

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AWARENESS IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract

A translation is a bridge of communication among nations that have unique cultures and language. In fact, cultural differences lead to different ways of delivering ideas or message. Even, similar utterance might have different meaning depend on its contextual setting and the speaker. Therefore, translation process is not a simple activity of replacing words from a language into another language. This paper aims at introducing cross cultural communication awareness that must be owned to be a professional translator. Besides, this paper also aims at showing the use of pragmatic analysis in understanding and solving the problem of translation related to cultural differences. Firstly, some sources of (unidentified) translation problems related to specific feature of languages are raised and ways to analyze and solve the problems are proposed.

Key words: cross cultural, cultural awareness, pragmatic, translation.

Introduction

It is not unusual that many people consider Translation is an easy task. They thought that translation is just a process of replacing words with such equivalent words in another language. Some people even simply believe that if you master two languages so you can do translation. It would be true if all the language system were the same and all nations in the world had the same culture and lived in the same environment. In fact, they are different each others. Even in the same country, some people have different ways in expressing their ideas since they have different cultures.

That is cultural background that leads the way of people in doing communication. Cultural background here might derive from local knowledge that inherited generation to generation. Even, it becomes local wisdom that determines the beliefs, habits, custom, and perception of the society. For instance, in Minangkabau culture whenever the people meet each other, they will say "*Kama tu pak?*" Literally this utterance means "where do you go sir?" In fact, the speaker knows the listener would like to go the rice field as he brought a hoe.

Then, can we translate that utterance as it is? Of course, it will be strange or it cannot be culturally accepted in Western culture. It means that as a translator who bridges a cross cultural communication between people who do not share the same language, it cannot be translated into "where do you go sir?" This cultural expression functions as phatic language that must be translated into the expression that has the same function in English. Therefore, it might communicatively be translated into "Good morning". Then, is it accurate?

Again, translation is not merely the activity of replacing word in a language into similar word in another language. For instance, the notice that is usually stucked on the windows of vehicle "Dilarang mengeluarkan anggota badan" cannot be literally translated into "do not put part of your body out" or "do not exit your body". However, it must pragmatically be translated into "Do not lean out of the window" (see Ardi, 2015; Ardi, 2002). It indicates that each language has unique way in stating their message.

Thus, cultural differences awareness must be promoted in order to produce translators who are able to be agents in cross cultural communication. But, how can we produce a wise translator to face cross cultural problem? Translators as agents of cross cultural communicator must have such competence. In this paper, it will discuss some possible cross cultural problems and some possible solution through pragmatic approach.

Relevant Theoretical Review

Firstly, let us review the prominent definitions of translation. Although it has been defined since 106-43 B.C. by Cicero, a classical orator/translator (Robinson 1997: 9), however, we will compare two definition proposed by Nida (1964: 1982) and Catford (1967: 1980). Nida is one of the pioneers of modern translation theory. Nida (1964) and Nida & Taber (1982) define translation as “Translating consists of 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.” Nida’s definition explains that translation is an activity of reproducing the message with the closest natural equivalent in the target language by preserving or keeping the message and style. Nida (1964) and Nida & Taber (1982) emphasize that **message** and **style** must be maintained. The bold words emphasize that not the **structure** or **form of the word**. It means translation is not only transferring or replacing a word into another language.

Next, let us look at the definition of the translation proposed by Catford (1967: 20; 1980: 20). He defines translation as follows: “Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)”. Catford’s definition is very different from the definition proposed by Nida. Catford says that translation is a replacement of textual material or text (Ardi, 2015:12). This definition has a weakness since a text in a language cannot be replaced into a target language without capturing or transferring the message behind the textual material. In fact, the same expression or textual material stated in a different language could have different meanings. For example, the phrase "*maaf permisi, saya mau ke belakang*" may not be simply replaced into "excuse me, I want to go to the back" although lexically they are the same textual material. It is because the word 'belakang' is a euphemism to express “go to the toilet” (Ardi, 2015: 12). It might be translated into similar euphemism such as “Excuse me, I want to wash my hand” or “Excuse me, I want to comb my hair.”

In the previous, we have mention cross cultural communication. Actually, what is culture? Newmark 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 (1995: 94). What is the problem? There is no problem for universal thing (such as die, mirror), but there will be problem in translating “batagak pangulu”, “take a bath”, or “siraman”. These are cultural words or cultural language. Even, personal language will be different for each person in describing their feelings. Newmark (1995:95-102) identifies that there are at least 5 cultural categories, they are: (1) ecology, (2) material culture (artifacts), (3) social culture –work & leisure, (4) organization, custom, activities, procedures, concepts, (5) gesture and habits (see Newmark for details). Mostly, these cultural categories are related physical or non-linguistic aspect. Moreover, Sumarno (2003: 19-22) adds some other sources of the problem related to cultural differences, they are: (1) stereotype expression, (2) cultural event, (3) traditional house, (4) kinship, (5) proper name, (6) speech level, (7) idiom. Soemarno identifies some problem related to linguistic aspects, such as stereotype expression, proper name, speech level, idiom that belong to specific feature of language.

Then, Newmark (quoting Bühler) in his book *A Textbook of Translation* says that there are at least three functions of language: (1) **expressive function**, the mind of the speaker. It functions to express feelings irrespective to any response; (2) **informative function**, focus on the external situation, the fact of a topic, reality outside language, including reported ideas or theories; (3) **vocative function**, focus on the readership, the addressee to act, think, or feel intended by the text (Newmark, 1995: 39-41). Then, based on Jakobson’s ideas Newmark adds three more language functions, they are: (4) **aesthetic function**, design to please the senses; (5) **phatic function**, maintains friendly contact with addressee; (6) **metalingual function**, language ability to explain its name and feature (Newmark, 1995: 42-44). In translation process, the translators must evaluate the ability of their translation to run those language function, especially expressive, vocative, aesthetic, and phatic function that deal with cultural differences.

Then, final purpose of a translator is to produce the message that is accurate, acceptable, and readable (clarity) in the target language. Therefore, in the translation process, translator deals with **form & meaning** (message) in the source language that must be re-expressed in the target language with the same **effect**. Thus, meaning in a language cannot be only analyzed based on its dictionary meaning (lexical meaning). But, meaning must be seen in its contextual setting and its user (speaker) and listening. It is related to the domain of pragmatics.

Discussion

There is a common local wisdom “dima bumi dipijak, di situ langik dijunjung” or “dimana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung”. Literally, it means “where do you stand up, there you should uphold the sky above your head.” This local wisdom teaches us that wherever we go, we must obey the rule of the indigenous community. It also happens in translation. In order to be a professional translator, we should follow the rule of the target language. You should be able to reproduce an **accurate** translation that is **acceptable** in the target language. These are two different things. Accuracy related to the “the ability of a translation to keep or maintain the fact or truth in the target language compared to the source”. As stated by Shuttleworth (1997:3) that accuracy is the extent to which a translation matches its original. Meanwhile, acceptability is related to the ability of translation to fulfill the rule or norm in the target language. A good translation must fulfill the three criteria of translation quality; they are accuracy, acceptability, and clarity/readability (see House, Nababan, 2012, Ardi, 2015 for detail).

The problem is the translator’s awareness on the appearance of translation problems. Based on the review above, there some translation problems happened because of the cultural differences between source language (SL) and target language (TL). Newmark and Soemarno have mentioned some cultural differences that influence translation quality. However, I think, those problem that related to non-linguistic aspect is clear enough or visible. There many objects, condition, habits, ceremony, and artifacts in a culture that are not available in another country. Then, another language will not have such vocabulary since there is no reference in that language. However, it can be detected easily. Mostly, the solution is borrowing (pure or naturalized), adaptation, and describing, etc.

In fact, there are some (unidentified) problems that appears in the text which shows some specific feature of a language. Sometimes, if we do not so familiar with language, this problem will not be detected by the translator. These problems usually appear as a specific language feature that is different from another language, such as phatic expression, euphemism, metaphors, politeness strategy, that related to local culture which reflects its local wisdom.

1. Phatic Expression, Level of Formality, and Pronoun

Phatic expression is the function of language to keep friendliness such as greeting, small talk in the opening of conversation, goodbye, etc. There is no problem in translating greeting from English into Indonesia or vice versa. Both languages have such similar expression - selamat pagi, selamat siang, selamat malam” (that is predicted as translation of good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, etc). Actually, they are not totally equivalent. However, translator will think many times, to translate a text which has “*kulonuwun, sampurasun, mangga, horas*”. Soemarno classified it is as stereotype expressions; however I tend to use phatic expression since these words function to keep friendliness. Each culture has its own way that has different expression which has different meaning, but the same function.

When I gave a text (dialogue) which has phatic expression from a Minangkabaunese to be translated into English, there are many students just translated literally, since they are not aware the appearance of them.

- SL Malin: Oi Kutar kama tu?
 Kutar: Malin ma! Ba Kaba lamo dak mancogo?
 Malin: Baitu juo baru. Ka pai kama angku ko?
 Kutar: Ka kadai One sabanta
- *TL1 Malin: Hi Kutar, where do you go?
 Kutar: Hi Malin!. How are you? Long time no see.
 Malin: Just like that. Where are you going to?
- TL2 Malin: Say Kutar, How you doing?
 Kutar: Malin!. How are you? Long time no see.
 Malin: Not bad. Where you going?

In this setting we can learn that the utterances are mostly informal. The utterance “Oi, Kutar kama tu” is not a real question but a kind of ice breaking or greeting to open a conversation. Thus, the speaker does not expect the answer about destination of the listener (perlocutionary). That is why it is not answered by

Kutar. Meanwhile, in the third line Malin really asked where Kutar want to go. This time Malin did ask the information, it is not a phatic expression anymore. That is why, Kutar answered the question. This pragmatic analysis must be done while doing translation process to know that is the real intention or implicature behind the utterance.

In TL1, the first expression is translated literally. It fails to transfer the implicature since it does not function as a question but as phatic expression. This utterance should be pragmatically translated into TL2. Based on the formality, TL1 is translated without considering the level of formality. Furthermore, the third utterance “ka pai kama angku ko?” is translated formally without considering formality. Although the translation is accurate and acceptable, however it fails to reflect the social context. The word “Angku” is used informally in this context. This word usually refers to show respect to the elderly or traditional leader, however the speaker used the word “angku” to show their close relation. It can be translated into “dude” or just translated informally in TL2. It is not translated into “where **are** you going to?” since the context is informal situation.

Moreover, the translation of pronoun or proper name and also kinship should be given special attention too. The term “Angku” might have different translation for another context (pragmatically). The translation pronoun from English into Indonesia seems easier, however in translating a text from Indonesia into English, we should maintain the cultural aspect, such the translation of kinship “paman, om, and mamak” that only has one choice “uncle”. The term “mamak” is different from *paman* or *om*, since it is only used for mother’s brother in Minangkabau.

Based on the example, it can be understood that pragmatic analysis gives a better description about the text. However, the most important point is that translator should be aware the appearance of any translation problem that must be treated specially. Introducing local language text which has local wisdom or local culture will promote students’ awareness related to cross cultural problem in the translation process. This problem can also be analyzed by pragmatic approach (see also Machali, 2003; Baker, 1998). The information that must be found, “What is the function of that expression? or “Why the speaker used such expression?”

2. Euphemism, metaphor and Idiom

Euphemism and idiom have specific function that sometimes cannot be translated literally. An example given by Soesilo (1990: 183), he mentions the problem that occurs in the translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Malay in 1879 as follows:

"Saul Masoeklah ke dalamnja [gua] hendak berselimoetkan kakinja"
(Samuel 24: 4).

As lay or common readers who do not know the culture in Hebrew, of course we think that Saul’s feet get cold so he wanted to get rest or warm his feet in the cave. Meanwhile, “hendak berselimitkan kakinya” or (literally 'cover the feet') in Hebrew is a euphemism to express 'want to go to the toilet. So translators who do not know the euphemism expression and translate innocently even mislead the reader. In this case, translator can give explanation in the translation or translate them by dynamic equivalence (see Catford, 1980 for details).

Another example, in translating idioms, setting is in a car. The driver made an expression as follow:

SL2: I need to stop in that gas station, I wanna drain the radiator.

*TL4: Saya perlu berhenti di pom bensin itu, saya mau mengeringkan radiator

TL5: Saya perlu berhenti di pom bensin depan, saya mau buang air kecil.

The word "drain the radiator" does not really means to empty the radiator. Thus, translators should really know the subject matter and the culture of ST. Translator should be sensitive to metaphor, idiom, or euphemism, since the message cannot be transferred by translating the phrases literally (see Mona Baker, 1992 about equivalence above word level). In this case, translator’s transfer competence is required to choose the options, translate them with the idiom, euphemism, or metaphor in TL that has equivalence meaning, or translate them into general meaning, or other choice.

Related to the translation of idiom, Baker (1992:72-77) suggests four choices: (1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form, (2) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, (3) translation by paraphrase, and (4) translation by omission. Again, it shows that in translating the first priority is meaning, form is second, even you can change them since it is only a case to deliver the message. As stated by Jumanto (2009:85) meaning is the thing being communicated by a speaker, not the form that is only a facility or a container of the message (translated by the writer). In this case, the translator should be aware the appearance of such expression, although they can be translated literally, however it may mislead the message in the target language.

3. Politeness Strategies

Every culture has its own strategy in politeness strategy. Pragmatically, it can be categorized into two types that is positive and negative politeness strategy (Yule, 1996; Gunarwan, 2005; Cutting, 2008; Jumanto, 2009). In the translation, translator should be aware this politeness strategy, Western culture has different politeness strategy from Indonesian culture. For example:

SL3	A: Panjenengan sampun siram?	(lit, have you taken a bath?)
SL4	B: Kowe wes adus?	(lit, have you taken a bath?)

Both utterances have the same meaning; however these utterances are used in different context and listener. The utterance in SL3 is usually used by a young people to the older people of higher position than the speaker. This expression use "*krama inggil*" to show politeness strategies by putting a distance and using a diction that is different from daily expression. Meanwhile, the utterance in SL4 is usually used by older people to the younger person or the people lower than the speaker. It will be difficult to find such similar expression in English language since English does not have speech level likes in Javanese.

Many vernacular languages and Indonesia have different word choice for showing respect or as politeness strategies, meanwhile English uses different grammatical structure to show respect or politeness strategies. Let us see other examples:

Table 1. politeness strategies in various languages

Language	To the higher level listener	To the lower level listener
Indonesia	Saya ingin bertemu dengan Bapak. Bolehkah saya bertemu dengan Bapak?	Saya mau bertemu dengan Anda. Aku mau ketemu kamu. Bisa saya bertemu Anda?
Rejangnese	Uku lok temau ngen kumu Buliak uku temau ngen kumu?	Uku lok temau ngen ko. Pacok uku temau ngen ko?
Minangkabaunese	Ambo nio batamu jo Angku. Lai bisa ambo batamu jo angku?	Den nio basobok jo ang Bisa den basuo jo ang?
English	I would like to meet you. Is it possible to meet you? Would you mind if I want to meet you?	I want to meet you. Can I meet you?

In the table above, it shows that mostly Indonesian and some vernaculars show respect by creating the distance between speaker and the listener. It is indicated by the word *Bapak*, *kumu*, *angku*. On the other hand, English just have the word "you" as the pronoun for the second speaker. The politeness strategies in English language are shown by structural arrangement. In the example, it uses direct expression to show close distance but it is different for higher people.

Moreover, in the literary works, we can see more examples of politeness strategies in western culture. In general, whenever they are close, the participants tend to use positive politeness (see Gunarwan, 2005). They tend to use first name to show that, for instance, a son-in-law might calls his father-in-law by "Frank" directly as positive politeness. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, it is not acceptable to call father in law by his first name directly. It will be translated into "Ayah" which belongs to negative politeness. It is the local wisdom of Indonesian people.

Based on the discussion above, it implies that translation is not an easy task. In their task, translator should try to communicate the thing that might not be available in the target language culture. How a translator could translate “*Penari menyerahkan sirih di carano kepada tamu-tamu kehormatan*” into English since TL does not have ‘carano’ in their language. Similarly, it will be difficult to translate the word from a foreign language that does not exist in Indonesia. Translator is a person who tries to explain an elephant to a blind people who never seen or never known what is an elephant comprehensively.

Moreover, a language is not only related to the culture that related to non-linguistic aspect. Every language has its own feature that different from another language, such as, phatic expression, metaphor, idiom, kinship (related to its semantic feature), and politeness strategies. This cross cultural awareness can be equipped to the foreign language learners by providing pragmatics subject. Pragmatics is provided for the functional purpose not for structural analysis of language. It is hoped that students, especially students who would like to be a professional translator will be a wise person as a cross cultural communicator. Thus they must have pragmatic competent.

Conclusion

Translation is a big task to communicate a message from a language into another language with different cultural context. This cultural context creates a language system that might not work in another language system. An expression in a language might be translated literally or maybe differently but having the same meaning. Therefore, a translator should be aware of the problem in a cross cultural communication. He/she should be able to open the ‘container’ of the message to get its ‘content’. Then, he/she should deliver the same ‘content’ to the target language readers with the same container or maybe different container. The process of opening an re-wrapping the message can only be done if the translator has a pragmatic competence and cross cultural communication awareness.

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