

## FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS IN TRANSLATION PROCESS

### A Preliminary Insight of Translation Theory

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### Abstract

Generally, the primary activity of translators in translating a text is transferring source language (SL) into target language (TL). This transferring action includes a language replacement process between the two different languages as consequence, conflicts often take place. Such conflicts happen when the meaning of a language is not transferrable due to non-equivalence or might not have the equivalent meaning yet. This writing is focusing on the translation process in general and influencing factors on its process. This process is the prominent foundation for translators and language learners when it comes to understanding selected text as well as its influencing factors.

Key words/phrases: Target Language (TL), Source Language (SL), language, culture.

### *Aspek Pokok dalam Proses Penerjemahan*

#### *Abstrak*

*Kegiatan utama para penerjemah dalam menerjemahkan suatu teks pada umumnya adalah pengalihan dari bahasa asli ke bahasa sasaran. Dalam pengalihan ini terjadi proses pemindahan makna antara dua bahasa yang berbeda, sehingga dalam proses pengalihan inilah sering terjadi konflik. Konflik ini terjadi saat makna bahasa yang diterjemahkan tidak sepadan atau belum memiliki padanan pada bahasa sasaran. Fokus tulisan ini tertuju pada proses penerjemahan secara umum dan faktor yang mempengaruhi proses. Proses ini menjadi dasar utama bagi para penerjemah atau pembelajar bahasa dalam memahami makna suatu teks tertentu berikut faktor yang mempengaruhinya.*

*Kata kunci: bahasa sasaran, bahasa sumber, bahasa, budaya*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Translation involves minimum two different languages; source language and another one is target language. There are a growing numbers of demands in translating foreign language books and literature into Indonesian these days.

Hence in answering such demand, printed media distributors and publishing companies need more translators who are able to meet the public needs. However, translating is not merely transferring one language to another, but it also involves transferring or replacing the meaning of the text. Thus the process in which the translation takes place is very crucial to translators as well as their linguistic competence in both source and target language. English and Indonesian are mostly the discussed of this writing since English is the language which is widely spoken in Jakarta at the moment; meanwhile Indonesian is the mother tongue and national language of Indonesia.

## B. DISCUSSION

### **Translation: Language Aspects**

Translation must involve at least two different languages: a Source Language - SL and a Target Language - TL. A translator has to be fluent in both languages to do the work. Before starting the work, a translator has to be aware of the text he deals with; therefore two basic questions he needs to ask: what are the SL and the TL? There are some initial steps that he needs to take into account before producing a translation: he has to fully understand what the writer is trying to say in the text, acknowledges how the grammatical and lexical aspects work in the text and knows both the context as well as the culture. If a translator fails to comprehend them, then the message will never be understood by the targeted readers.

Gentzler (1993) mentions that Holmes was keen more on “the process of translation in order to understand why certain decisions were made; before judging the result as good/ bad, true/ untrue, understood/ misunderstood.”(p.101). He emphasizes that it is necessary to know how decision of using a particular word in the translator’s mind when they are translating a text. During the process, the translator always comes into a point where a decision what words or phrase to use in the TL.

Besides a text, in translating activity, a translator should aware of other aspects outside the text. Newmark, in *About Translation* (1991), illustrates the factors in the following Figure 1 that he believes:

All these ten factors may actually or potentially affect the translation of a text, which may *represent a compromise, a balance, a choice* [italics added] from among them. However, the moral and the factual truth must always be made clear when it is concerned. (p. 31-2)

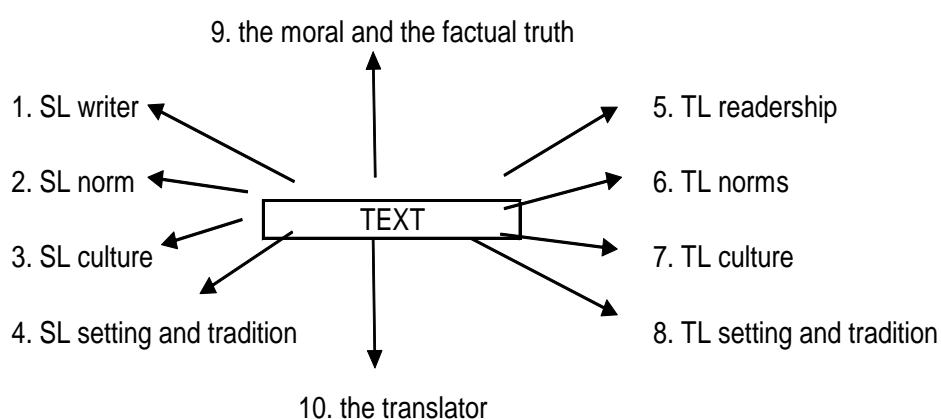


Figure 1. The various factors that impinge semantically on a text

For instance, when translating the word *cookie* from an American text into Australian text which probably a translator does is to change it to *biscuits*. Some vocabulary items are different even in the same language and have the same meaning. The most important thing here is “to balance” the meaning of TL and SL, as Newmark has mentioned, it is conveyed in the right direction without forgetting “the moral and the factual truth” of both the source text and target text.

### Translation: A Process

In his other book *A Textbook of Translation*; Newmark conveys that the translating process has four different levels. They are included in a system of language theory. Newmark (1988) believes that “If one accepts this theory of translating, there is no gap between translation theory and practice. The theory

of translating is based, via the level of naturalness, on a theory of translation” (p. 20).

Textual, referential cohesive and natural levels that cover the translating process (Newmark, 1988, p.22-9) are here mentioned as the following:

#### 1. Textual level

According to Newmark (1988), the textual level is a level where “... you transpose the SL grammar (clauses and groups) into their ‘ready’ TL equivalents and you translate the lexical units into the sense that appears immediately appropriate in the context of the sentence.” (p.22)

The translator needs to feel comfortable with the source text thus he has to read it several times. The main purpose is to find the message in it and there is a possibility that transferred meaning is involved at this level. This is also the level where a literal translation takes place because a translator deals with a text of SL at the first time.

#### 2. Referential level

Newmark (1988) defines that:

The referential level, where you mentally sort out the text, is built up out of, based on, the clarification of all linguistic difficulties and, where appropriate, supplementary information from the ‘encyclopaedia’ – my symbols for any work of reference or textbook. (p.23)

Thus in reading this sentence: *He has a Sisyphean task*; the translator may find the word Sisyphean needs clarification. He will picture in his mind what it means. Thesaurus and encyclopaedia may help the translator to find the explanation, but he also must be responsible for the moral and the factual truth in it. *Sisyphean* is a Greek mythology about someone who is

being punished by pulling a very big stone to the top of a mountain, which is impossible to finish.

According to Shen & Wong, **language** and **culture** (1999) are one of the most “influencing factors in translating process” (p.1). Even though their study is about translating process in English and Chinese, still the translator has similar difficulties: lexical, syntactic, etc. Inexperienced translator might find the linguistic aspect is difficult to deal with. In lexical problem, the word *mouse* today has different meaning when a housewife is screaming from the kitchen and when it is spoken by a computer user.

Cultural factor is also very crucial in translating a text. For instance, in English we have sentence like: *I am going to have a shower*. Indonesian does not have cultural expression for the word *shower*; therefore to avoid misunderstanding the translator will translate it into *mandi* – which has similar symbolic meaning.

### 3. Cohesive level

The mood aspect shows the emotive purpose of the text, if it is neutral, emotional, negative, positive, etc. as Newmark (1988) says:

This cohesive level is a *regulator*, it *secures coherence*, it *adjusts emphasis* [italics added]. At this level, you consider the lengths of paragraphs and sentences, the formulation of the title; the tone of the conclusion ... This is where the findings of discourse analysis are pertinent. (p. 24)

This level links the previous levels: textual and referential levels. According to Nida and Taber (1982), this is also the level where the translator needs to “make the transfer of the total discourse” (p.104). This means the translator is expected to see coherence and cohesive levels of the text in order to get a better understanding of what the text said.

Structure and mood of the SL affected the translator's mind in producing a communicative translation in the TL. In this way, he will translate and choose the meaning in the most comprehensible language without disregarding the TL structure which makes the flow of the text is logical and coherence in order. For instance:

- a. She came into the room and sat down
- b. She came into the room. She sat down

Here, 'and' has a role as a conjunction which signalling a sequence of actions "came into" and "sat down". This particular connector makes the two sentences have different meaning. In (1), "she" refers to someone who came into the room only, but in (2) "she" could possibly refer to someone who came into the room or someone else. Hence, the meaning will be different. The translator has to be mindful to this discourse and has to see both its cohesion and coherent.

#### 4. Natural level.

Newmark (1988) mentions two things a translator should make sure that:

...you have to ensure: (a) that your translation makes sense; (b) that it reads naturally, that it is written in ordinary language, the common grammar, idioms and words that meet kind of situation. Normally, you can only do this by temporarily disengaging yourself from the SL text, by reading your own translation as though no original existed. (p. 24)

Newmark recommends that the translator have to check the level of naturalness of the TL text. The level of naturalness should rely on the readership; norms, culture, setting and tradition of TL, without forgetting the rest factors of SL since they relate to each other (see **Figure 1**). Besides, by "disengaging yourself from the text" will help the translator to check its accuracy of meaning. If the translator fails to do so, then the message will never be understood by the readers/audience. For examples:

	English (SL)	Indonesian (TL)
<b>Verb</b>	The river <i>runs</i>	<del>Sungai itu berlari</del> Sungai itu <i>mengalir</i>
<b>Idiom</b>	He is a <i>rotten egg</i>	<del>Dia itu telur busuk</del> Dia <i>orang yang jahat</i>
<b>Word order</b>	<i>Bob</i> bought a new book	<i>Buku baru itu</i> dibeli oleh Bob or <i>Bob</i> membeli <i>buku baru</i>

It is also possible to do restructuring in order to achieve naturalness in the translation. Restructuring (Nida and Taber, 1982, p.104) is suggested to be done before presenting the translation to the reader/audience. Therefore, editing and proof-reading will carry better result to improve and achieve the naturalness in the TL text.

### C. CONCLUSION

The real challenge in the process of translating is when a translator begins and goes through it to produce a natural and communicative translation. This is also depends on the complication of a text. Thus in running the process and analysis of a particular text, again, a translator should have both the SL and TL competences to be able to comprehend the meaning as well as transfer it into TL text without lessen the meaning. In other words, when doing a transferring process, a translator needs to be mindful that he is working on languages which contain numerous meanings, rules, cultures, values, systems, styles and norms. Hence, translating involves a good decision-making to produce a logical, acceptable and meaningful translation.

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