the text in a limited scope), (2) reference (relating the text with reality outside the text), (3) cohesion (semantic relationship between the aspects in the text), and (4) appropriateness (acceptability of translated text by the readers).

The main point in translation is finding out the equivalence of words or phrases between the s-l and the t-l. Accordingly, in translation, formal correspondence, that is the parallel in structure between s-l and t-l is sacrificed (equivalence over formal correspondence). Due to the stress of being equivalent, the translator is often forced to make changes in the structural level, even in the semantic level. Based on the problems described above, there are two ways to solve the problems : (1) using transposition, i.e. a technique which uses translation with a different sentence structure from the source text, (2) modulation, i.e. a technique which uses semantic changes which are different from the source text.

Translating means handling two different kinds of text (source and target texts). In relation to text, Newmark (1988) states that translating is not static but dynamic. In translation we cannot use just one approach in dealing with a text since the text to be translated is affected by ten factors, i.e. (1) source text writer, (2) the existing norms in the source language, (3) cultural background in the source language, (4) place/time and tradition of writing and publishing the source text, (5) target text readers, (6) the existing norms in the target language, (7) cultural background in the target language, (8) setting/time and tradition of writing and publishing the target text, (9) the topic, and (10) the translator. Those ten factors should be born in mind when making translation since they will be closely related to the design of audience, the choice of method and technique, and decision making.

Nida and Taber (1974) argue that the correct translation will depend on the audience, i.e. who will be the readers. In addition, the correctness of translation will depend on the purpose of translation. Thus, the response of the translated text reader should be "similar" to the response of source text reader. Based on the description above, the correctness of translation becomes relative. It depends on the types of method chosen in accordance with the translation purpose. In relation to this, Newmark proposes some guidelines which are useful for the translators. He states that a translator may determine one or several methods in the process of translating which is line with the translation objective. Theoretically there are eight possible methods, i.e. (1) word for word, (2) literal, (3) faithful, (4) semantic, (5) adaptation, (6) free, (7) idiomatic, and (8) communicative. According to Newmark, the first four methods (1-4) are more oriented to the source language and the second four methods (5-8) are oriented to the target language. But in practice, the translators use the fourth method (semantic) and the eighth method (communicative) most. The following is illustration for each method :

Word-for-word translation. In this method the words, phrases, and clauses in the target language strictly follow the order of the source language. The words in the source language are translated without considering the context, and the culturally related words (for instance 'tempe') is not translated. Generally this method is used as a phase of pre-translation (as a gloss) for translating very complicated texts or for understanding the source language mechanism. Thus, in the translating process, this method can be applied at the analysis phase or preliminary phase of transfer. However, it should be kept in mind that such a method is only used with a specific purpose, and in practice it is not commonly used by the translators.

Literal translation. The structural patterns in the target language strictly follow those of the source language, but the translation in the lexical level or in the word level is separated from the context. For instance, the sentence "It's raining cats and dogs" in English is translated "Hujan kucing dan anjing" in Indonesian. This out of context translation results in the meaningless and weird target language version (cats and dogs cannot drop from the sky). This method is also used for the preliminary phase of transfer.

Faithful translation. This method tries to reproduce the contextual meanings but it is still restricted by its grammatical structure. In this case, any words which are culturally bound are transferred, but in terms of grammar and diction (choice of words) there are still some deviations. This kind of translation still focuses on the intention and purpose of the source language; accordingly, the results still sound awkward and strange. This method can be used for the initial process of transfer. For instance, the sentence "Ben is too well aware that he is naughty" (there is no cultural load in this sentence) is translated into Indonesian "Ben menyadari terlalu baik bahwa ia nakal". In spite of having a closer meaning in the source text, the target version still sounds awkward, and it will be more appropriate if it is refined and adjusted to the target language patterns "Ben sangat sadar bahwa ia nakal." In this version, the target language pattern is no longer faithful to the pattern of the source language by changing the form (from the phrase 'too well' to 'sangat').

Semantic translation. If compared to the faithful translation, the semantic translation is more flexible, while the faithful translation is stricter and does not compromise to the target language patterns. It is also different from the faithful translation, the semantic translation considers aesthetic aspects in the source text. In addition, the words with a little cultural load can be translated by using neutral words or functional terms. For example, "He is a book-worm" can be translated into "Dia (laki-laki) adalah seorang yang suka sekali membaca." This translation is functional (easily understood), even though there is no cultural equivalence, that is finding equivalence by using similar idiom in the target language 'kutu buku'.

Adaptation. Adaptation is a translation method which is the freest and the closest version to the target language patterns. The term 'saduran' can be included here as long as it does not sacrifice essential aspects such as theme, character, and plot. This method is commonly used for translating plays or poems, that is by maintaining theme, character, and plot. However, in the translation process, the cultural transfer from the source language to the target language takes place, and the original text is rewritten and adapted into the target language. For instance, the translation or more precisely adaptation of the Shakespearean play "Macbeth" by WS Rendra was performed at the Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta, 1994. Rendra maintained all the characters and the story line (plot) in the original text, but he adapted the dialogues which are in line with Indonesian culture.

Free translation. This method is a translation which focuses the content and sacrifices text form in the source language. This method is usually in the form of paraphrase which can be longer or shorter from the original text. This method is often applied in the mass media and is called "oplosan" (see Suharno, 1990, from Seminar Terjemahan I, Fakultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia). It is called "oplosan" (mixture) since the form (both the 'rhetoric', e.g. plot and sentence patterns) in the target language disappears. The following example shows the free translation of a news headline :

TSu : (Time, May 28, 1990) ; "Hollywood Rage for Remakes"

TSa : (Suara Merdeka, 15 Juli 1990) : 'Hollywood kekurangan Cerita: Lantas Rame-rame Bikin Film Ulang'.

From the example above, it can be seen that the target text version is longer than the source text, but the news content is shorter than the original text (see Suharno, 1990). The example above is called 'oplosan' (mixture) in that several aspects in the news content is inserted at the news headline, so that it makes the title longer from the original headline. As a translation method, the use of this method is very specific and is also specifically aimed.

Idiomatic translation. This method is aimed to reproduce the message in the source text but it often uses intimate or idiomatic expressions which are found in the original version. Therefore, many distortions of meaning nuances take place. Some world class translators like Seleskovitch is fond of this method which is deemed more 'lively' and 'natural' in the sense of being intimate. The following example shows how the idiomatic expression is applied :

TSu : Mari minum bir sama-sama; saya yang bayar.

TSa : I'll shout you a beer.

The translation above uses Australian English which is more idiomatic than the original text. The less idiomatic translation (i.e. semantic translation) will be : "Let me buy you a beer".

Communicative translation. This method tries to reproduce contextual meanings in such a way that both the language aspects and the content are easily understood by the readers. Hence, the target text is also acceptable. In accordance with its name, this method pays attention to the principles of communication, i.e. the readers and the translation objective. By this method, a source text can be translated into several versions according to the principles described above. As an illustration is the word 'spine' in the phrase 'thorns spines in old reef sediments.' When the word is translated by a biologist, its equivalence will be 'spina' (Latin technical term), but if it is translated for the common readers, that word will be translated 'duri' (from Lokakarya Penerjemahan III bidang Iptek, 1999)

PROBLEMS IN CCU

The translator needs to learn more about cross cultural understanding (CCU). CCU is given as one the compulsory subjects in the English Department. As human beings are born in multiculturalism they should learn other people's cultures in order to be able to communicate well. Similarly, a translator should also learn cultural background found in the source text. For instance, if he or she translates an English text he should know Western culture or when translating Arabic text he should be familiar with Middle East people's cultural background. The translator should be aware of various cultures existing in this world and, in general, world culture is divided by east and west, modern and traditional, developed and underdeveloped, south and north, even among the eastern people have various cultures which can enrich our fund of knowledge.

In relation to the cross-cultural problem, Stewart (1972 : 10) distinguishes common characteristics between Eastern and Western people. The American advisors or technicians usually go to developing countries, mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For instance, the Thailander is a member of a culture which is usually described as rural and traditional, or *gemeinschaft* ; on the other

hand, a middle class American is a member of a *gesellschaft* culture, a term applied to the technologically developed West. Similarly, the Japanese, who – like the American – is a member of a highly industrialized nation, defines himself in terms of a system of social links with his family and extended group. According to Silzer (1990 : 3) there are four types of difficulty in interpreting expressions related to cultures, i.e. gestures, metaphors, implicit information, humors, and cultural expressions or idioms.

Gestures. In general, gestures are universal characteristics of all nations in the world, but every culture has its own way to interpret gestures. The translator should understand the gestures first before translating them. Body movement or the same gestures do not have the same meaning in two cultures. For instance, shaking head may mean 'disagree, 'not understand', or 'shy'. Nonverbal communication, or "body language" may arise misunderstanding between two people from two different cultures if they misinterpret nonverbal signals. Misunderstanding can be amusing but sometimes serious. Take, for example, the differences in meaning of a gesture very common in the United States: a circle made with the thumb and index finger. To an American, it means that everything is OK. To a Japanese, it means that you are talking about money. In France, it means that something is worthless, and in Greece, it is an obscene gesture. Therefore, an American could unknowingly offend a Greek by using that particular hand signal. (Oshima,1991 : 75)

Metaphor. Metaphor is a kind of figurative language and it is frequently used in literary works, especially poetry. Metaphor is a literary device which compares two different things but they are deemed similar because of their property. For instance, a whale's back is compared to white snow in Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" In daily life we also have a metaphor like "He is a bear in the morning"; it means someone who is fierce and strict or severe. Similarly, in American culture Pike (1982 : 5) says "A theory is like a window", "apples and bridges", "a dentist's drill and a steam shovel", etc.

Expressions related to culture. Apart from metaphors, there are other expressions which are closely related to cultural backgrounds. Those expressions include kinship, food names, and wise words, quotations in literary works, and songs. For instance, Pike explains that the whole universe can be perceived as "wheels within wheels" (1982:130). This expression is a quotation from the Bible meaning "a very complicated hierarchy." Pike also quotes a children's song "There's a hole in the bottom of the sea". This song describes a pyramid consisting of a hole in the sea bed, a piece of wood lying on that hole, a frog is on the wood, a wart is on the frog, hair is on the wart, and a louse is on the hair. To understand this song, we need to have a cultural knowledge; otherwise, it is just a nonsense. This song also describes a hierarchy.

Implicit meanings. According to Larson (1989: 41) information or certain meanings stay implicit owing to the source language structure in that the information or the meaning has been included in other parts of the text. Or the information has been recognized in the communicative situation. For instance, Pike (1982: 28) states "In Wilder (1963) ..." The expert reader is supposed to understand that Wilder is a famous American writer and that "in Wilder" is perceived 'In (a play written by Thornton) Wilder". This implicit information is not additional information since the readers and the writer (Pike) from the same culture.

Humor. Translating humor is not easy for a translator since humor is closely related to a philosophy of life and cultural values. A translator should understand humor first before he or she translates it. The following is an example of humor about Robinson Crusoe :

Did you know that Robinson Crusoe started the forty-hour week?

First a reader should understand what is meant by "forty-hour week" in relation to the working hours and "Robinson Crusoe" is a famous character in the famous story. "Forty-hour week" is a modern expression and custom, while Robinson Crusoe lived several centuries ago. And the answer is : "He got his work done by Friday."

CONCLUSION

From the description above some conclusions can be drawn as follows :

- (1) To be a good translator, one should master both the source language and the source language;
- (2) To be a good translator, one should have more practice and experience;

- (3) To be a good translator, one should be aware of the different cultural background in the source texts, especially words or phrases which are culturally loaded (e.g. idioms, metaphors, proverbs, etc.)

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