

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF JAVANESE CULTURAL PIECES IN *RONGGENG DHUKUH PARUK* NOVEL

Khristianto

kristian.topz@gmail.com

University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia

Jalan Raya Dukuhwaluh, Dukuhwaluh, Kembaran Kab. Banyumas, Indonesia

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Corresponding Author:

kristian.topz@gmail.com

Abstract: Translating cultural pieces is always challenging since it usually involves a task of presenting something unknown to the target readers. This case is seen in the translation of *Ronggeng Dhukuh Paruk* novel which has been translated in many languages, one of them is English. It is full of Javanese cultural pieces but it was written in Bahasa Indonesia. Later, it was translated (or rewrite) into Javanese—like coming back to its own language habitat. The objective of the paper is to identify the strategies applied to translate the cultural meaning. The data sources are the three-language versions of the novel, in Indonesia, Javanese and English. The analysis on the data revealed that there are many various cultural meanings in the text: ecological facts, social and cultural concept, the cultural products in things, religion, and linguistic features of the culture. The strategies used to translate the cultural meaning are descriptive (*badhongan* – leave garland), calque (*bukak klambu*), borrowing (*dadap*, *seling*, *kathik*), and borrowing with description (*kamitua* – respected leader). The procedure taken in translating cultural pieces considers some factor: the importance of the meaning for the narration, its foreign level, the importance of its exotics sense in the literary work, and the interest to present local nuances to the target readers.

Keywords – Translation, Cultural Meaning, Translation Strategy, Banyumas Culture

INTRODUCTION

In doing his/her task, a translator has to understand the meaning of a whole text and presents them in another language completely. The “completeness” here will never be

achieved because rendering the meaning from a source text to a target will always creates a translation loss (Harvey and Higgin, 1999:16):

“the transfer of meaning from ST (source text) to TT (target text) is necessarily subject to a certain degree of translation loss; that is, a TT will always lack certain culturally relevant features that are present in the ST.”

A translation is impossible to represent a perfect meaning due to the discrepancies of language and cultural elements involved. In a case, a translator should take an adaptation procedure by overhauling the wording of the original text. This is done especially when a translator finds the concept in the original text that is not known in the target culture (Hatim & Munday, 2004:151). He, then, should create a new wording regarded to be equivalence, the situational one. The novel of Ronggeng *Dukuh Paruk*, is titled by Lysloff (2003) as *“The Dancer”* and the movie of *“Le Grande Meaulne”* (*“The Big Meaulne”*) is rendered into *“The Wanderer”*. Their different wordings do not block the meaning delivery, the reader still gets the core meaning of the original (see Hatim & Munday, 2004:151).

Such cases are frequently encountered in translating literary works. In doing his works, a translator has to understand *“the intentional meaning”* of the author by interpreting linguistic, stylistic and thematic signs. Translation in this case then means interpreting the intentional meaning of the author. (Nord, 1997:34). Besides the meaning, the translator should be able to realize a similar language beauty in the translation. This paper analyzes the cultural meaning in an Indonesian novel of *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* which has 6 versions of translation. It will only focus on three versions of the novel, Indonesian, Javanese and English. Considering the limit space, the paper will only present three strategies employed by the translator in handling the cultural meanings: descriptive, semantic, and calquing.

DISCUSSION

Descriptive Translation

Description has been there in the original novel. It is done to depict the unique pieces in the cultural context. One of them is the ecology like the sample below.

Yang menjadi bercak-bercak hijau di sana-sini adalah kerokot, sajian alam bagi berbagai jenis belalang dan jangkrik. Tumbuhan jenis kaktus ini justru hanya muncul di sawah sewaktu kemarau berjaya. (RDP:6)

(The green spots seen here and there are *kerokot*. The natural offers for locust and cricket. The plant of cactus type only grows in a drought.

The original text has described that “*kerokot*” is a unique grass of cactus type. “Cactus” is made into a bridge to make the concepts understandable for the Indonesian readers. The description reflects the fact that the readers of the novel do not belong to the cultural setting in the novel. If the target readers are Javanese of Banyumas culture natives, the author won’t need to put such a description. This has an effect to the translation as the text that is translated into Javanese to which the story belongs. The Javanese version reveals the foreign term, “*kaktus*”.

Ning esih ana dlemak-dlemok ijo wujud thukulan sing dearani kroat, sing desedhiakna neng alam nggo pangane jangkrik utawa walang. Thukulan sing kelebu perangan kaktus kiye pancen teyenge metu angger ana mangsa ketiga.

The presence of “*kaktus*” in Javanese version emphasizes the intertextuality of source text (guide) in creating the text (see Halliday in Manfredi:2008). The translator does not only tell the story, but also the original wording. Banyumas readers surely know more “*kerokot*” than “*kaktus*”. Explaining it via “cactus” in fact makes the readers frown, because they are very different in forms. It’s there only to flavor the narration.

English version tends to simplify in presenting *kerokot* by putting its association with cactus at the front as premodifier.

The only spots of green here and there were the cactus-like kerokot that appeared in the fields only during a drought, nature's sacrifice to the sundry forms of locusts and crickets. (1)

The translators present the explanation at the beginning to avoid the foreignness. It is to give a clue to the target readers. However, the use of “like” here is questionable. The author of the original novel compares *kerokot* to cactus in terms of their survival nature in drought. With “like”, it seems that both have similarity in their physical characteristics, which are in fact very different. Similar cases are also seen in the translation of *badongan* (leave garland) and *bukak klambu* (the opening of net-mosquito) in which the concepts are described a lot.

Similar strategy is also seen in the translation of “rangkap”. The concept is provided with a definition and description. The word “rangkap” has been changed into Indonesian phonology from Javanese term of *rangkep*.

<p>"Rangkap" yang dimaksud oleh Sakarya tentulah soal guna- guna, pekasih, susuk, dan tetek-bengek lainnya yang akan membuat seorang ronggeng laris.</p>	<p><i>Rangkep sing dekarepna neng Sakarya mesthi baen ngenani guna-pekasih, susuk utawa liyane sing merekna dadi larise ronggeng. Pancen, Kartareja karo bojone kewentar pisan maring prekara kiye.</i></p>	<p>And, there's another thing: the problem of <i>rangkep</i>, of course. That's right up your alley, isn't it?" Kartareja chuckled. Sakarya was referring to the black magic, love charms, body piercing with talismans and other procedures that make a ronggeng dancer popular.</p>
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The writer needs to explain this way since the concept is unknown for the modern culture—including for the people with Javanese cultural background. Surprisingly, English version adopts the original Javanese terms, *rangkep*. Though its definition of “black magic” is not quite right. Cambridge Advance Learner’s Dictionary (2008) defines it “a type of magic that is believed to use evil spirits (= people who cannot be seen) to do harmful things, *Rangkep* here has a good purpose to make people love to the dancer, without any bad effect to the people. The use of original *rangkep* here proves that the translator understands the original culture of the novel and the common adaptation of Indonesian-Javanese words as it is seen in many other cases like (*mantap-mantep, mantan-manten, malam-malem, asam-asem*, and many others).

Semantic translation

It refers to the use of the terms in TL whose meaning is not really the same like that in the SL, but it is taken as “adequate” to represent the original word. In doing so, a translator should “emphatize” with the author—have a feeling in the way the writer does (Newmark, 1988:64). This is seen in the English version to deal with the artifacts like food and clothes: *gaplek (tapioca gruel)*, *sampur (scarf/sash)*, and *angking (waistband)*. Besides, it is also used to transfer the cultural social status, *kamitua* (“respected elder”). The “*angking*” in Javanese is not the same like “waistband” : “a strip of material that forms the waist of a pair of trousers or a skirt” (CALD: 2008). “*Angking*” and waistband shows a similar function, but their shapes and materials are very different. The similar case is also evidence in *sampur* and its selected equivalence “scarf” or “sash”.

Calquing Translation

Calque is “a form of **cultural transposition** whereby a TT expression is modelled on the grammatical structure of the corresponding ST expression” (Hervey & Higgins, 1992: 29). This is seen in the English version to render “*Kyai Comblang*”. It is a meaningful name for a musical instrument of percussion. It is taken with its paraphrase of “*Venerable Matchmaker*”. “Kyai” is the Javanese honorifics to refer religious leader, animal and things they believe to have a magical power. “Comblang” is literally a matchmaker. Thus, it can be defined that the musical instrument has a supernatural power to make two persons in love each other. “Venerable” is not really adequate to accommodate the meaning in “Kyai”; it is lost in the magical power.

Borrowing

This is mostly used by the English version to render the ecological facts unknown in the west. The words are just taken into the translation, without any addition. They are recognized by the naming of the species, like birds and trees. The examples include *dadap* (dadap tree), *puring* (puring tree), *bluwak*, *kuntul*, *trinil* (water birds, like *bluwak*, *kuntul*, and *trinil*). With this, the readers can understand that they are the local names for the birds and the trees.

Borrowing and Description

One of the key words in the novel is *ronggeng*, referring to a traditional dance performance in Banyumas area. It is taken as a common word in Bahasa Indonesia. It is based on the assumption that the Indonesian readers in general know the performance.

Orang-orang tua bertembang kidung, dan anak-anak menyanyikan lagu-lagu ronggeng. Dengan suara kekanak-kanakannya, Srintil rnendengarkan lagu kebanggaan para ronggeng: Senggot timbane rante, tiwas ngegot ning ora suwe. (RPD: 11)

To deal with this, English version directly borrows and uses it along the narration. To bridge the understanding, the translator puts the word, “dancer”, “performance”, “songs”. The word “dancer” is the fixed modifier used by translator to help readers take the right meaning. The similar cases are seen in the translation of the words like *kidung* (traditional ballads), *thole-thole* (dance), *tembang* (Javanese traditional song).

and the songs of ronggeng dancers that were popular among the children. Srintil, in her young girl's voice, was singing "Senggot," a favorite song of ronggeng dancers.

The strategies taken in translating the cultural elements in the novel are based on the factors like the significance of the concept to the narration, the level of foreignness of the word in the target readers' mind, and the importance of presenting the exotics of the novel. Besides, the difficulty of translation of some concepts becomes the reason to take the way they are. For example, the ecological word like "waru" is translated by its Latin terms, *hibiscus*. Others are just borrowed by identifying by mentioning the species, like birds, and trees, this is done because the words are not very important to the narration and the readers do need to really know them. It is enough for them to know that they are birds and trees.

CONCLUSION

The measures a translator decides are to present the meaning of the original for the target readers. Semantic strategy, for example, may transform the cultural concept and in turn creates a discrepancy against the original. However, it is the best option to take in its corresponding case. Presenting a perfect meaning in literary text can be said to be impossible. With their authority, translators then have a space of freedom to create their own text, guided by the original work. Thus, the decision is so various, even to deal with the cultural terms. Some words are handled by descriptive translation, and others are rendered via semantic translation, calquing, borrowing, and borrowing plus description.

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