

## MEANING IN TRANSLATION

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### ABSTRACT

Translation is a kind of process. It is not regarded as the product. The process of translation is decoding the source language text to find the meaning. After that, encoding the meaning in the target language text. The process of decoding and encoding meaning in the translation process is not a simple activity. there are many considerations that have to be taken into account. Meaning equivalence has to be maintained well. Because of that, decoding and encoding the meaning must be done properly. In finding the meaning of the source language text, it is not enough to pay attention merely on the referential meaning. the connotative meaning plays important role in gaining the right meaning. After getting the meaning of the source language text, maintaining meaning equivalence in target language can be difficult. There are problems that might rise the difficulty in finding the meaning equivalence. The problems are the difference of language system, the difference of culture, the various meanings embedded by a word, and the lack of generic-specific word relationship.

**Key words:** meaning, translation

### A. Tanslation

Translation is a process of finding meaning behind the source language text that will be transfered into target language text. In rendering the meaning, there are some points that should be maintained well such as accuracy, clarity and naturalness of the meaning, ideas, or messages of the translation. The result of the translation has to give the same sense to the reader in the target language as the

source text does to the reader in the source language. This fact is reflected by definition proposed by some scholars.

The most famous definition of translation is proposed by Newmark. Newmark (1988: 5) defines translation as rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text. This explanation gives special importance on decoding the meaning of text in the source language then decoding the meaning into the text in the target language by still maintaining the author's intention.

In addition, Hatim and Munday (2004: 6) define translation as the process of transferring a written text from source language (SL) to target language (TL). Definition given by Hatim and Munday describe translation as a process of changing the form of text in the source language into the text in target language. Although the definition doesn't state clearly about meaning, the translation process itself is not merely about form. In transforming the form, meaning still goes together within its process.

Nida and Taber (1982: 12), on the other hand, state that translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message. In this definition, Nida and Taber use term receptor language instead of target language. This definition explains that translation is finding the closest natural equivalent of source language text meaning in receptor language. They emphasize on equivalence between the meaning in the source language text and target language text.

From the previous definitions, it can be concluded that translation is an activity did to find meaning equivalence in the target language text. In finding the meaning, the translator has to deal with unit of translation. Unit of translation is the element used by the translator when working on the source language text. It may be word, group, clause, sentence or the whole text (Hatim and Munday,

2004:17). Meaning contained by source language text can be gained by analyzing the source language text based on the unit of translation. In other words, meaning lies within the unit of translation.

In conclusion, the principal thing in doing translation process is meaning equivalence. The main activity of translation process is rendering the meaning of the source language text embedded deeply within the unit translation. After finding the meaning, the translator has to deliver the meaning into target language text by still paying attention to the meaning equivalence between source language text and target language text. It can be said that translation is a process dealt with meaning. Hatim and Munday (2004: 34) also suggest that one of the key problems for the analyst was in actually determining whether the source text meaning had been transferred into the target text. It cannot be denied that meaning is the main consideration: whether meaning of the source language text is accurately transferred into the target language text.

## **B. Meaning**

Meaning between the source language text and target language text must be equivalent. The discussion of meaning in translation process is not merely about transferring it into target language text. In finding the meaning, there are many aspects that have to be taken into account such as diction, grammatical structure, communication setting, and cultural context of the source language text. The same considerations are done in transferring the meaning to the target language text. The translators must assure that the meaning in source language text is equivalent to the meaning in target language text.

It is unavoidable that translation will relate to language. Basically, every language has its own system that is different to another language. This fact will influence the translation process in finding the right term in target language text. Meaning equivalence will be challenged by different system of language. As the example

of this different system is the translation process involving Bahasa Indonesia and English. On the system of noun phrase, Bahasa Indonesia and English have different system. In English, the rule of noun phrase is modifier followed by noun head. While in Bahasa Indonesia, the rule is D-M (*Diterangkan – Menerangkan*) or noun head followed by modifier. To make it clear, the following example can be a proof. The English phrase “ a new book” is translated into “*sebuah buku baru*”. It will be wrong when it is translated into” *sebuah baru buku*”. The comparison gives an insight about the different system of two languages that becomes a barrier in translation process when it is difficult to find the equivalence duo to the difference.

The meaning of a word or phrase cannot always be translated literally. English has phrase “a big hand”. When it is translated into Bahasa Indonesia, there is a possibility it will be wrong when it is translated into “*sebuah tangan besar*”. When the sentence is “They gave a big hand for her performance”, it will be wrong when it is translated into “*Mereka memberikan sebuah tangan besar untuk penampilannya*”. The right term of the translation is “*Mereka bertepuk tangan dengan riuh untuk penampilannya*”. In conclusion, the equivalent term for English “a big hand” is “*bertepuk tangan dengan riuh*”. It cannot be translated literally into” *sebuah tangan besar*”

### **C. Kinds of Meaning**

The famous scholars in translation field, Nida and Taber, classifies meaning into two classes, referential meaning and connotative meaning(1982: 56). Based on the classification above, the paper will concern on the discussion of referential meaning and connotative meaning.

#### **1. Referential Meaning**

Referential meaning deals with the words as signs or symbols of particular real thing or abstract thing. The meaning contained by word refers to something. Larson (1984: 36) state that referential meaning is the word refers to a certain

thing, event, attribution, or relation which a person can perceive or imagine. Referential meaning is also called denotative meaning. In rendering the meaning, translator must pay attention to two considerations.

#### **a. Grammatical Condition**

In particular condition, the meaning of a word is ruled by the grammatical structure. The part of the speech of the words will influence the meaning. These are the examples:

1. a. She creates beautiful dance  
b. Mary dances beautifully
2. a. Your father bought paint  
b. They paint the wall
3. a. I take a glass of water  
b. Dont water the plant
4. a. She had hard struggle  
b. They struggle to earn living

It can be seen from the above that in point a the English words ‘dance’, ‘paint’, ‘water’, and ‘struggle’ are nouns that is translated into ‘*tarian*’, ‘*cat*’, ‘*air*’, dan ‘*perjuangan*’ in Bahasa Indonesia. While in point b, the underlined English words are not nouns, but verbs. In Bahasa Indonesia, they are translated into ‘*menari*’, ‘*mengecat*’, ‘*menyiram*’, and ‘*berjuang*’. The examples show that the part of speech of the word influence the meaning reflected although the words are exactly same.

#### **b. Semotac condition**

The word’s meaning is influenced by the words that come after or before it based on the context. It tends to the relationship of the other words around it. In short, semotac environment will give different meaning. Here are the examples.

1. a. Beat it! Don’t let it go.

- b. *Beat it from here! I don't want to see you*
2. a. *She gets up at 05.00*
- b. *He couldn't get up anymore*

The terms “beat it” have different meaning. The meaning of “beat it” in 1.a is a command to strike something. In Bahasa Indonesia, the translation is “*pukul itu (menunjuk pada suatu benda)*”. On the other hand, the meaning of “beat it” in the 1.b is asking someone to get away. In Bahasa Indonesia, the translation is “*pergi dari sini*”. On the second sentence, the terms “get up” have different meaning. The meaning of “get up” in the 2.a is stop from sleeping. In Bahasa Indonesia, the translation is “*bangun tidur*”. On the other hand, the meaning of “get up” in 2.b is having no ability to rise anymore. In Bahasa Indonesia, the translation is “*bangkit*”. From the examples, it can be seen that the same term will have different meaning based on the semotac condition.

## **2. Connotative Meaning**

Finding the meaning of the source language text is not only to find the reference of the word. Translator has to pay attention to the emotional side. In formulating the meaning in target language text, the translator has to maintain the emotional state brought by the meaning of source language text. The emotional level might be strong, weak, positive or negative. Meaning having emotional state is named as connotative meaning. Larson (1984:131) explains that in addition to convey factual information by reference to things, events, attributes, and relations, words also reflect attitudes and emotions.

The example of the word “woman”. It's more neutral. On contrast, the word “witch” would be negative. The words will give different sense although the reference is the same person (Larson, 1984:131). The next example is the word “notorious”. It means “famous” but with the negative connotation.

In short, rendering and transferring the meaning have to pay attention to the emotional state. Although emotional state is abstract, it should be maintained well that the reader in target language will get the same sense as reader in the source language. There are three main principles to understand connotative meaning. They are:

**a. Social background of the speaker**

People are social being. Because of that, they live in a community. Every community will create their own system of language that is different to other community. The language system that is different each other will give identity to the member of the community. The unique language used by particular community's member will associate the speaker to his or her community. Because of the difference, there are words that are understood only by the community's member. People outside the community will not understand the meaning of the words. Event, the difference system will create different sense or connotation for a spesific word.

Connotative meaning sometimes is influenced by culture. It is possible that a word will have positive connotation in one culture. On the other hand, it has negative connotation in one culture. For the example is the word "tribe". In some parts of the world, ethnic groups are welcome to be called as "tribe" because it has positive connotation. On some ethnic groups, they regard the word "tribe" as negative connotation (Larson, 1984:131).

**b. The role of the speaker**

The same word spoken by the same speaker in different condition may give different meaning. Some expressions are related to certain environments as in court, police station, market, tourism objects, etc. For illustration, there is a man who works as police. In his working hours, he is trying to catch a person who breaks the rule. When the person is trying to escape, the policeman shouts

“freeze”. Based on the condition, the meaning of “freeze” is not to turn the liquid into hard substance in refrigerator. The condition shows that the policeman asks the person to stop from running. In Bahasa Indonesia, the “freeze” can be translated into “*diam di tempat*”. On the other hand, the meaning of “freeze” will be different when the man is standing in front of the refrigerator and saying “ i am freezing the water”. Based on the condition of the man, the meaning of “freeze” is to turn the water into hard substance. In Bahasa Indonesia, the “freeze” can be translated into “*membekukan*”. From the two conditions above, the word “freeze” reflects different meaning.

### **c. Linguistic factor**

One word will give different meaning when it is attached to different word. The word ‘die’, for example, when it is in pair with the following words, it has different meaning.

1. Die away

The meaning is *hilang dari pendengaran secara perlahan*

2. Die down

The meaning is *mengecil*

3. Die out

The meaning is *punah*

The word ‘die’ in some examples above are in fact of stop living. The word has different meaning when it occurs before certain words that the receivers might react differently.

### **D. Elements of Meaning**

Larson (1984: 6) proposes characteristics of languages employed within the translation process. One of the characteristics is meaning components. Meaning components are “packaged” into lexical items, but they are ‘packaged’ differently in one language than another. By knowing the elements of meaning of the source



language, translators can make the right decision related to these elements. The elements are described below.

### 1. the rule of plural system

The language system of English and Bahasa Indonesia are different. It can be seen in marking plural nouns. In writing form, English uses morpheme *-s* or *-es*, or adds phoneme */-s/*, */-z/*, or */-is/* in speaking form. Some irregular forms are also exist. While in Indonesia, markers of plural nouns are shown by using repetition. For example:

English	Indonesian
Pen → pens	<i>pulpen</i> → <i>pulpen-pulpen</i>
Book → books	<i>buku</i> → <i>buku-buku</i>
Apple → apples	<i>Apel</i> → <i>apel-apel</i>
tooth → teeth	<i>gigi</i> → <i>gigi-gigi</i>

### 2. One form with many alternative meaning

A word has a primary meaning, that is the meaning which will appear in the mind of the reader or listener first. The primary meaning is an arbitrary accepted by the society. The second or alternative or connotative meaning is one which is affected by the context. Larson (1984:6) gives the following examples to clarify this.

English	Bahasa Indonesia
The boy <u>runs</u> fast.	→ Anak itu <u>berlari</u> dengan cepat.
He <u>runs</u> his eyes over the crowd.	→ Ia <u>melayangkan pandangannya</u> pada kerumunan itu
Life must <u>run</u> its course.	→ Hidup harus <u>menempuh jalannya</u> sendiri.

### 3. Grammatical marker

In this case, grammatical marker has two functions, primary and secondary functions. The word ‘on’, to give an example, in English indicates some meanings. This fact is described by the example given by Larson (1984:8) below.

John found a book on the floor.

John found a book on Mathematics.

John found a book on Tuesday.

The word ‘on’ in the examples above indicates ‘position’ or ‘location’, ‘about’ and relation of time which in Indonesian are translated as ‘*diatas*’, ‘*tentang*’, or ‘*pada*’.

### **E. Non-Equivalence Problem**

In transferring the meaning into target text, sometimes, the translator finds some difficulties. Some problems of non-equivalence at word level, according to Baker (1992: 17), is related to cultural differences, where there is no equivalent words in both source and target language. Source and target language make differences in meaning, or where there is no specific term in the target language. This is what so called culture specific.

#### **1. Cultural difference**

Newmark (1988: 94) defines culture as the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression. Sometimes, words in source text are difficult to be understood. The translator cannot find the meaning although he or she has divided the text into the smallest unit of translation. It is because the difference of culture between source text and target text. Translator who has different culture will be difficult in gaining the meaning of source text come from different culture. The example is:

Source language text: *Dia memakai kebaya.*

Target language text: She wears traditional clothes.

The word “*kebaya*” in source language is a kind of traditional clothes worn by Javanese people in particular situation. It has various colour and design. When the

translator is not Javanese, she/he will be difficult in finding the meaning of “*kebaya*”. “*Kebaya*” is a kind of culture owned by Javanese. English doesn’t have equivalence word for “*kebaya*”. As the solution, the general term of clothes is used. Instead of it, descriptive explanation is added to modify clothes in order to be more understandable.

## **2. No equivalent word in the target language**

It is possible that the word in source language is easy to be understood, but it is difficult to find the word expressing the same meaning in target language. Baker gives the word “savoury” as the example of the difficulty of no equivalent word in the target language. The meaning of “savoury” is spicy rather than sweet. Baker explains that the word “savoury” is understandable but it is difficult to find word reflects the meaning of spicy rather than sweet (1992:21).

## **3. Differences in meaning between source language text and target language text**

In rendering and transferring the meaning, it is possible that the translator will express different meaning. for this case, in finding the meaning, the translator doesn’t only pay attention to the meaning of the word itself but also to the context. To following example will give clear insight:

SL: i agree, it’s hard to get them all done. But at least we’re all in the same boat.

TL: saya setuju bahwa ini sangat sulit diselesaikan. Tetapi setidaknya kita berada pada kapal yang sama.

The expression of “in the same boat” is translated into “*berada pada kapal yang sama*”. Based on the context, it is not appropriate to translate the expression into “*berada pada kapal yang sama*”. The proper translation is “*berada pada situasi yang sama*”.

#### 4. There is No Specific Expression in the Target Language

English has some relationship between lexical item. The relationship is the generic - specific words. This relationship sometimes gives difficulty in translation process because the target language is lack of specific word. Larson (1984:66) provides clear example to explain this relationship.

		Sheep	Horse	chicken	Dog	Deer
Adult	Male	Ram	Stallion	rooster	Dog	buck
	Female	Ewe	Mare	Hen	Bitch	Doe
Young		lamb	foal	Chick	puppy	Fawn

From the table it can be seen that the generic words are sheep, horse, chicken, dog, and deer. These generic words have specific words classified based on some criteria. The generic word of sheep has three specific words. When it is adult and male, it is called ram. When it is adult and female, it is called ewe. When it is young, it is lamb. For the generic word of horse, the specific word for adult and male horse is stallion, the specific word for adult and female horse is mare, the young horse is foal. The difficulty will rise when target language doesn't have similar specific word sharing similar criteria. The English specific word "doe" will give difficulty when it is translated into Bahasa Indonesia. It is because Bahasa Indonesia doesn't have specific word explaining adult and female deer. Bahasa Indonesia merely has generic word "rusa".

#### F. Conclusion

Translation is one way direction activity, from source language text into target language text. In the process of translation, the consideration is not only how to change the form of source language text into target language text. Translation process has to render the meaning in the source language text embedded by unit of translation, then find the equivalence meaning in the target language text.

In decoding the meaning of source language text, there are many considerations that have to be taken into account. It is not enough to pay attention only on the referential meaning, a meaning of word or sentence refers to. Connotative meaning has to take a part in finding the meaning of source language text. Instead of finding the reference of the meaning, the social aspect of the speaker, the place where the words or sentences are produced, and language system might be considered to find the appropriate meaning.

In finding the meaning equivalence, some difficulties might rise. The system for every language is different. It becomes a difficulty in transferring the meaning to the target language text. Furthermore, the difference of culture will lead translation process into hard activity. In addition, various meanings embedded by words may result in wrong meaning production. The last, the lack of generic-specific word relationship make it more difficult to find the equivalence in target language text.

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