



Translation Study: How Crucial Is Cultural Knowledge For Students as The Translators?

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Abstract

This article intends to discuss the importance of teaching cultural knowledge for EFL students in translating text. Translation process is not simply translate word by word but it should also transfer culture together with its language. Since language is a part of culture so both of them always are interrelated each other. Commonly, it will become teacher' tasks to take his role in translation study, introducing cultural knowledge as part of translation material in lesson plan. The circumstance that students as translator only translate text literally because of their lack of cultural knowledge, therefore they should be enriched with knowledge related to the language and culture. Finally, the crucial factors in translation such as language competence is absolutely needed, the usefulness of cultural competence also act as important as language competence does.

Keywords: translation study, cultural knowledge.

Introduction

Recently it needs for language learners to master some skills related to their field study. Language skills are interrelated so learners are necessary to study those skills as they are supported each other, i.e. basic skills for whom are interested in learning language those are vocabularies mastery and grammatical structures. The skills will potentially influence learners' competencies as the first step to further language studies. Thus, they will facilitate them to study the next level of language skills for examples; receptive skills involve reading and listening skill, while speaking and writing are known as productive skills.

As language skills are mastered in certain level, learners do not simply equipped by their language structure, more over they also need to support their current competences with cultural knowledge. Understanding meanings that are conveyed through written and spoken languages should be completed by learners' cultural knowledge in order to avoid mismatching between two languages. Culture and language are closely tight so they need to study simultaneously. Both aspects cannot be separated from human life where people use language to interact with others while culture they believed as norms and values that guide and direct them how to behave and treat others appropriately so they could be well accepted among society.

Another benefit of understanding cultures especially in the term of language study, that is, supporting translation studies. Generally, graduate students think that translational approach only need their languages skills to produce adequate translation. In fact, it is not as simple as learner thought, translating text need more skills to convey the similar message in target language transferred from the original text. It is not simply finding out word by word as mostly experienced by unskilled translator. Such translation will not get equivalence in meaning and readers could be confused when trying to get information from that translation result.

The sensitivity of people in cultural understanding involves their awareness and competences as a whole in order that they can grasp the similar sense in transferring information from source language to target language. People need to be aware of cultural differences and how its complexity may influence translation product. (see Robinson, 1997; Snell-Hornby, 1988) It is clear that a translator has to consider about this circumstance since this aspect will determine whether he or she will become a successful or fail translator. Therefore, providing their selves with cultural knowledge will ultimately become demand that should be fulfilled by a translator.

Concerning with culture in translation study, translation could be said as cross cultural event (Snell-Hornby, 1998 p.39). Language as a media that is used in translation process where translator manage and arrange words in such a way so they are seen as natural as the original text. Therefore it is not solely understanding both source and target languages, more over a good translator need to master the culture of those languages. Why should they? It is as a result that translating words are not merely find its meanings from dictionary but she or he has to ascertain that the words has already get its meaning equivalences.

In fact, some learners today only terribly rely on their language competencies in doing translation tasks. Most of them assume that their vocabulary and grammatical abilities have contributed adequately when they want to transfer messages from one language to other language in translation form. It can be said good translation if readers read the translation result as if they read the message in their own language. It is not easy job to produce

translation as nature as original text. Translation process can also be kind of art created by translators in which they will be able to arrange good sentences as readers usually read in their language. It could be said that bad translation when word that are arranged in sentences that seem very awkward and odd for the readers. They will be confused to understand meaning and get an idea, or in other side, they may be easier to understand if they read the original book written in foreign language rather than its translation. For example; many English books translated in Indonesian today are more difficult to understand since the translation does not use good sentences in target language (Indonesian language).

The same cases is also found among the foreign language learners. Based on the researcher's experience, most students still performed the weakness when translating texts in their daily practices. Besides, their scores indicated that they have uncompleted knowledge about the important elements on how to translate correctly. Most of them only focused on the grammatical structures in the target language without considering that it is not the only aspect that will support their translation result. They also tended to translate word by word and cannot avoid their prior knowledge in their first language where it still hampered their translation into target language. Since they have studied the subject "Language and Culture", "Sociolinguistics" and "Translation" previously, the researcher assumes that they have already owned cultural knowledge and cultural awareness both in their language and English.

Robert Lado (1979) wrote his study that focused on experiment on translation study *Language and Thought: Effect of Translation vs Interpretation*. He conducted two experiments tested the following hypothesis: translation which proceeds from surface structure to surface structure causes greater interference than delayed interpretation across languages which stores the ideas in deep memory and expresses them later in the target language. The study found out that from thirty English-speaking students rendered a Spanish text into English, half of them translated it with text in view and 24 hours later wrote it from memory. The other half wrote it 24 hours after studying it. The immediate translations showed significantly more problems than the delayed recall versions. Twenty-five subjects translated a Spanish text into English with text in view and recalled the content of a similar Spanish text in English after studying it. Again the translations showed significantly more errors than the recall versions. The hypothesis has theoretical interest and practical implications for L2 learning. The data support a negative attitude toward translation with text in view and a favorable one toward recall tasks across languages which approximate linguistic performance for communication.

Other related study was also conducted by Viktor Becher (2010) that was entitled . "Abandoning the Notion of "Translation-Inherent" Explication: Againts

A Dogma of Translation Studies“. This study was intended to show that the dogma of translation-inherent explicitation rests on fallacious theoretical considerations and premature interpretations where he examined the Explicitation Hypothesis, postulates that explicitation is “inherent” in the process of translation and may therefore be regarded as a universal of translation”. In recent years, a number of corpus-based studies on explicitation have been produced, most of which purport to offer evidence in favor of this hypothesis. As a result, the alleged universality of explicitation has achieved the status of dogma in translation studies. In the first place, it will be argued that the Explicitation Hypothesis strictly speaking does not even qualify as a scientific hypothesis, since it is unmotivated, unparsimonious and vaguely formulated. In the second place, it will be shown that previous studies on explicitation fail to provide conclusive evidence for the translation-inherent nature of explicitation due to a number of methodological shortcomings.

Thus, Fasa (2013) in his study investigated the relationship between translation students' personality types and the quality of their English-to-Persian translations with respect to different text types. He took 35 undergraduate senior students of translation as the sample who were randomly sampled. It was used questionnaire to obtain demographic information about the participants. The instruments were translation tests and questionnaires to shed light on their performance in the act of translating. Subsequently, once the participants' personality types were determined via the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) anchored in Jung's psychological theory, their dominant mental functions involving intuition, sensation, feeling and thinking were identified. To analyze the data, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure and post-hoc analysis were employed. The study showed that there was a significant difference between intuition versus sensation. Shortly, the intuitors outperformed their sensor counterparts in the translation of the expressive text. Based on the results it was suggested some pedagogical guidelines too.

Lado (1979) also conduct the same research but he took Spanish language as the target language while the original language is English. He examined the hypothesis, such as ; translation which proceeds from surface structure to deep structure causes greater interference than delayed interpretation across languages which stores the ideas in deep memory and expresses them later in the target language. Thus, Becher (2010) also conduct the same study, but he focused on arguing the dogma of translation studies. It is different from Lado's study and the current study in which he examined the Explicitation hypothesis. He postulated that explicitation is “inherent” in the process of translation and may therefore be regarded as a universal of translation”. Fasa (2013) also conducted translation study but his research was descriptive study where he investigated the relationship between translation students' personality types and the quality of their English-to-Persian translations with respect to different text types.

What is Translation?

It is previously defined in the last part that translation is a process of transferring messages from source language to target language. Moreover, it is not simply about transferring messages from one language to another different language, but translator should focus on the cultural background that belongs to language to translate. It can be said that translation is also transferring the culture that the language has. Certainly two different languages absolutely own different cultures. This condition rise some difficulties in finding the equivalence in translation. Such case could be shown in English and Indonesian language where their different cultures may influence its translation result. As Basari's study (2013:3) gave the example from Indonesian word "*padi*", "*beras*" and "*nasi*", but English just has "*rice*" as its equivalent. *Rice* is similar to *nasi* and also *beras* in European culture. As a result, the translator should highly consider about other cultures.

A good translator should have good comprehension on vocabulary, equivalency and grammar in order to make understandable or comprehensible result which is acceptable in the target language as the first step in making a good translation (Oetomo, 2013:3). Furthermore, it is relevant to what Hervey and Higgins (1992:18) said that to be a translator, it is required intelligence, mental effort, linguistic skill, and mastery of the target language as a prerequisite. It is also similar to what Newmark (1988) defined about translation method as a systematic way to translate a whole text. All skills needed in translation are interrelated and supported each other. It seems not easy to master them in short time, it really needs hard effort and of course practice more and more from translator in order to fulfill the competences.

Besides seeking the equivalency, the translators also should consider the message, the concept, and the meaning contained in the source language. It is clear that translators should understand well knowledge related to the target language together with the culture that the language has. To reach an adequate translation result, it is needed appropriate dictionary or other related references to help them in producing good translation. They should consider some procedures before doing translation project and also it needs to ascertain whether the translation result has fulfilled comprehensibility and acceptability for the reader of target language. (Suryawinata in Ahmad, 2016)

Since translation is assumed not easy to do, Newmark (1988) said that process of translation is often dangerous to translate more than one sentences, the translator should read first the second or third paragraphs. It means that translator need to read the whole passages carefully until he really understand the content before he start transferring the message from source language to target language. Reading each paragraph contained in the text is necessary to gather the whole messages that the source language has. Furthermore, the

simple definition about translation stated by Catford (1965) where he said that translation is an operation performed on languages, it as a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. This definition do not mentioned the role of cultures in both language in order to pass the translation process.

It is clear that becoming a translator should have adequate competences in linguistics culture as well. Before translating text, there are some steps that should be followed, such as; the text, the target, the team, and the tools (Larson, 1998: 51-52). Text refers to text originated from the source language document to translate. A translator should determine a particular text completed with its reason. The aim is to share the enjoyment of the source text when communicating certain information to people who speak another language. The target related to the audience who will enjoy translation product. There are some considerations that concerned with the target namely where translation product will be used? It will be different form when it will be used in school, in business, or read orally in the religion or just in home. Thus, the team refers to the people who involved in the project team. In fact it is optional since the speaker has a good competent in both source and target language, so it does not need to recruit more members. The last thing is the tool, it refers to the written source materials that will help translator when it is necessary. Tools may as dictionaries, lexicons, grammars, cultural descriptions, and many others.

Most translation theories primarily emphasize on the competence in the grammatical structures as the first skill that is absolutely owned by translator. Some problems may appear because of every language has differences in its language structure. Therefore translator should be careful to identify the source language into the target language and has to deal with two different languages expressed in the forms of words, phrases, clauses or sentences. The differences in the grammatical structure of the source and target language often results in some change in the information content of the message during the process of translation. This change may take the form of adding to the target language which is not expressed in source language text (Baker, 1991:101).

Kinds of Translation

Generally some linguists divide two kinds of translation such as literal translation that is usually produce word by word translation and semantic translation that preferred to convey message from its source language. At glance, it is likely the semantic types that will be more useful for both languages since it tries to reach the equivalency of meaning. Newmark (1988) stated the same opinion where he divided the types of translation into semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation, as one of the translation methods, delivers the best meaning based on grammatical and structure of the

sentence.

Nevertheless the result of semantic translation may sometimes is very independent in interpreting the messages. Since such translation is highly rely on personally and individually orientation, translator tends to over-translate, shift the nuances of meaning, yet aims at concision in order to reproduce pragmatic impact. Therefore, it is guessed that the meaning conveying will be far from the original meaning. Whereas, another type of translation is communicative translation that is social, concentrates on the message and the main force of the text, tends to under-translate, to be simple, clear and brief, and is always written in a natural and resourceful style.

Davies (2004) also defines translation into three kinds such as *intralingual translation* or rewording is transferring a message from a language in the same language. He gives the example for process of language acquisition in children. They automatically get restricted vocabularies so they will ask their parents to know the meaning of symbol or language they listen in their surrounding. To interpret the meaning, parents or teacher of course will help them to identify the word by using simple words that are equivalent to its meaning. The best effort and also match to the level of children cognition is introducing new word to them by using synonym and antonym. Thus, *interlingual translation* is translation work from one language to another language. Some translator are likely use such kind of translation in the world. It is translated text from source language text into target text and the other way. The last kind is *intersemiotic translation* or transmutation is translated written text to media, audio, pictures, music, and video. This kind gives the different way to interpret some meanings.

Thus, Nida and here are three types process of translation that showed above, those are analysis, transfer, and reconstruction, such as: 1) Analysis, in this processes, the translator analyzes the source language grammatical and understand the whole meaning of the content, 2) transfer, after analysis the text will transferred from the source language into target language. In this process, the meaning of text as internal structure form which get from external structure form that will be used with involve cognitive translation process looking at equivalent information that had understood, 3) The last process is reconstructing in which the meaning of rewritten text based on the first and second step to produce result appropriately as regulation of target language.

Larson also regard if translation of process will be present automatically if the translator revealing back the meaning that they have comprehended into the target language. He draws his explanation into figure:

The Importance of Cultural Knowledge in Translation Studies

Learning a language is simply learning language itself, but it needs broad understanding related to language studied. It seems not easy job when talking about cultural knowledge. Why? Because perceiving other's culture cannot be learned only by studying it in formal context in the classes. Moreover studying culture is more unique where it can be studied through repeated experiences or by noticing other people act and behave in their daily life. Talking about language cannot be separated from culture since language is one of cultural manifestation. Therefore culture plays its essential role in learning a language in several skills, namely; writing, speaking, reading, listening, translation studies and other linguistics subjects. Since translation becomes a part of linguistics aspect, cultural knowledge should completed this skill as Hornby (1988) said that, the concept of culture as a totally of knowledge, proficiency and perception is fundamental in our approach to translation. If language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, but he or she must be bilingual and bicultural.

When a translator does not understand the culture of both source and target language, it will be a trouble for readers to get the similar meaning of both languages. As it is mentioned in previous part that translator does not simply transferring from one language to other language, but he or she also transfers its culture at the same time. The problem will probably be too complicated if the kind of text still contains common words although certain words do not have equivalence with target language or vice versa. However, it will be different if translator translates a text which its contain involves culture such as; idioms, belief, life style, manners, politics, etc. It is clear that expression of idioms are really interrelated with culture, therefore in translating idioms translator should be equipped by cultural knowledge which may help him to convey the same ideas. For examples : "*feeling under the weather*" means "speaker is not really in good health". Another example is "*a piece of cake*" does not really mean "*a little of cake*" but it expresses "thing that is easy to do"

Thus, the importance of having knowledge of language and culture as well is forced to the translator (Venuti in Schaffner, 1995). The knowledge is closely intertwined with their successful role as interlingual and intercultural mediators. It means that they have helped readers to grasp what they do not know previously in the second language (message, information). As Robinson said readers as a part of a community who certainly speak their native language and also perceived their culture will be unaware of fact that there are also some other communities who speak different language and share different culture. Therefore both cultural knowledge and cultural differences have been a major focus of translator training and translation theory for as long as either has been in existences. Mizani (2009:49) supported this idea where he stated that cultural knowledge is very essential to considering the implications for translation, and language is a part of culture so that it is impossible to separate them.

Therefore, providing their selves with cultural knowledge will ultimately become demand that should be fulfilled by a translator. Therefore, concerning with culture in translation study, translation could be said as cross cultural event (Snell-Hornby, 1998 p.39). Language as a media that is used in translation process where translator manage and arrange words in such a way so they are seen as natural as the original text. Therefore it is not solely understanding both source and target languages, more over a good translator need to master the culture of those languages. Why should they? It is as a result that translating words are not merely find its meanings from dictionary but she or he has to ascertain that the words has already get its meaning equivalences.

The product of translation is the result of a long process conducted by professional translator in transferring message from one language to another language. Certainly a translator have already passed the process based on some procedures that should be followed in order to become a successful translator. The procedures involve some steps in which those activities can be applied in systematical orders. Besides, it is commonly known that having an adequate knowledge of vocabularies and grammatical competency are the absolute requirement that must be fulfilled by a good translator. Nevertheless, there is another element that is cultural knowledge where it is as important as those elements that may complete the requirements in translation tasks as a whole.

Translation is study about lexicon, grammatical, communicative situation, cultural context from source language. Thus, it also analyzes source texts to find out its meaning, finally to reveal its similar meaning by using lexicon and grammatical structures that is matched to both target language and cultural context (Larson, 1984). Considering Larson's statement, it seems that translation is having more complex knowledge, not only in language skills, but it also relates to semantics and cultures terms as well. It is similar to (Riccardi, 2002) It is necessary to link linguistics diversity with external differences of historical, social and cultural background rather than one-sidedly insisting on the overriding importance of a link between cognitive and linguistics differences. Cultural knowledge including knowledge of various subcultures has long been recognized as indispensable for translation, as it is knowledge of the application that linguistics units have in particular situational and socio-cultural context which make translation possible in the first place.

There two types of translation such as overt translation and covert translation. Based on the name. "overt" means open and clear translation where translator try to produce a translation in which readers can easily understand its message conveyed. This kind of translation, translation may be assumed that he/she too independently interpret its meaning of original language. Consequently its target culture addresses sometimes are quite overtly not being directly addressed. It also owns independents status in the source culture because the original text tends to be more crucial in commonly the human

interest. The second type of translation is covert translation in which this translation is different from the previous one where it tends to preserve the original text in the receiving culture. The translator tends to translate in literal mode or in other words he likely translates word by word to transfer the meaning in target culture. As a matter of fact its translation do not particularly conveyed its meaning based on its original text as a result in the lack of target cultures. Therefore, in this type, translator should understand well both source and target cultures in order that the meaning of original text can be as similar as target one. An original and its covert translation might be said 'universal' in the term of meaning but it is different in their respective language. It can be state that readers mostly enjoy the covert translation since it involves cultures of both languages. (House in Riccardi, 2002:98)

Based on what Riccardi stated previously, it is clear that understanding culture of the target language will support the result of translator's interpretation. Cultural knowledge will help translator to convey the information based on target culture. The problem can be appear when translating literary in which its contain should be related to the culture of target language. Translator do not simply translate word by word without considering its meaning. As Robinson (1997) stated in the translation Charles Dickens, native speakers still can enjoy his works as they read the source language because its translation is translated based on the place and time of the later generation. It means the translator translated some specific words that may not be understood by the current generation, as this literary work written in old English, so he/she tried to find the words which were equivalent and understandable to young generation. Text move in space or in time, so it has to be written significantly in different ways as long as it does not change the original meaning of text.

Learning new culture is not an easy task and it can not be perceived in short time. In other side, it will take a long process to understand it. Moreover, experiencing the situation will be undertaken naturally when people want to recognize a new culture. Translation may cause a far effect in target culture where such effects may result from the description of the source culture is presented by the translation into the target culture. It is similar to what Schaffner stated that knowledge about culture which is different from other cultures can be acquired by living in other culture, watching subtitled films, or reading text that contains the target culture, however it also needs language knowledge as a media to learn this culture. There is also another way to gain other culture is through translation. Certainly the translation has equivalence with the original since it can be as 'culture transcending process is essential way in forming cultural identity and of positioning cultures (Vernerr , 1992 in Schaffner). There are also some important factors that contribute to the formation of cultural identities such as; the choice of translating the original text and the way it is published. The other factors are how these texts are read, comprehend, reviewed, and made use of social, cultural, and institutional setting. All factors

are supported each other so that translator can facilitate translator to conduct translation process.

Conclusion

Having discussed translation and cultural knowledge, it can be concluded that before doing translation translators should equipped their selves with cultural knowledge. Translation is study about lexicon, grammatical, communicative situation, cultural context from source language. There are some elements that should be considered in translation process namely; what kind of text, who is the readers, translator as a team and tool that involves cultural description as one tool that will support translator besides dictionaries, written source materials, lexicons, grammars, and many others. The cultural knowledge becomes crucial factor that will support him to produce good translation result. It includes knowledge of various subcultures has long been recognized in order to help translator in transferring messages from source language into target language. Understanding other cultures need a natural and long process to understand it. It can be perceived by experiencing the situation in a real situation where the culture shared by the community. It also can be taught through translation study at the same time.

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