

The Awareness of Cultural Literacy in Translating English Poems

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Abstract

This study deals with analyzing types of cultural words in some of the English poems and identifying the translation procedures used in the Indonesian translation of the poems based on Newmark's. Thus, the objectives of this study are to identify the cultural words and the types of translation procedure applied in translating those cultural words and to find out whether students have the awareness of cultural words or not. The method employed in this study is qualitative. The data are gathered from students' translation of some poems during the Practicum of Translation's class. From the findings and the discussion of the study, it can be preliminary concluded that there are categories of cultural words appeared in the poem such as ecology, material, social, organization, and gesture and habit. Students also employ various procedures in the translation namely transposition, transference, notes, naturalization, cultural equivalence, componential, literal, addition and glossaries, couplet, paraphrase, descriptive equivalence, through translation, and synonym. This study shows that students still lack of awareness in terms of cultural literacy when translating English poems.

Keywords: cultural literacy, cultural words, translation, translation procedures.

Introduction

Literacy is very pertinent in communication and in doing translation. Literacy competence is not only needed for reading and writing texts but also for comprehending cultural issues. In other words, literacy competence is the ability to transfer cultural aspects found in the source text to target text. The gap between languages and cultures may create problems that hinder the fluency of communication so as in translation; the gap may create misunderstanding on for achieving similar meaning as meant in the source language. Cultural literacy is a term invented by E.D Hirsch (1983), referring to the ability to understand and participate fluently in a given culture. Therefore, cultural literacy requires proper literacy that is the ability to write and read letters. The difference between the literate readers with a culturally literate is that the literate reader knows the grammar, vocabulary, whilst the culturally literate person knows a given culture's signs and symbols, including its language, particular dialectic, stories, entertainment, idioms, idiosyncrasies, and so on. The culturally literate person is able to talk to and understand others of that culture with fluency, while the culturally illiterate person fails to understand culturally-conditioned allusions, references to past events, idiomatic expressions, jokes, names, places, etc. In doing translation, the translator is required to be a culturally literate person so that he or she understands other cultures in particular, the culture that is being translated.

A culturally literate translator may means that he or she has cultural awareness. The words "awareness" according Webster Dictionary means "the quality or state of being aware". Cultural awareness according to Tomalin and Stempleski is a concept that is used to describe sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behavior on language use and communication (1993). So cultural awareness in translation in the sensitivity of the translator to the cultural aspects found in the Source Text (ST) and how he or she manages to communicate those in Target Text (TT). The task of translator is not easy.

Translator is a cultural mediator that must be equipped with cultural awareness in doing the activity of transferring meaning. This is where translation comes into play.

Newmark stated that "Translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text" (1988: p.5). This means that when a text is translated from ST to TT then the meaning should be rendered the same as the intention of the author. Catfors (1965, p.21) also mentioned that, "Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (Source Language/SL) by equivalent material in another language (Target Language/TL)". Translator should have good understanding of SL and TL on textual level in order to enable him or her to transfer message and to avoid any mistranslation and distortion of meaning.

In translating a poem, it is pertinent that the translator understands very well not only the grammatical aspect but also the cultural aspect of the poem. Newmark (1988: p. 95) also make a relation between cultural words with a particular language and he also mentioned that cultural words cannot be literally translated. It means that cultural word is a word that only exists in a particular language. Baker also supported this statement that (1992: p.21) "SL word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the TL culture". Translating culture should not be done literally because culture is abstract and concrete. They refer to belief, type of food, religious, flora and fauna, and social customs. In a more specific way, Newmark (1988: p. 94) defined culture as the way of life and its manifestation that very special to a community that uses certain language as the way of expression. Newmark categorizes cultural words into several items namely: Ecology which consists of geographical features for example it could be flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills, seasons, etc. Second is material culture that covers food, clothes, houses, towns, and transport. Next is social culture includes work and leisure. Fourth is organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, etc. It also includes political and administrative such as King, Presidents, and religious things such as temple, shrine, mosque, etc. The last category of cultural word is gestures and habits which among others are kissing hands to greet older people or to praise them, the way of standing while talking, and how you place your hands when talking to older and younger people, etc.

In doing the translation of cultural words from English into Indonesian, some procedures are required to create accurate, natural, and clear translation. A procedure is used to help the translator in translating a text; in this case the text is poem. In helping the translator to translate cultural words, procedures by Newmark (1988: p. 103) are used such as: 1) Transference, 2) Cultural equivalence, 3) Neutralization, 4) Literal translation, 5) Label, 6) Naturalization, 7) Componential analysis, 8) Deletion, 9) Couplet, 10) Accepted standard translation, 11) Paraphrase, gloss, notes, etc., and 12) Classifier.

This paper aims to find out what are the cultural words found in the translation of poem and the procedures employed in translating them. This paper also tries to analyze how the translation of cultural words relates to the awareness of students in cultural literacy.

Method

This study uses qualitative method and the cultural words are derived from the poem to be analyzed. The data gained are then described and analyzed accordingly. The data in this study are in the forms of 20 cultural words/phrases found in the two poem, "Meeting at Night" by Robert Browning and "An Untitled Poem" by Li Shan Yin. The object of this study is the fifth semester students of English Department approximately 25 students. They are chosen because they have studied *Introduction to Translation* in the 4th semester. Students are asked to translate two poems and then the results are analyzed by employing Newmark's theory of categorization of cultural words and procedures in translating cultural words.

Result and Discussion

This study investigated the kinds of cultural words found in the two poems by Browning and Li. There are 20 data found in this study. Among the 20 data are included into ecology, material culture, social, organization, and habit. The highest number is in the category of ecology and the procedure mostly used is literal procedure which students translate the cultural words into as it is.

Result and Discussion of the Translation of Cultural Words and Procedures in Translating Cultural Words

The 20 data gathered are categorized based on Newmark's category of cultural words. They are: 14 ecology which mostly are fauna, one (1) concept of distance, two (2) material cultures, one (1) social culture, one (1) habit, and one (1) organization. Below is the elaboration on the translation of cultural words and the procedures that the students employed in translating those cultural words.

Ecology

There are 14 items found in the poem that belong to the ecology. They are included into fauna (2 items), ecology (9 items), and geographical features (3 items). One example of cultural word that belongs to fauna is the following:

Table 1. The example of fauna category

ST	TT
Spring silk worm died after it ended fiber production	Ulat sutera musim semi semimatisetelahtiadalagimenghasilkanseratbenang
I asked the blue bird to convey you my kindest regards	Ku pintaburungbirutuksampaikansalamku.

In the example above, "spring silk worm" is a moth whose larva spins a large amount of strong silk in constructing its cocoon especially: an Asian moth (*Bombyx mori* of the family *Bombycidae*) whose rough wrinkled hairless caterpillar produces the silk of commerce (online Merriam-Webster) is translated directly into 'ulat sutera musim semi'. Thus, the procedure applied is literal translation (silk worm into 'ulat sutera) and componential analysis (season of spring). According to Newmark combination of two procedures is called couplet.

The cultural word of "blue bird" any of three small North American thrushes (*Sialia currucoides*, *S. mexicana*, and *S. sialis*) that are blue above and reddish brown or pale blue below (online Merriam Webster), is translated into "burungbiru" which it has similar symbol but in the western culture the 'blue bird' is associated with happiness, joy, delight, a sign of good thing whilst in Indonesian culture we do not have 'burungbiru' as the symbol of happiness. In the Indonesian culture we have 'burung layang-layang' to symbolize happiness. The procedure applied is literal translation. (it is supposed to be cultural equivalent). Another example of ecology is geographical features which have three items. Below is the explanation.

Table 2. The example of geographical features

ST	TT
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;	Tigaladang/ tanah lapang dilaluihinggamenujupertanian/peternakan

According to online Merriam Webster, "field" is an open land area free of woods and buildings. Students have translated this word into 'ladang' or 'tanah lapang.' In Indonesian culture, 'ladang' and 'tanah lapang' have different meaning and object. 'Ladang' is 'tanah yang diusahakandanditanami (ubi, jagung, dan sebagainya) dengan tidak diairi; tegal' (KBBI online) whilst 'tanah lapang' is 'tanah yang

lapang dan hanya ditumbuhi rumput'. So, it might have different meaning is students translated 'field' into 'tanah lapang'. Students have also translated 'farm' into either 'pertanian' or 'peternakan' which according to Merriam Webster, 'farm' is a tract of land devoted to agricultural purposes or a plot of land devoted to the raising of animals and especially domestic livestock and in Indonesian it means 'lahan yang digunakan untuk bertani atau beternak'. Both words are translated by using literal translation. As meant in this poem that the writer must cross three fields and one farm to reach to his loved one, so the translation should be meant as it is. Poem usually hides meaning, but these words are meant very literal. Cultural words that show ecology are nine items as samples explained below.

Table 3. The example of ecology

ST	TT
Easterly wind weakens while all kinds of flowers faded;	Angindaritimur mulaimelamahsementarabungamelayu
The grey sea and the long black land ;	Lautankelabudandaratan yang hitam memanjang
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand .	Mempercepatalurnyamelewatipasir yang lembap

In the first phrase "easterly wind" is translated directly into "angindaritimur" dan "anginpaskah". Students who translated it into 'angindaritimur' obviously have awareness that the word 'easterly' means "something that is coming from East" and has nothing to do with "Easter" as a celebration. While the students who translated it into 'anginpaskah" have no background knowledge and they just translated as what they know of the word "easter". This translation is using literal translation. The phrase "the grey sea" and "the long black land" are showing the condition of the sea and its surrounding. The writer is deliberately visualize the condition of the dark sea by stating 'the grey sea' which supposedly means that the sea is covered by fog so as it is unable to see clearly. Students translated it into "lautankelabu" or 'lautanabu-abu' which has no closest meaning. Perhaps it is better to translate it into "lautantertutupkabut" or "lautanberkabut". Students translated this phrase by using literal translation.

The phrase 'slushy sand' also depicted the condition surrounding the sea or the ecology of the sea. The word 'slush' means soft mud so 'slushy sand' means sand that is in the form of mud, it is watery and partly melted (online Merriam Webster). The students translate the phrase into "pasirlembap" which has similar meaning with being watery but not necessarily in the form of mud. The procedure used here is paraphrase.

The other items of cultural words are deal with material culture, social culture, habit, and concept. All which students translated them by employing literal translation which this signals to the idea that students are having lack of awareness of cultural words therefore that can be said they are having lack of awareness in cultural literacy.

Conclusion

This study is aimed at identifying kinds of cultural words found in the poem and the translation procedures applied in translating them. Based on the findings and the discussion, it can be concluded that there are five basic categories of cultural words exist in the poems. They are 20 data overall. Thetypeofculturalwordsmostlyfoundisecology thatconsistsof flora, fauna, geographical features, and season. From 14 items of ecology, 9 items are ecology, 3 items of geographical features, and 2 items of fauna. The other categories are one item for concept, one item for social culture, one item for habit, one item for organization, and two items for material cultures. In terms of translating cultural words found in the poem, this study reveals that literal translation procedure is mostly used due to the fact that the students are lack of awareness of cultural literacy in translating poem. Literal procedure is the kind of

procedure that directly translates words as they are. This finding convinces the writer that students still lack of awareness in translating cultural words because they still mistranslate some of the cultural words by not taking into account the Indonesian culture.

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