

THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTS IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT OF *MUSEUM WAYANG DAN ARTEFAK PURBALINGGA*

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Abstract

The article discusses translation techniques applied in the translation of culture-specific concepts in the description text of *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*. Culture-specific concept is one of the common types of non-equivalence at word level resulted from the absence of cultural concepts in the target language. To cope with this problem, a translator is provided with translation techniques proposed by many translation scholars. This research applied the theory of translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir. Based on the analysis, the most frequently-used technique is borrowing technique. The technique is relatively common to apply in translating culturally-bound terms that do not have one-to-one correspondence. The most common non-equivalence problem at word level to find is problem of culture-specific concepts. It is because the text describes the puppets displayed there, and to be more specific, puppets are parts of Indonesian culture, a precious cultural heritage. Therefore, many culturally-bound words or terms are kept original.

Keywords: *culture-specific concepts; translation; translation techniques*

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a big country with various cultures. Each area in Indonesia has its own culture with its uniqueness that differs it from the others. Puppet (*wayang*) is one of the Indonesian culture products that exists in some regions in Indonesia like Central Java and West Java. It is presented in a show in which the stories are mostly full of moral values and lessons depicted by the puppet characters. When it is not performed, the puppets are kept in certain places, for example in the puppeteer's house and in museums. In some artefact museums, *wayang* is displayed as a tourist's attraction. For example, in *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*, some *wayang* characters are displayed with the description attached to each of them. The description is written in Indonesian and English so that foreign visitors can read and understand each of the *wayang* characters.

The researchers are interested in analyzing the translation techniques used in those bilingual texts, particularly the techniques used to translate the culture-specific concepts. In translating culture-specific concepts, a translator needs to consider several aspects since these aspects have important influences on the translation results. A translator is required to have linguistic skills to transfer information from the source language to the target language;

and interlinguistic knowledge, such as background knowledge of a certain culture inside a text, to transfer any information related to a text.

Linguistic features commonly have a strong relationship with the social condition of a community and its culture. These conventions may have different meanings and understandings if they are applied in another community. Hence, a translator is also required to have adequate cultural knowledge of the source language to facilitate him/her in doing translation process. He is required to convey information from the source language, not only about the message, but also the social condition of the target language with a level of legibility, to the target language. In this circumstance, background knowledge of the target language must also be grasped by a translator.

The research is focused on the most-frequently used translation technique in dealing with culture-specific items found in the text. Similar research was conducted by (Purwaningsih et al., 2019) that focused on the translation techniques applied by the machine in translating Banyumas batik motifs from Indonesian to English. In that research, the data were taken from @batikantodjamil and @batk_rd, and the result shows that the most dominant technique is borrowing. It is because mostly the names of the batik motifs are derived from cultural terms, especially Javanese and the machine cannot analyze the meaning behind the names.

Another previous research related to cultural terms was conducted by Hardiyanti, et al. (2021). They discussed the English translation of Javanese cultural terms in *Gadis Kretek* novel. The study highlighted translation technique and quality of those cultural terms. The result shows that generalization and pure borrowing are the most frequently used techniques. There are also some combinations of translation techniques, for instance borrowing + addition, borrowing + adaptation, and many else. The use of borrowing is quite dominant since cultural terms are very specific concept that belong to one language and they might not have equivalence in another language.

This study is expected to contribute to readers in the field of translation and in the form of a research model for translating cultural texts. In addition, this research is expected to be useful for translators by offering suggestions on techniques that can be used in translating culturally-charged texts.

2. Literature Review

The word *translation* is a term referring to either a process or a product of message transfer from one language to another language. The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL) (Munday, 2008). According to (Nida & Taber, 1982), "Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style". From that definition, it is clear that the message is the most important thing to consider in translation process. It is in line with Larson's (1998) definition; translation consists of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language (target language). It is the meaning that is being transferred and must be held constant. Only

the form changes. The translator works from the very basic unit of language namely word or lexicon to achieve the equivalence of the whole text. (Bassnett, 1980) states that equivalence in translation should not be approach as a search of sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two target language versions of the same text, let alone between the source and the target language version. It is very likely for a word in the source language does not have a one-to-one correspondence in the target language, especially when it is a culturally bound term. Sapir in *ibid* states that no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.

Cultural specific item or culturally-bound term is only one of non-equivalence problems in translation occurring at word level. According to Baker (2018), non-equivalence at word level means that the target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text. The type and level of difficulty posed can vary tremendously, depending on the nature of non-equivalence. The following are some common types of non-equivalence at word level according to *ibid*.

a. Culture-specific concepts.

The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as 'culture-specific'.

b. The source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language.

The source-language word may express a concept which is known in the target culture but simply not lexicalized, that is not 'allocated' a target-language word to express it.

c. The source-language word is semantically complex.

The source-language word may be semantically complex. This is a fairly common problem in translation. Sometimes words are not morphologically complex, yet semantically complex. In other words, a single word which consists of a single morpheme can sometimes express a more complex set of meanings than a whole sentence. Languages automatically develop very concise forms for referring to complex concepts if the concepts become important enough to be talked about often. We do not usually realize how semantically complex a word is until we have to translate it into a language which does not have an equivalent for it.

d. The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning.

The target language may make more or fewer distinctions in meaning than the source language. What one language regards as an important distinction in meaning another language may not perceive as relevant. For example, Indonesian makes a distinction between going out in the rain without the knowledge that it is raining (*kehujanan*) and going out in the rain with the knowledge that it is raining (*hujan-hujan*). English does not make this distinction, with the result that if an English text referred to going out in the rain, the Indonesian translator may find it difficult to choose the right

equivalent, unless the context makes it clear whether or not the person in question knows that it is raining.

e. The target language lacks a superordinate.

The target language may have specific words (hyponyms) but no general word (superordinate) to head the semantic field.

f. The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym).

More commonly, languages tend to have general words (superordinates) but lack specific ones (hyponyms), since each language makes only those distinctions in meaning which seem relevant to its particular environment. There are endless examples of this type of non-equivalence. English has many hyponyms under article for which it is difficult to find precise equivalents in other languages, for example feature, survey, report, critique, commentary, review and many more.

g. Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective.

Physical perspective may be of more importance in one language than it is in another. Physical perspective has to do with where things or people are in relation to one another or to a place, as expressed in pairs of words such as come/go, take/bring, arrive/depart and so on.

h. Differences in expressive meaning.

There may be a target-language word which has the same propositional meaning as the source-language word, but it may have a different expressive meaning. The difference may be considerable, or it may be subtle but important enough to pose a translation problem in a given context. It is usually easier to add expressive meaning than to subtract it. In other words, if the target language equivalent is neutral compared to the source-language item, the translator can sometimes add the evaluative element by means of a modifier or adverb if necessary or by building it in somewhere else in the text.

i. Differences in form.

There is often no equivalent in the target language for a particular form in the source text. Certain suffixes and prefixes which convey propositional and other types of meaning in English often have no direct equivalents in other languages. English has many couplets, such as employer/employee, trainer/trainee and payer/payee. It also makes frequent use of suffixes, such as -ish (e.g., boyish, hellish, greenish) and -able (e.g., conceivable, retrievable, drinkable).

j. Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms.

Even when a particular form does have a ready equivalent in the target language, there may be a difference in the frequency with which it is used or the purpose for which it is used. Thus, English uses the continuous -ing form for binding clauses much more frequently than other languages which have equivalents for it, for example, German and the Scandinavian languages. Consequently, rendering every -ing form in an English source text with an equivalent -ing form in a German, Danish or Swedish target text would result in a stilted, unnatural style.

k. The use of loan words in the source text.

The use of loan words in the source text poses a special problem in translation. Quite apart from their respective propositional meaning, loan words such as *au fait*, *chic*, *Auf Wiedersehen* and *alfresco* in English are often used for their prestige value, because they can add an air of sophistication to the text or its subject matter.

Some scholars propose theories to analyze translation strategies, techniques, and methods, and procedures. However, according to Molina & Albir (2002), translation techniques are more applicable in translating micro units of a language, such as words, phrases, and clause in some cases. There are five basic characteristics of translation techniques; they affect the result of the translation, they are classified by comparison with the original, they affect micro-units of text, they are by nature discursive and contextual, and they are functional. Those translation techniques are explained in the following parts.

- a. Adaptation means to replace a ST cultural element with one from the target culture.
- b. Amplification means to introduce details that are not formulated in the ST: information, explicative paraphrasing.
- c. Borrowing. To take a word or expression straight from another language. It can be pure, or naturalized.
- d. Calque is literal translation of a foreign word or phrase; it can be lexical or structural.
- e. Compensation is to introduce a ST element of information or stylistic effect in another place in the TT because it cannot be reflected in the same place as in the ST.
- f. Description is to replace a term or expression with a description of its form or/and function.
- g. Established equivalent is to use a term or expression recognized either by dictionaries or language in use as an equivalent in the TL.
- h. Generalization is to use a more general or neutral term.
- i. Linguistic amplification is to add linguistic elements. This is often used in consecutive interpreting and dubbing.
- j. Linguistic compression is to synthesize linguistic elements in the TT. This technique is often used in simultaneous interpreting and in subtitling.
- k. Literal translation is to translate a word or an expression word for word.
- l. Modulation is to change the point of view, focus or cognitive category in relation to the ST; it can be lexical or structural.
- m. Particularization is to use a more precise or concrete term.
- n. Reduction is to suppress a ST information item in the TT.
- o. Substitution (linguistic, paralinguistic) is to change linguistic elements for paralinguistic elements (intonation, gestures) or vice versa
- p. Transposition is to change a grammatical category.
- q. Variation is to change linguistic or paralinguistic elements (intonation, gestures) that affect aspects of linguistic variation: changes of textual tone, style, social dialect, geographical dialect, etc., e.g., to introduce or change dialectal indicators for characters when translating for the theater, changes in tone when adapting novels for children, etc.

3. Research Method

This research belongs to qualitative research in which the researchers become the research instruments, and that an interview or observation guide should be regarded as flexible and open to change as the research proceed (Taylor et al., 2016). Most of the analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, or broken into segments. They can be reorganized to permit the researcher to compare, contrast, analyze, and construct patterns out of them (Miles et al., 2014). The data of this research are taken from the description text in *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*. The description is attached on each puppet displayed, and it is written in Indonesian and English. The text contains many culture-specific items coming from either Javanese or Sundanese culture since those regions are the origins of puppets. The researchers employ purposive sampling technique since the researchers have already set the boundary in selecting the data. The unit of analysis is words and phrases that result in non-equivalence problems when being translated into English. There are 125 data found in this research with 111 data translated using borrowing technique, 7 data belonging to transposition, 3 data to generalization, 2 data to established equivalent, and 2 data to adaptation.

In analyzing the data, the researchers begin by collecting the cultural terms in the description text of *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*. After collecting the cultural terms, the researchers sort the cultural terms that can be included as data. This is also called domain analysis. Then, the researchers determine the translation techniques used by the translator in translating those cultural terms. Lastly, the researchers do componential analysis by finding the correlation between the translation techniques and non-equivalence.

4. Results and Discussion

After analyzing the translation of cultural terms in the description texts of *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*, the researchers discover several translation techniques. These techniques are applied by the translator to describe the cultural terms from Indonesian to English. Since the description texts are for a museum, there are so many cultural terms in those texts. Moreover, this museum displays the traditional puppets and artefacts from Indonesia. Thus, there will be no surprise if many cultural terms exist.

Those culturally-bound terms are surely challenging for the translator. It is because culture is representation of language and every language might have its own culture which does not prevail in another language. Thus, it is the translator's job to convey the meaning of those cultural terms to foreigners, so that they understand the terms clearly. The following are some translation techniques used by the translator.

4.1 Borrowing

Borrowing is one of translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2000) that is defined as taking a word or expression straight from another language; it might be either pure or naturalized borrowing. Borrowing technique is mostly used when the translator cannot find the closest equivalence for a source language word in the target language word. For instance, when the translator has to translate culturally-bound terms.

Word with culture-specific concept is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food. As an example, the word *gamelan*, a Javanese cultural term that is

defined in Collins Dictionaries Online (2023) as a musical ensemble of Indonesia, consisting of wind, string, and percussion instruments, as flute, lute, gongs, drums, and bamboo xylophones. Although the term is already known and defined in English dictionaries, the one-to-one correspondence for it in English is not available. The term *gamelan* is categorized into material culture since it is a product of a culture in form of artefact. In the source language culture, there is no such thing equivalence to *gamelan*, so in translation it results in non-equivalence problem. *Gamelan* is translated into the same word, or in this case, the translator applies borrowing technique because it is impossible to translate it into Javanese traditional music instruments, which has more general referents.

Another example is the word *slendro* which also belongs to material culture in form of abstract concept. In Merriam Webster Dictionary (2023b), the term is defined as a pentatonic tuning employed for Javanese *gamelans* that divides the octave into five roughly similar intervals. Similar to the previous example, the term *slendro* also does not have one-to-one correspondence in the target language although the dictionaries provide its definition. In the translation of the description text, the term is translated by borrowing technique. Besides cultural items, borrowing technique is also used in translating proper nouns like *yoghurt*, *burgundy*, *barbeque*, etc. It is also commonly used in translating common nouns like *aluminium foil*, *rating*, *lipgloss*, etc., like what is found in (Ulfah, 2019).

The next example is the word *cepot*, a Sundanese puppet character representing commoner who has a close relationship with the royal family of Astinapura. *Cepot* is the problem solver of Astinapura everytime the Kingdom is in trouble (Nurhidayat, 2016). Like *gamelan* and *slendro* that belong to material culture, *cepot* also belongs to the same category. However, *cepot* is not available in English dictionaries and the translator uses borrowing technique in translating it. The absence of *cepot* in English dictionaries might be due to the dominance of Javanese culture worldwide.

Moreover, the word *dalang* is also an example of borrowing technique. According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) (2012), *dalang* means the person who plays puppet. However, *dalang* does not play any puppets. He usually plays *wayang* (shadow puppets) which originally comes from Indonesia. The words *dalang* and *wayang* are translated the same by the translator since those terms do not have one-to-one correspondence in English. These two terms also belong to material category.

4.2 Transposition

Transposition is a technique in which the grammatical category is changed. Transposition technique is applied for example when translating Indonesian noun phrase into English or vice versa. There are two types of transposition, namely obligatory and optional; the former can be found in noun phrase translation from Indonesian to English or vice versa, and the latter occurs when the transposition of a phrase or sentence construction is made by the translator for a stylistic reason. Optional transposition may occur in some processes, for example from a noun into a verb, a verb into an adjective, or an adjective into an adverb. It might also occur in the translation of a word into a phrase or vice versa and a phrase into a clause or sentence. Indonesian noun phrase construction places the headword at the beginning, and the modifier at the end of the construction, but English noun phrase construction is composed the other way around.

In this research, there is only obligatory transposition to be found. Here are some examples of transposition found in the research data. The phrase *wayang tengul* which is translated into *tengul puppet*; the transposition occurs in the change of the head and modifier's position. In the source language, the head is *wayang* and the modifier is *tengul*, but in the target language, the position is exchanged. Transposition is a very common technique to use especially when dealing with noun phrase construction, and in this case the transposition is obligatory due to the language structure difference. Another example of obligatory transposition is the term *wayang pancasila* which is translated into *pancasila puppet*. The headword of the source language phrase is changed into the modifier in the target language. Meanwhile, in the term *wayang cepak cirebon*, the head word is the word *wayang*, and the modifiers are the words *cepak* and *cirebon*. Since there is no closest equivalence for this term in English, the translator keeps the words *cepak* and *cirebon* and changes the position, so the translation for the term is *cirebon cepak puppet*. This term refers to a kind puppet that exists in Cirebon, a town in West Java.

4.3 Generalization

Generalization is when the translator uses a more general or neutral term, and it is the opposite of particularization. In this research, there are two data that are translated using this technique, for example in the term *serat menak*. The term refers to an ancient manuscript containing special characteristics of ancient literature. In the description text, it is translated into *the book of menak*. The word *serat* has more specific meaning than the word *book*, so this is where the generalization occurs.

Another example is the word *bedug* that is translated into *traditional drum*. *Bedug* is one of traditional music instruments that has similar shape as drum, but nowadays *bedug* is more familiar to find in mosques as a traditional communication instrument. *Bedug* is used to sign the praying times as well as *ifthar* time in Ramadhan, so it has a different function today. The use of generalization technique in translating culture-specific concepts sometimes decreases the level of accuracy and acceptability of the translation. The target readers might not be satisfied with the general terms brought by the translator since it is very likely that the source and target text items are totally different when they are compared.

4.4 Established Equivalent

This technique occurs when the translator uses a term or expression recognized (by dictionaries or language in use) as an equivalent in the TL. This technique is very recognizable because it is commonly used in translating familiar words or phrases, so researchers can easily see it. In this research, we can find this technique in translating the word *sorban* into *turban*. Both *sorban* and *turban* have the same referent, for example in Cambridge Dictionaries online (2023a), *turban* is defined as a head covering for a man, worn especially by Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, made from a long piece of cloth that is wrapped around the top of the head many times. In Indonesian, *sorban* carries the same meaning.

Another example of established equivalent technique is the translation of *Bupati Purbalingga* into *the regent of Purbalingga*. In Merriam Webster Dictionary Online (2023a), the word *regent* is defined as a person who governs a kingdom when a monarch is not able to, but it is used to translate the word *bupati*, which means an official who rules a region. In

Indonesian governmental system, the provinces consists of some regions or regencies governed by regents. In the past, many regencies were governed with monarch or kingdom systems such as the regency of Banyumas in Central Java, which used to be ruled by a descendant of Majapahit kingdom. Therefore, the researchers classify this translation technique into Established Equivalent, since the concept of this technique matches the background of both source and target languages. Established equivalent is very common to be used when a translator works on vocabulary items used in general context from which the words' meanings are easily found in the dictionaries.

4.5 Adaptation

In adaptation, the translator replaces a ST cultural element with one from the target culture. The translator replaces or adjusts some elements of the source language with elements that are accepted and recognized in the target language. It might occur at both micro and macro level of a language unit. The example of micro adaptation is found in the data of this research. The word *Kurawa* which is translated into *The Kurawas*. *Kurawa* is the name of a clan in Indian epics called Mahabharata; *Kurawa* is the descendants of Destrarastra, the first son of Bharata Dynasty. The translator adapts the family naming system in the target language, so the word *kurawa* is translated into The Korawas. The family naming system in the target language is by adding the article 'the' and also adding the plural indicator 's' to the name of the clan name.

Another example is in the name of a person called *Pak Gepuk*, which is translated into 'Mr. Gepuk'. The adaptation technique is in the use of 'Mr.' that functions as a salutation for a man; in the source language culture, the use of salutation is very important especially for a respected man, or for a man with certain social status. In Indonesian culture, the use of *Pak* is very common when addressing a stranger or when paying respect to someone. However, in English or western culture, the salutation is used in slightly different way, for instance 'Mr.' is followed with the family name, for example Mr. Dickinson or with certain predicate, for example Mr. President. Adaptation might also occur in such a way that sometimes makes the whole message of the target text change totally, or the translation feels domesticated or very close to the target language. This technique is somehow debatable for translation scholars, because if the message of the whole text changes, then the accuracy of the translation is distorted. Therefore, adaptation is mostly used when translating texts which do not have direct impact to the readers.

Those translation techniques were selected by the translator to convey the meaning of cultural terms in the description texts of *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*. The borrowing technique is used to express the cultural terms which do not have equivalence in target language. Meanwhile, transposition is applied to give clearer explanation by changing the grammatical category. Besides, generalization is also found to give general explanation on the cultural terms, so that it is easier to understood by target readers. Another technique found is established equivalent, this technique is applied when there is an equivalence of the cultural terms in the target language. In addition, adaptation gives more familiar cultural element for target readers. Even though those translation techniques have different applications, the purpose is the same, which is conveying the meaning of cultural terms to target readers clearly.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be seen that there are five translation techniques applied to translate the culture-specific concepts in the descriptive texts of the puppets in *Museum Wayang dan Artefak Purbalingga*. Those techniques are borrowing, adaptation, generalization, established equivalent, and transposition. The most frequently-used technique is borrowing because most of the culture-specific concepts in the texts do not have natural equivalence in the target language. This finding is in line with the function of borrowing technique, that is to help translator cope with the non-equivalence problems emerging in translation process. However, in some cases like culture-specific concepts, borrowing technique cannot give satisfactory translation to the target readers because the readers are not familiar with the concepts.

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