

Wordplay or Not Wordplay

(The Indonesian version of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)

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Abstract—Wordplay is a clever and witty way of using words, exploiting similarity in form and differences in meaning to serve some purposes, for example creating jokes. Lewis Carroll is famous for his wordplays as unique signature of his works, such as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. This research describes the English wordplay translation into Indonesian in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland – *Petualangan Alice di Negeri Ajaib*. The Indonesian version was translated by Maria Masniari Lubis and published by Cikal Aksara in 2013. Applying Delabatista and Leech theories on wordplay and translation technique, there are 50 wordplays analyzed. As the result, paronymy is the type of wordplay which appears the most, 15 data, while homograph does not appear at all. The most frequent technique discovered in translating wordplay is Wordplay to Non-wordplay as many as 31 times or 62% of all data. While the second preferred translation technique is Wordplay into Wordplay. In conclusion, despite a fact that wordplay is Lewis Carroll's signature, the translation fails to produce equivalent wordplays or maintain the style of the author.

Keywords—alice's adventures in wonderland; translation; translation techniques; wordplay

I. INTRODUCTION

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is Lewis Carroll's most notable work. This novel was published during Victorian period—in 1865 and gained recognitions as it is stood out from the popular genre in that era. This novel is written for children when most of literary works in that age, according to Walker [1], was produced for adults. The language style, theme, and symbolism that Carroll puts in this book make it even more intriguing, making it not only suitable for children's readings but is also appealing for adults. Considering that Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is encouraging the genre of fantasy and children's literature with its highly thought of language style, it is important for this work to be spread out and reach as many audience as it can. This idea can be achieved by translation.

However, translating Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is not an easy task. One of most prominent features of this book is the language style that Carroll exhibits in the form of wordplay. Carroll plays a lot with words by exploiting their similarity in form and differences in meaning. In addition, according to Zavišić [2], this novel is rich with humor, wordplay and nonsense. Consequently, those pose a huge

challenge for any translator. Chiaro states that the core problems for translating any kinds of verbally expressed humor (VEH), including wordplay are equivalence and translatability as they are really specific from one culture to another [3]. Meanwhile, Nida and Taber points out that translators have to be smart to be able to produce a good translation that sounds and reads like an original work [4].

Studies about Lewis Carroll's works are quite many. Diaz Pérez conducted a research on one Galician and three Spanish translations of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There [5]. Similarly, Zavišić did his study on wordplay translation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in three Croatian and three Russian translation [2]. They concluded that the puns in the data is translated into pun in order to maintain the humor. On the other hand, Humanika that compared three Indonesian translations of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland [6], and Sulistyowati that scrutinized Djokolelono translation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland concluded that English wordplay found in their studies is mostly translated into Indonesian non wordplay by applying literal technique [7].

This study scrutinized a translated version by Maria Masniari Lubis and published by Cikal Aksara in 2013 to enrich study about Alice's Adventures in Wonderland translation from English into Indonesian, especially on the techniques employed. Since the data in this research is in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that contain wordplay, the method applied in this study is descriptive qualitative [8].

II. WORDPLAY TRANSLATION

Translating literary works is different from translating any other forms of translation. The distinction lays in a way that according to Landers, the translation literary works need to be lively and aesthetic [9]. It has to preserve the style of the original works. Gill said that translating literary work is a perpetual process of making choices from a lot of aspects such as meaning over rhymes, rhythm over grammar, and many others [10]. It is also important to note that the translation of literary works should be entertaining while capturing the author's intentions as well. Literary works that include the genres of fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction will always have unique language of style. This requires translators to

always ‘think outside the box’ and be creative in the process of translation.

A. Wordplay

According to Delabastita wordplay is defined as any “textual phenomena” that has similarity in the forms of words, phrases or sentences and their differences in meaning [11]. Wordplay mostly contains ambiguity and functions to tell humor. Linguistically, wordplay has classification and needs special techniques to translate. Delabastita [11] and Leech [12] classify wordplay into the following.

1) Phonological and graphological wordplay

a) Paronymy: Paronymy wordplay occurs when there is a little difference in the spelling and pronunciation of some words, yet the meaning of the words are not related.

b) Homonymy: Homonymy is words with the same spelling and the same pronunciation, yet not having any correlation in meaning. It is used in the puns by exploiting the lexical ambiguity of the word.

c) Homophony: Homophony is words that are similar in pronunciation but are different in spellings. These words also have different meaning. Because of its importance in the way of a word is pronounced and heard, homophony is usually made or noticed when a person is delivering a wordplay by saying it.

d) Homography: Homography is words which are different in pronunciation but the same in spellings. The focus on spellings tricks the reader into pronouncing the word in incorrect way.

2) Polysemy: The meanings from polysemous words are indeed different, yet these words are still related because they are generated from the same root.

3) Idiomatic wordplay: Idioms are fixed expressions. wordplay from idiomatic expression can be created by changing the formal structure of idioms or by having its literal meaning contrasted with the figurative meaning.

4) Morphological wordplay: Morphological wordplay is created by performing modification in the word structure by: abbreviation, acronym, clipping, derivation, and blending.

5) Syntactic structure: Wordplay found in syntactic level as a whole rather than only in individual words. This phenomenon is called syntactic ambiguity. It occurs when one sentence as a whole or a phrase can have more than one meaning or interpretations.

6) Play on antonym: The use of words that are the opposite of each other as a wordplay in a non-antonym way.

B. Translation Techniques

Other than proposing classification of wordplay, Delabastita also offers techniques of wordplay translation [11]. There are only six techniques elaborated below, omitting the Non-wordplay to Wordplay and Zero to Wordplay techniques since this study focuses on wordplay translation.

1) Wordplay to wordplay: The wordplay in the ST is transferred into another wordplay in the TT. Applying this technique means that the translators can preserve the both the form and successfully deliver the meaning of the wordplay. The readers of the TT will also perceive the TT wordplay as if it is an original one.

2) Wordplay to non-wordplay: The wordplay in the ST is not translated into other wordplay in the TL. Often with this technique, the wordplay is translated literally.

3) Wordplay to related rhetorical device: The wordplay is transferred into the TL by using rhetorical devices such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, irony, paradox and many others as stated in Delabastita [11]. This is done in order to maintain the effect of the wordplay.

4) Wordplay to zero: The wordplay is being deleted and neither in any way translated nor being left untranslated.

5) Wordplay ST = Wordplay TT: Translating the wordplay with this technique means that the wordplay of the ST is left untranslated. Translators only copy and paste the wordplay into the TT.

6) Editorial Techniques: The translator gives explanation of some words or phrases containing wordplay usually in the form of footnotes, endnotes or comments so that readers can further understand the meaning of that particular wordplay as it is sometimes really confusing.

III. WORDPLAY CLASSIFICATION

Applying Delabastita’s classification elaborated above, there are 50 wordplays identified in the novel Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. Paronymy, playing with spelling and pronunciation, is the most frequently identified wordplay in the novel. Paronymy appears in the novel as many as 15 times, while homography, same spellings but different pronunciations, do not appear at all. Table 1 illustrates the variety of wordplay presents in the data.

TABLE I. THE FREQUENCY OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF WORDPLAY IN THE SOURCE TEXT

No	Classification of Wordplay	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Phonological and Graphological Wordplay		
	Paronymy	15	30
	Homonymy	9	18
	Homophony	5	10
	Homography	0	0
2.	Polysemy	7	14
3.	Idiomatic wordplay	3	6
4.	Morphological wordplay	4	8
5.	Syntactic Ambiguity	2	4
6.	Play on Antonym	5	10
	Total	50	100

According to Delabastita, paronymy is wordplay that exploits the similarity between both the pronunciation and the spelling of the words [11]. As it is shown in Table 1, paronymy is the most commonly found wordplay in the novel. The wordplay appears 15 times and takes 30% of the whole data. This may because creating paronymy is much easier than other

types of wordplay as stated by Eerio [13]. Paronymy has two features, slight differences in spelling and pronunciation, as its characteristic for contrasting two different words. Thus, it leaves the author a higher chance to find two different words with these distinguishable features. In other words, it is easier to find two different words with slight difference in both spellings and pronunciation than only one of them.

One example of paronymy can be seen in Alice's statement "Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats?" [14]. 'Cats' and 'bats' are paronymy in the way that they are slightly different in spelling and pronunciation. The words only differ in one letter in their spellings and one sound in the initial /k/ and /b/ in pronunciations. Another example is the comparison of axis and axes in [ibid] Axis and axes differ in spelling in the letter i and e in the initial second syllable of each word. In terms of pronunciation, they differ slightly as well. The word axis is pronounced as /'aksɪs/, and the word axes is pronounced as /'æk sɪz/. There is a similar sound /'a/ and /'æ/ for 'axis' and axes respectively which is immediately followed by consonant /k/. Another difference is that the both words are ended with the sound /s/ and /z/. Moreover, both of these words also have very unrelated meaning. Axis is a noun which according to Oxford Living Dictionary means "an imaginary line about which a body rotates". Meanwhile, the word axes is actually a plural form of the noun axe, a tool used for chopping wood [15].

Homonymy relates to similarity on spelling and pronunciation, yet different in meaning. There are nine homonymy found in the data. One of example is as follow

"And so these three little sisters—they were learning to draw, you know—"

Alice did not wish to offend the Dormouse again, so she began very cautiously: "But I don't understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?" [14].

The word 'draw' that is used in the page 33 as in Carroll is a homonymy [14]. It is two different words that have the same exact same spelling and pronunciation yet have no correlation in meaning. The words mean *menggambar* and *mengambil* in Indonesian.

Another wordplay classification is homophony. The most famous example is 'Not' and 'knot' [14]. The word *not* and *knot* have different spellings and meanings that are not related at all. However, they have the exact same pronunciation which is /nɒt/. *Not* is an adverb to express the negative of something, meanwhile *knot* is a noun which means a fastening of something by looping a rope, or string which purpose is to tighten it.

Further, the novel also feature polysemy wordplay in which one word possesses many meanings. For example in a conversation between Hatter and The King on the novel.

The miserable Hatter dropped his teacup and bread-and-butter, and went down on one knee. "I'm a poor man, your Majesty," he began.

"You're a very poor speaker," said the King. (p. 54) [14].

'Poor' is a polysemous word. It has related meaning where the first one means 'lacking sufficient money to live in a standard considered as stable in society,' and the other one is 'being inferior or below the standard quality.'

While idiomatic wordplay also appears in the novel. One example is a statement by the Duchess which derived from an original idiom: 'take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves'.

"Ah, well! It means much the same thing," said the Duchess, digging her sharp little chin into Alice's shoulder as she added, "and the moral of that is—"Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves." (p.41) [14].

IV. WORDPLAY TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES

Regarding the translation technique applied in rendering wordplays found in the data, it was revealed that the most frequent technique used is *Wordplay to Non-wordplay*. As many as 31 wordplay or 62% of the data are translated using this technique. It is highly probable because wordplay is very culture-dependent and rely so much on context. It is very difficult to find the equivalent of English wordplay in Indonesian. Words that spell and sound similar in English is often spell and sound very different in Indonesian. Thus, translating wordplay literally, sacrificing its form and meaning, is often opted.

Table 2 confirmed that Wordplay to Non-wordplay is the technique that is used the most in translating wordplay as many as 31 data or 62%. This is because it is difficult to maintain the form as well as the meaning of the wordplay from SL to TL. Wordplay ST = Wordplay TT is the technique that is not used in the translation.

TABLE II. THE FREQUENCY OF THE TECHNIQUES USED IN WORDPLAY TRANSLATION

No.	Technique of Wordplay Translation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Wordplay → Wordplay	14	28
2.	Wordplay → Non-Wordplay	31	62
3.	Wordplay → RRD	3	6
4.	Wordplay → Zero	1	2
5.	Wordplay ST = Wordplay TT	0	0
6.	Editorial Technique	1	2
Total		50	100

A. Wordplay to Non-wordplay

On page 43 in Carroll, there are wordplays *tortoise* and *taught us* which are homophone and the translation is *kura-kura* and *mengajari kami* which follow literal meaning [14]. As a consequence, there is a lost in witty words and the humor intended. Indonesian readers can understand the story, but they are detached from the author's creative language style. Further, the translation of *soles and eels* [14], which is a play on words and similar end sounds of *soles* and *heels* is ignored and simply transferred into *ikan sole* and *belut*, which is, once again, the literal meaning. Thus, the humor evoked by the use of wordplay cannot be maintained. Worse still, the similarity in the pronunciation of *porpoise* and *purpose* is not preserved as they are translated literally into *dengan lumba-lumba apa*

and *tujuan* respectively. While Djokolelono translated the same wordplays into *pesut* and *maksud* which betray the literal meaning, yet preserve the rhyme of the wordplay [7].

B. Wordplay to Wordplay

In fact, translating wordplay into wordplay is possible. Yet, there are only 14 wordplays translated using this technique. The paronymy *tale* and *tail* are translated into *kisahku* and *misaiku* to preserve at least the similar last syllable pronunciation. While for *pig* and *fig* the translator opted rhymed pair *sapi atau babi* instead of *buah ara* which is the actual meaning of *fig*. Thus, it revealed that the effort from the translator to preserve either the spelling or pronunciation similarities in the target language may result in equivalent wordplay in the target language by sacrificing the original meaning. Unfortunately only 28% of wordplay to wordplay translation technique is used in this novel.

One interesting technique present in translating wordplay in *Alice's in the Wonderland* translated by Maria Masniari Lubis is editorial technique. The translator chooses to borrow the wordplay into the target language and adds information between brackets to ease readers' understanding.

The only example is from page 48 [14], in which one creature said that "Boots and shoes under the sea are done with a **whiting**." While the translation is "Sepatu dan bot di dalam lautan dikelapkan dengan **semir whiting (kapur sirih—red.)**." It is clear that the word whiting is the opposite of blackening which is the common practice of polishing shoes on land. Since the setting is under the sea, the term blackening is changed into whiting, from the root word white. In the target language, the translator keeps the word *whiting* in the target text and provides an additional information about the word 'whiting' in brackets which means *kapur sirih* to help readers understanding the intended meaning. However, this technique does not illustrate the creativity and fluency of the author.

V. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be said that the translation of wordplay in Alice's in Wonderland into Indonesian by Maria Masniari Lubis and published by Cikal Aksara in 2013 tends not to preserve the style of the original work and is considered less lively and aesthetic compared to

the original work. Yet, the readers are at advantage in understanding the target text better due to simpler lexical choice that does not lead to ambiguity. Finally, based on the findings, it can be assumed that wordplay translation requires translator's creativity and initiative to maintain the uniqueness of a literary work.

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