

Internationalizing Localities in The Translation of Social Science Texts

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Abstract— *Whereas academic texts need to be conveyed in a universal language, they contains alot of localities central for the message. This may cause a failure to publish article in an internationally reputable journal for non-native English writers. That is why it is important to know cultural elements commonly found in social science text, what problems may emerge from the cultural elements, and how to cope with the problems to produce a qualified translation.*

It is a descriptive qualitative study using a case study design whose subject is the translation of article from bahasa Indonesia to English in an international journal. Source of data is the article submitted to the journal in bahasa Indonesia, the English published article, and the translator.

Research results showed that there are a lot of cultural elements in the translation of social science text in the form of material culture; social culture; organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concept. The cultural elements cause cultural problems and linguistic problems. Some translation techniques done by the translator are effective to solve some cultural problems. However the uncarefulness of the translator in dealing with language made linguistic problems remain and this gives bad impact on the readability of the translation.

The improvement of cultural and linguistic competence of the translator is a necessity. Monolingual dictionary, encyclopedia and data base of specific field of study will be very useful translation aids.

Keywords: *Academic Translation, Culture, Translation Problem, Translation Technique*

I. INTRODUCTION

The translation of academic text is part of the many kinds of translation which grows in popularity along with the globalization in the academic sphere. International publication places academic translation as the main process undergone by non-native writers in disseminating their ideas, research results or studies in an international academic sphere. Academic translation can be said as a growing translation industry due to the many demands on this service.

Based on the definitions provided by academic translation services in their websites, it can be concluded that academic translation refers to the translation of various written works for academic purposes. The written works can be article or manuscript to be published in international journals or proceeding, abstract, research paper, research proposal, conference poster, book, lecture, theses, or dissertation.

Academic translation covers text coming from many fields which is usually divided into two main types, that is, natural science text and social science texts.

Social science text has less technicality but tends to have more culturally bound terms compared to natural science texts. Natural science texts have cut and dried lexical choices and high level of generality while social science texts are contradictory since they are set by particular political, social, and cultural contexts[1]. Whereas natural science texts tend to be more universal, social science texts are set by various contexts which bring their own characteristics.

Social science text mostly deals with society and its culture. For example, a text on sociology and anthropology frequently talks about cultural phenomenon and uses many terms to express local culture. This might be a challenge for translators since translating culture is never a simple thing. The expression of local culture should be understood by international audience but should not loose its local taste at the same time because frequently the localities are the core or the topic to be discussed in an article of social science studies. . More than that, the translation should be academic in that it uses proper terms in the related field of subject of the text.

Translation and culture is a never ending topic to be discussed by translation scholars. Abbasi et.al[2] talked about language, translation and culture. Buden et.al.[3] studied the problems in cultural translation and the way to respond the problems. Al-Masri did a more specific study on translation and cultural equivalence in Arabic literary texts[4]. Stolze talked about cultural elements in technical texts[5]. Some studies made a general discussion on translation and culture while some others had a more specific discussion by focusing on certain aspects of cultural translation. This paper dicusses about translation and culture in the context of academic translation.

Academic translation for English as Foreign Language (EFL) writers in Indonesia is the way to do international publications which is obligatory for lecturers in higher education. Writing in English is never an easy job for those coming from non-native English countries. This is also true for the Indonesian lecturers willing to do international publication through international journals or proceedings. Some cases show that rejection from certain journals were accompanied by reviewers' comment saying that their English writing is not

“academic” enough. This comment brings to various interpretation on what is meant by academic when the detail information about the comment is not available. This drive the writer to do a study on the translation of social science text. It is aimed at knowing cultural elements in social science translation, the problems emerging from the elements and strategy in coping with the problems. The first problem is described using the concept of cultural expression by Newmark. The second problem is analysed using the notion of North about translation problem. The last problem is discussed using the concept of translation technique by Molina and Albir.

The existence of culture in academic translation is different from its existence in other kind of translation. It involves at least three cultural discourses, that is, cultural discourse of source text, target text and subject of study. The three dimensions should be combined smoothly to produce a qualified translation which will be said as academic. It is where the basic strategy of translation is applied. This strategy is usually called translation strategy or translation method or translation procedure. Molina and Albir [7] define translation strategy as the procedures used by the translators to solve the problems that emerge when carrying out the translation process with a particular objective in mind.

Under the basic translation strategy is then the problems in translating solved. Translation problem in the case of this paper is focused on the existence of cultural element in the social science text. Cultural traces in texts have a specific linguistic form ranging from word level and syntactic structures to the style on the text level, and its pragmatic social function[5]. Further, cultural traces may appear in some forms:

- Culture in terminological concept
- Culture in the language form
- Culture in the syntax
- Culture in the text structure
- Culture in pragmatics

The forms have represented both the meaning and the structure of a translated text.

In the words of Newmark, cultural expression can be categorized into 5 types[6]:

- Ecology
- Material culture (artifact)
- Social culture
- Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concept
- Gestures and habit

In the level of practice, translation strategy is embodied in the way the translator cope with translation problem which is called translation technique. This paper used translation technique proposed by Molina and Albir[7], among which are:

- Amplification: convey details that are not contained in the SL, which can be either information or paraphrasing explicitly.

- Borrowing: take the right words or expressions from other languages. There are two kinds of borrowing, that is pure borrowing and naturalized borrowing.
- Description: changing a term or expression, with a description of the shape and or function.
- Established Equivalent: using terms or expressions which is known (in the dictionary or every day use) as the equivalent of the TL.
- Generalization: using more common and more neutral terms.
- Literal Translation: translating words or expressions in word for word equivalence.
- Particularization: using more specific or concrete word or phrase in the TL.
- Reduction: reducing certain elements of the SL. Reduction is also called elimination. This technique is the opposite of amplification technique.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative study using an embedded case study. Source of data is documents and informants. Documents used are the published articles, as well as the original text of the translated articles. The informants are the staff of the journal translating the articles. This study used purposive sampling technique, that is, the researcher did sampling on the source of data, which is done with some considerations. The articles used as data are articles which were submitted in bahasa Indonesia by the author, and then translated into English by the journal staff.

Data collection was done by using in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The researcher did interviews with the translator. This study used two types of triangulation, the triangulation of sources and triangulation of methods. With triangulation of sources, the researcher combined data extracted from documents and informants. Triangulation of method is done by examining a single source with a different method. In this study, triangulation of method was done by using in-depth interviews and document analysis.

Techniques of data analysis in this study is inductive and sustainable. Data analysis was performed using data analysis techniques presented by Spradley[8]. The technique of data analysis is done in four stages, namely: 1)domain analysis, 2) taxonomy analysis, 3) componential analysis, and 4)cultural values analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Cultural Expression in Social Science Text

Using the notion of cultural expression of Newmark, this study recorded some cultural expression in some categories as follow[6]:

- Material culture: tubers, nuts, sarong, *selendang*, *ATBM*, *gedogan*

There are some cultural expressions in the form of material culture from the kind of food and clothes. Tubers and nuts are food, while sarong and selendang are clothes. Sarong is a dress usually worn around waist. Selendang is shawl usually worn by women. *ATBM* is a tool to weave. *ATBM* is the abbreviation of *Alat Tenun Bukan Mesin*, or non-machine loom, *gedogan* is a weaving tool.

- Social culture (work and leisure): *sillelungsirui*, *sibaliperri*, *sibalireso*, *pappalele*.

The words are local language of an ethnic group related to working culture. *Sillelungsirui* is the principle of cooperation in working which prioritize family as the first group to be chosen to have a cooperation with. *Sibaliperri* is the principle of helping in distress. *Sibalireso* is the principle of helping in the work. *Pappalele* is loyal traders.

- Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concept: household head, *BKKBN*, Indonesian National Police, National Narcotics Board, Central Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, New Order, Indonesian National Army, Minister of Defense, *pongawa*, *aqiqah*, *passolo*.

This type of cultural expression was the most frequent expression found in the data. It has political and administrative, religious, and artistic sub categories. From the category of political and administrative organizations, there is *BKKBN* which is abbreviated from *Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional* or National Population and Family Planning Agency, and *pongawa* meaning boss or patron. *Aqiqah* which is a religious activity is derived from arabic language having the meaning of a ceremony to celebrate a birth by slaughtering goat to be cooked and given to the surroundings. *Passolo* is a local word which is part of custom which means a donation envelope.

Although coming from similar category of social science text, the type of cultural expression found in each text taken as sample is different. This is because social science has some branches of study talking about different topics. For instance, text from sociology has some cultural expression on material culture and social culture while text from politics is dominated by cultural expression in the form of political and administrative organization.

B. Translation Problem

In general, translation problem can be defined as the difficulties faced by the translator when doing the work of translating text from a language to another. It is the part where the translators are not sure, even, do not know the equivalence of certain unit of language, and they have to work more to find it.

Translation problem in this study is described using the the classification of translation problems proposed by North[9].

- Pragmatic Problem

Following the model by Nord, the pragmatic translation problems are concerning with the issuer, the receiver and the function of targets of the two text. They are created because of the differences between the original text and the production situation of the translation situation[9]. Baker[10] defines pragmatics as the study of meaning not as generated by the linguistic system, but as conveyed and manipulated by participant in a communicative situation. Many experts said that pragmatics deals more with the context rather than the text.

One of the pragmatic problems found in the data is the problem in translating the word *orde baru* (bahasa Indonesia) to new order (English). The translation lost its deep meaning since the equivalent phrase in the English does not represent the history and real description behind the phrase “orde baru”. Lexically the translation has no problem but contextually it is not equivalent.

Orde baru was a period of leadership by the second president of the Republic of Indonesia, the late President Soeharto which came into crwon in 1966 and collapsed in 1998 through a series of riots in some big cities in Indonesia. It was the reformation movement led by some Indonesian political figures and youth (university students) that forced Soeharto to give up the position he had held for 32 years. *Orde baru* is closely associated to the regime of corruption, collusion and nepotism.

Thus, it is not enough to use the phrase “new order” to be the equivalent of *ordebaru*. There should be additional information accompanying the phrase, or it is better to use the borrowing technique with additional information. This will maintain the deep meaning of the phrase *orde baru*.

- Cultural Problem

Because translation is an act of delivering message from a culture to another, the existence of cultural problem is a certainty. Cultural problems are triggered by the difference between the culture of the source text and the target text.

Idioms, proverbs and cultural-bound words are things that are considered as the cause of cultural problem. Unlike literary text, idioms and proverbs are not commonly found in academic texts. Cultural-bound words are many to be found in the data. There are some material words and concepts which are closely related to the local culture of an ethnic group so that it bring difficulties for translators to find their equivalence in another culture.

Sarong is an example of a material word which is closely related to certain group. In the case of the Indonesian, sarong is mostly known as the cloth for *santri*(moslem scholars) and it is usually worn to do prayer or attend religious activities. *Selendang* is another example of material word bound by culture. Shawl used as the equivalence of this word does not sufficiently represent the cultural taste in it.

Concepts on kinship are the evidence of cultural-bound words. It is not easy to find the equivalence of the words. Terms naming some cultural activities are also cultural bound words requiring translators’ skill in describing them in another language.

- Linguistic Problem

Linguistic problem includes terminological problems, lexical problem, and stylistical problems [9]. Terminological problem is the difficulties in searching for equivalent terms. In the context of academic text, the equivalence of terms includes the attempts to find terms which are commonly used in certain field of study. When translators translate certain term, the use of dictionary frequently do not help much. The use of data base or encyclopedia of the field of study can be other translation aids.

Lexical problem is related to suffix, words/terms, idioms, proverbs and abbreviation. Idioms and proverbs in lexical problem is different from the ones in cultural problem in that it is focused more on the language unit rather than the meaning. Abbreviation is one of the linguistic problems which can be found easily in the data. Translating abbreviation is a translation problem because rarely is an abbreviation in one culture also an abbreviation in another culture. The aim of abbreviating phrases is to simplify utterances and make them more catchy. Therefore, when the abbreviation is translated into non-abbreviated phrases, there is something missed.

Stylistical problems refer to the problems related to connotation and figurative expression. They are also a translation problem because similar meaning may be expressed in different figurative expressions in different cultures. It needs extra-effort of the translators to find equivalence stylistically. A connotation is better to be translated to a connotation without losing its accuracy. The data of this study do not show the case of translating connotation and figurative expression.

In the context of academic translation, translators' ability in solving cultural problem and linguistic problem will produce a translated article which can successfully bring localities in an accurate and understandable international package. It means that a suitable strategy to maintain source culture in the translation and make it accessible for international should be attempted.

C. Translation Technique

Translation technique is the practical level of the implementation of translation strategy. It can be defined as the way the translators solve the problems they face during the process of translation. Using the concept of translation technique proposed by Molina and Albir[7] this study recorded some translation technique done by the translator .

- Literal translation

It is a technique of translating words or expressions in word for word equivalence. Word for word equivalence is possible when certain concept in the source text is also known in the target text. Translator should check whether it exists or not in the target culture by inputting the keywords in the search of scientific articles discussing about it. A qualified monolingual dictionary is another way to ensure the existence of certain phrase to convey certain concept in a culture. The example of the use of literal translation is the translation of the phrase *kepala keluarga* (bahasa Indonesia) to family head. Both phrases are found in the culture of the target text meaning that the translation is acceptable.

- Borrowing

Borrowing is taking the right words or expressions from other languages. There are two kinds of borrowing, that is pure borrowing and naturalized borrowing. Pure borrowing is using words from the source text as it is, without doing any adjustment in the spelling. Whereas naturalized borrowing is using words from the source text with certain adjustment in the spelling.

Pure borrowing is the most frequent technique done by the translator. This is because there are many local terms that have no specific equivalence in the target text. The borrowed words are followed by information describing the words. The additional information is not added by the translator. In fact, the additional information following a borrowed word was written by the author of the source text. Some of the examples of the case is: *sikampong* (regional network), *sahabat* (friendship network), *sempugi* (ethnic network), *sibaliperri* (helping in distress), *sibalireso* (helping in distress), *pappalele* (loyal traders), and there are many others.

Naturalized borrowing was done by the translator in the case of translating the word *sarung* (bahasa Indonesia) to sarong (English).

In some occasions, the translator uncarefully did the borrowing technique. Some borrowed words are not accompanied by their explanations. It influences the readability of the translation. For example, in some parts of the text, the translator write the word *gedogan*, *aqiqah*, and *selendang* without giving any information about the words.

Pure borrowing technique was also used by the translator to solve the difficulty in translating abbreviations. For instance, when finding the word *BKKBN*, *UMP* and *KB* in the source text, the translator borrow these words as the equivalences in the target text. Unfortunately, the translator did not give information on the word *BKKBN* (*Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional*- National Population and Family Planning Agency) and *UMP* (*Upah Minimum Provinsi*-Province Minimum Wages) even though it is very important since the words are abbreviation.

- Established Equivalent

Established equivalent is translation technique done by using terms or expressions which is known (in the dictionary or every day use) as the equivalent of the TL. In the context of academic translation, established equivalent has many things to do with the accuracy in using terms bound with certain field of study (content-specific terms). In this case, the translator should be painstaking in searching for the proper terms with reference to the data from certain field of study. A careful use of established equivalent technique is also done by using internet and being connected to certain data. For example, when translating the name of government institutions, the translator can check into the official websites of the institutions to know the proper name for the institutions. Besides, searching in the internet may lead the translators to some reputable articles which possibly give information on the common terms used to represent certain concepts.

Some of the examples of the use of established equivalent are the translation of the name of some Indonesian government institutions, such as: Indonesian National Police (*POLRI*), National Narcotics Board (*BNN*), Indonesian National Army (*TNI*). Since they are names, there has been definite terms as their equivalences, so that literal translation may not be suitable to be applied. For instance, *Badan Narkotika Nasional (BNN)* may be translated to “National Narcotics Agency”, but “National Narcotics Board” is more commonly used based on some references.

The dominantly used translation techniques show the tendency of foreignization. It means that the translation is in favor of the source text.

CONCLUSION

Academic translation, especially the translation of social science text frequently deals with culture. Many articles in social science talk about society and its culture, meaning that local culture is the central point of the translation. Therefore the localities should be conveyed to international reader using a readable and acceptable language for international reader. This is not an easy work because cultural problems in translation is never a simple matter.

In fact, some translators have not successfully internationalized localities. They perhaps loyally maintain the local culture but they failed to make the target reader understand it.

To improve the quality of academic translation, especially the translation of social science text, cultural competence and linguistic competence of the translator need to be improved. Besides, optimizing the use of translation aids in the form of

monolingual dictionary, encyclopedia of certain subject, and data base will help the translator produce an accurate, readable and acceptable translation.

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