

Applying Translation Theory and Practice in Teaching

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Abstract

A basic premise of this article is that the institutional teaching of translation studies has evolved in the past years partly due to a growing connection between theory and teaching practice. The present article focuses on how translation process in theories and practices, on why theory is important for the teaching of the profession, and on the nature of theory. This discussion leads to a fundamental concern for the training of future translators for professional work. It is argued that translation trainees should be exposed to a variety of approaches to translation which are inspired by and connect to different theoretical schools so that students are in this way taught to be flexible in their approach to texts and will also learn theory in practical application.

KEYWORDS: translation theories, translation practices, teaching, translation types, translator

A. INTRODUCTION

In many universities, translation still plays a significant role in undergraduate teaching and is still commonly used as a testing technique. It is very difficult to prove whether translation does or does not help students to learn language. Some students, for example, in my classes still found hardness in learning English without knowing the meaning. Therefore, translation is very useful to grasp in mastering English. Moreover, some students were still confused the meaning of translation. Most of them claimed that translation was a simple activity in transferring meaning from a source language to a target language, in short, word by word. Here is a simple example of word for word translation.

My	mother	is	a	teacher	in	a	private	school
Ibu	saya	adalah	seorang	guru	Di	sebuah	sekolah	swasta

In that translating, each English word is translated in Indonesian literally in the same order with its English. But, in translating the primary and secondary meaning, some students got mix-up. For example, translating 'run' as verb, it is only '*berlari*'. They focused on the primary meaning meanwhile the verb 'run' could be defined some meanings in the secondary sense. Translating 'his nose runs into Indonesian will not focus on a physical activity. It is '*dia pilek*'. Meanwhile, 'the river runs' will be translated as '*sungai itu mengalir*'

The special terms / jargon used as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can not also be translated into word for word translation. Balance sheet in Economics can not be separated into balance and sheet, but it is '*neraca*'. Other examples are such as political interest (*kepentingan politik*), high politics (*politik strategis*), and interest rate (*suku bunga*)

Other difficulties in understanding some cases in translating English are due to some cases of onomatopoeia, i.e. the use of words, which have been formed like the noise of the thing that they are describing or representing, can be interesting to start the discussion of translation. When English people write down the sound of a gun, for example, in English is usually written down as *bang-bang* but in Indonesian, it is *dor-dor*. The sound of the cocks in the morning write down as *cock-a-doodle-doo*, the sound is *ku-ku-ru-yuk* in Indonesian. To imitate the knock on the door in English, people use "knock-knock" and in Indonesian, it is "*tok-tok*"

Some cases of idiomatic expressions can also be funny jokes. Translating "This book costs me fortune", a student has confidently related it to a familiar word "fortune teller" and the result was "*Saya membutuhkan seorang peramal untuk memberitahu saya harga buku ini* instead of *Buku ini sangat mahal*". Translating "It's raining cats and dogs" into Indonesian will not mention the two kinds of animals. It is *Hujan lebat sekali*. A further questions are why "puppy love" is "*cinta monyet*" and "go Dutch" is "*bayar sendiri – sendiri*".

The examples above show that translation is not merely a process of transferring words into their counterpart target language words. By borrowing Larson's (1984, p 1-3) writing, "*the ideal translation will be accurate as to meaning and natural as to the receptor language forms used*". An intended audience who is unfamiliar with the source

text will readily understand it. The success of a translation is measured by how closely it measures up to these ideals.

The ideal translation should be: (1). **Accurate**: reproducing as exactly as possible the meaning of the source text; (2). **Natural**: using natural forms of the receptor language in a way that is appropriate to the kind of text being translated; (3). **Communicative**: expressing all aspects of the meaning in a way that is readily understandable to the intended audience. Translation is a process based on the theory that is possible to abstract the meaning of a text from its forms and reproduce that meaning with the very different forms of a second language.

Therefore, sometimes, a warning like “Be careful with the dictionary when you translate!” seems necessary because some students feel that as long as they already base their translation on the words in the dictionary, they are “safe”, meaning they cannot be wrong. Those students’ perspectives will be “a trap” in translating. Absolutely, the process of conveying messages is nil. Translation can be a complex process that involves many aspects to consider before we come to a final version of a translation product.

By borrowing the thought of Larson (1991, 1), “*Good theory is based on information gained from practice. Good practice is based on carefully worked-out theory. The two are interdependent*”. Nowadays, some teachers assume translation as a separate skill. It implies that translation requires practice rather than theories. To some extent, translation is a skill because the more one practices to translate, the better he can do it. However, some students have complained that they cannot improve themselves well by merely keeping on translating without understanding any theories on translation.

Some teachers consider translation as a scientific orientation to linguistic structures, semantic analysis, and information theory. Translation, then, consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text. According to Nida and Taber (1974, vii), “*translation is far more than a science. It is also a skill, and in the ultimate analysis, fully satisfactory translation is always an art*”.

Many people argue that skill in translation cannot be learned, and cannot be taught. There is an assumption that some people are born with a gift of being good translators. In other words, skill in translation is a talent; either you have got it or you

have not. Translation is similar to subjects like mathematics or physics. Some people are good at it, others find it difficult (Hervey and Higgins, 1992:13).

Still by borrowing the thought of Hervey and Higgins, when we talk of proficiency in translation, we are no longer thinking merely of the basis of natural talent an individual may have, but of the skill and facility that require learning, technique, practice and experience. The answer to anyone who is skeptical about the formal teaching of translation is twofold: students with a gift for translation invariably find it useful in building their native talent into a fully-developed translating proficiency; students without a gift for translation invariably acquire some degree of proficiency.

There are some definitions of translation as Newmark (1981:38) quotes Savory's words from *The Art of Translation* as follows: a translation must give the words of the original; a translation must give the ideas of the original; a translation should read like an original work; a translation should reflect the style of the original; a translation may add to or omit from the original; a translation of verse should be in prose. Savory's words above describe how translation is not a single absolute definition. It does not consist of a single absolute criterion.

The quotations of translation definitions above show the complexity in the "jungle" of translation. This paper highlights on some description of the translation processes, both in theory and in practice. Briefly stated, it also tries to discuss the following questions: (A). How are translation processes described in the theories? And (B). How are translation processes conducted in practice? The discussion of the processes of translation are taken from Larson, Nida and Taber, Bathgate, and Bell. Meanwhile, the discussion on the translation processes in practice will be mostly taken from the writer's experiences in translating some articles and documents as well in teaching translation for the last few years.

B. TRANSLATION PROCESSES IN THEORIES

Here, the writer is interested in the sub-title above based on how translation is claimed to be taught ideally in classrooms. Moreover, there is a general view that students of translation have "weak personalities" therefore translation theory has also placed great importance upon the cognitive and emotional aspects of the translation process. In fact,

students are taught not only to translate but also to translate in a confident manner. This may be done by means of theoretical studies. On the one hand, textual analysis sheds light on the most frequent errors committed by translation students such as interference, sloppy dictionary usage, incomplete paraphrasing, etc. The teacher is to identify mistakes, search for the causes, and propose solutions for future translating practice. As Hermans is clear about it that ‘Translating is not an innate skill, it has to be learned and negotiated, both cognitively and normatively. Translating always takes place in the context of certain historical conceptions of what constitutes translation. (2002a:14)’.

According to Rosell Ibern (1996), translation involves a difference, an indisputable loss. This is why teachers must improve students’ abilities to tackle these differences. In order to do this, students have to learn about typographical features in the source and target language, false friends, reference markers, semantic incoherence, and lexical divergences.

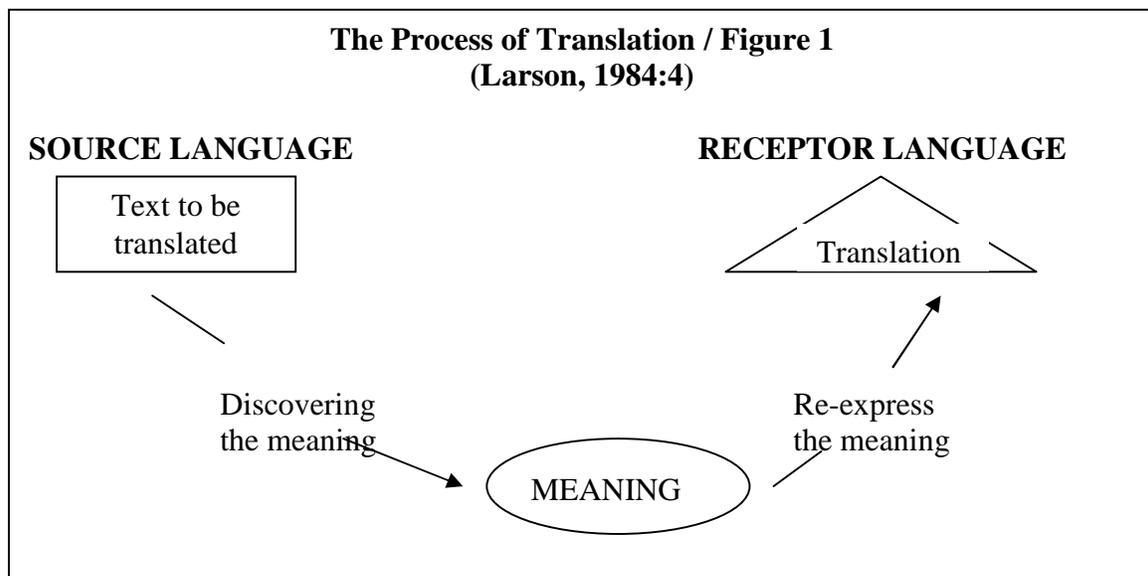
By borrowing the thought of House (1981:7-8), commonly, both in the past years and in the recent years, some the teachers of the course have passed out a text (the reason for the selection of this text is usually not explained). This text is full of traps, which means that the teachers do not set out to train students in the complex and difficult art of translation, but to snare at them and lead them into error.

The text is then prepared for the following sessions and the whole group goes through the text sentence by sentence, with each sentence being read by a different student. The instructor asks for alternative translation solutions, corrects the suggested version and finally presents the sentence in its final “correct” form. This procedure is naturally very frustrating for the students.

Therefore, here, the writer will highlight on some theories in translation process with some authors as mentioned above. Before that, the definition of translation process is given first. Cited from Wikipedia (December 26th, 2008), it is an activity during which a person (the *translator*) establishes equivalences between a text, or segments of a text, and text in another language. Simply, the translation process can be described as: 1). Decoding the meaning of the source , and 2). Re-encoding this meaning in the target language.

Many authors try to describe the process of translation in a way that can show the nature and the steps of translation. Nida and Tiber (1974:33) describe translation as comprising three stages: 1). Analysis, in which the surface structure (i.e. the message as given in language A, the source language) is analyzed in terms of the grammatical relationship and the meanings of the words and combinations of words; 2) Transfer, in which the analyzed material is transferred in the mind of the translator from language A (the source language) to language B (the target/receptor language), and 3) Restructuring, in which the transferred material in order to make the final message fully acceptable in the receptor language.

Meanwhile, Larson’s description of the process of translation is shown in this figure 1



By borrowing Bathgate’s writing in Widayamartaya (1989: 40-41) describes the translation process into seven steps, namely tuning, analysis, understanding, terminology, restructuring, checking, and discussion. **Turning** means trying to get the feel of the text to be translated. Each register as it usually called, demands a different mental approach, a different choice of words or turn of phrase.

In the **analysis**, after the translator attunes his mind to the framework of the text to be translated, he will take each sentence in turn and split it up into translatable units,

phrases, and words. The syntactic relations between the various elements of the sentence are also established. The next step is **understanding**, after having split up the sentence into its elements, the translator will generally put it together again in a form which he can understand. Due attention to both form and content is essential.

Meanwhile, **terminology** is used by the translators to consider the key words and phrases in the sentence to make sure they are in line with standardized usage and is neither misleading, ridiculous, nor offensive for the target-language reader. In **restructuring**, when all the bricks needed for the edifice of the target language text have been gathered or made, the translator will fit them together in a form which is in accordance with good usage in the Target Language.

Then, **checking**, the translator will check his draft translation for typing errors and passages where a second perusal suggest a more elegant, or more correct, translation. In addition, someone other than the translator can read through the finished translation and make or suggest changes.

The last step is **discussion**. A good way to end the translation process is a discussion between the translator and the expert on the subject matter. It is inadvisable to have more than two participants-out of this: too many cooks spoil the broth. On the other hand, it is sometimes necessary to point out to translators that they should not work in isolation. It can be inferred from the process above that the translation process is not a one-punch work. In the restructuring and checking, the translator may need to go back to the beginning of the process again.

Bell (1997:44-45) describes the process of translation that includes the process in the memory system. He explains that there are several assumptions that underlie the model. The process of translating as follows: 1). is a special case of the more general phenomenon of human information processing; 2). should be modeled in a way which reflects its position within the psychological domain of information processing; 3). takes place in both short-term and long-term memory through devices for decoding text in the Source Language and encoding text into the Target language, via a non-language specific semantic representation; 4). proceeds in both a bottom-up and a top-down manner in processing text and integrates both approaches by means of a style of operation which is both cascaded and interactive.

C. TRANSLATION PROCESSES IN PRACTICE

When a student starts translating a text for the first time, there are usually a lot of doubts and attempts to look up words in the dictionaries. Sometimes, certain words are easily found and what are defined in the dictionaries are helpful. However, it also occurs that some words or combinations of words are not found in the dictionaries. In facing this problem, firstly, student has to know what type of translation is. It is word for word, free or literal translation.

Translating this sentence “Please, do it by yourself, don’t steal a person’s thunders”. Student may find unfamiliar words easily by looking up a dictionary. But, remember, he must determine what type of the translation is. From the text above, he will find difficulties in translating word for word: “*Tolong kerjakan sendiri, jangan mencuri halilintar orang lain*” This translation has no meaning properly and it seems ridiculous. It should be translated in “free translation” because it contains idiom. So the translation into “*Tolong kerjakan sendiri, jangan menjiplak*”

In translating, students must get the closest meaning. Text is not only assumed as text alone but it also contains context. Text can be definite meaning, if the text is in context. Before text has a context, the meaning is still ambiguous. Text of “interest”, for an example, has no definite meaning before it is not positioned in definite structure; because it has meanings such as “*menarik, membuat, tertarik, hobi, hal yang disukai, modal, or even bunga.*”

There are many alternative meanings. It will get definite meaning if it is positioned as the following sentences: 1). Their proposal interests the rector; 2). His two interests in life are painting and fishing; 3). I have to pay 6 per cent interest on the loan. In the sentence 1, it is “*menarik (minat, perhatian)*”, sentence 2 means “*hal yang paling disukai*” and It is “*bunga*” for sentence 3. The definite meaning is clear because of its position in sentence.

But it does not guarantee absolutely when the text is placed in a sentence that it has definite meaning. Translating “Finally, we reached the bank”. The word “bank” still has double meanings (*pinggir sungai and bank*) even though it has been positioned in a sentence. In order to get clear meaning, there is a following sentence into “Finally, we

reached the bank. We spent Rp. 50.000 for taxi”. The ambiguous meaning is also in this sentence “He hits the man with a stick” can be into Indonesian: “*Dia memukul seorang laki-laki. Alat yang dipakai untuk memukul adalah tongkat*, but it also means “*Dia memukul laki- laki. Laki-laki tersebut memakai tongkat*”.

Setting and culture are also very important in giving meaning. A sentence with American setting can not be translated word for word in Indonesian reference as “The exhibition was officially opened by the Secretary of State”. Phrase of “Secretary of State” (American setting) into Indonesian to be “*Menteri Luar Negeri*” not “*Menteri Sekretaris Negara*”. A translator must understand deeply due to different reference before translating.

Translating a sentence like “He survived from many attempts on his life”, for example, may require the ability to understand the combination of the words. The translation into “*Dia bisa bertahan hidup dari banyak usaha pada hidupnya*” does not provide an understandable string of words. To provide a complete idea of the sentence, the word “*pembunuhan*” has to added. It should be worded more or less as “*Dia berhasil lolos dari banyak usaha pembunuhan atas dirinya*”.

Literal translation does not only sound stilted but also funny. It can also call misunderstanding as the experience of Paijo in Yogyakarta, “There was a foreigner who lost his motorcycle in a Mall, Yogyakarta. Then, he asked to Paijo whether he know the person who had stolen his motor”. Calmly, Paijo replied “*Yes, he use to table square-square. Worth he fast-fast go without any wet expire. Different river if park bicycle motor liver-liver, yes.*” (incomplete quotation from unanimous humor in internet). In Indonesian is written down as “*Ya, dia memakai kemeja kotak –kotak. Kemudian dia cepat – cepat pergi tanpa banyak basa-basi. Lain kali jika parkir sepeda motor, hati-hati ya*”. Because the foreigner was confused, Paijo suddenly said “Basic Bule” (*Dasar bule!*)”)

Having a text to translate, such as an article, a paper, or even a book, a translator is recommended to read the text first to get the whole main idea. While reading it for the second or third time, the translator can start underlining words that require a look-up in the dictionary. As the bricks are there, as mentioned by Bathgate, the translator can start setting up the building. Next, the typing can be started. The process of re-reading,

changing the words or sentences can occur all through the process of translation. Probably, it is not exaggerating to say that a sufficient mastery of both the source and target language is an important aspect in the translation process.

In class, teaching depends on the main focus of the teachers' theoretical bias. The writer believes that teachers should even make this bias clear to their students so that the students are fully aware of the teacher's aims and goals in classroom practice. Translation involves a difference, an indisputable loss. This is why teachers must improve students' abilities to tackle these differences. In order to do this, students have to learn about typographical features in the source and target language, false friends, reference markers, semantic incoherence, and lexical divergences.

Consultation with the author, if possible, is also useful. Besides the author, consultation with another person whom we think knows better than us can also be done. To translate "*tujuan hidup*", there are many words for "*tujuan*" in English. The confusion over the use of purposes, goals, objectives, aims, and other words, can be spontaneously answered by an English native speaker, "Oh, usually we use life **goals**".

When translating a text into either Indonesian or English, another very important and useful source to translation is reading. Reading a lot of texts, magazines, newspaper, and any other materials helps one get familiar with commonly used terms in written Indonesian and English. For example, the abbreviations DPR and MPR, which are Indonesian Legislative Assembly and People's Consultative Council respectively in the dictionary (Echols and Shadily, 1989:149), are not used in magazines or newspaper.

In most magazines and newspaper, DPR is the House of Representatives and MPR is the People's Consultative Assembly. Some terms such as *Ketua DPR* and *Ketua MPR* are mentioned as the speaker. It can be found that these terms are used: "the speaker of the House of Representative, Agung Laksono", and "the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly, Hidayah Nur Wahid ". By reading, we can get familiar with a lot of terms.

Getting more familiar with various types of genres of language can be interesting. The language of a work contract, for example, is different from daily language. Usually, at the end of the process, the translator need to checked the translation product by reading

the translation product without the source text. This is done to make sure that the target text sounds natural and idiomatic, and that meaningless strings of words can be avoided.

Herewith, The writer attacks some following words or phrases that the writer got experiences as translator due to H5N1 viruses or Bird Flu

INDONESIAN	ENGLISH	INDONESIAN	ENGLISH
<i>Ayam Kampung</i>	Kampung chicken	<i>Tengkulak/pedagang perantara</i>	Middle man
<i>Ayam buras</i>	Local chicken	<i>Wabah</i>	Outbreak
<i>Ayam ras petelur</i>	Layer chicken	<i>Unggas</i>	Fowl
<i>Ayam ras</i>	Purebred chicken	<i>Serum/vaksin/toksin</i>	Inoculum
<i>Puyuh</i>	Quail	<i>Belek</i>	Conjunctivis
<i>Entok</i>	Manila Duck	<i>Keganasan</i>	Virulence
<i>Elang</i>	Buzzard	<i>Ingus</i>	Mucus
<i>Telur tetas</i>	Hatching egg	<i>Leher terkulai</i>	Torticollis
<i>Serangan</i>	Onset	<i>Akut/sangat ganas</i>	Peracute
<i>Pembiakan sel</i>	Cell culture	<i>Rentan</i>	Susceptible
<i>Pemisahan</i>	Culling	<i>Memperburuk</i>	Aggravate
<i>Pengawasan</i>	Surveillance	<i>Selaput lendir</i>	Mucosa
<i>Titik sel/jaringan yang mati</i>	Necrotic foci	<i>Hewan/burung buruan</i>	Game birds
<i>Unggas yang dipelihara di pekarangan</i>	Backyard poultry	<i>Wabah penyakit unggas</i>	Fowl Cholera
<i>Vaksin dengan valensi beragam</i>	Multivalent vaccine	<i>Petugas pemelihara</i>	Service crew/caretaker
<i>Mati mendadak</i>	Sudden death	<i>Penelusuran</i>	Tracing back
<i>Megap – megap</i>	Panting/narbritius	<i>Dilemahkan</i>	Attenuated
<i>Gejala klinis</i>	Clinical symptoms	<i>Menyebarkan</i>	Shed
<i>Leleran hidung</i>	Nasal discharge	<i>Penularan</i>	Transmission
<i>Air liur</i>	Saliva	<i>Koreng</i>	Ulceration

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusion

It is undeniable true that there are a few students who keen on this subject. Yet today translation is largely ignored as a valid activity for language practice and improvement. Therefore, the writer highlights on learning translation to encourage students as well teachers in understanding it. Here, in order to get better understanding in learning translation, it had better combine theory and practice.

Some authors try to describe the translation process from different points of view. Larson (1994) sees the translation process as discovering the meaning and re-express the meaning. Nida and Taber (1974) describes translation into three stages, i.e. analysis,

transfer, and restructuring. Bathgate (in Widyamartaya 1989) sees the translation process as the steps that a translator may need to go through. He describes the translation process into seven steps, namely tuning, analysis, understanding, terminology, restructuring, checking and discussion.

In practice, a translator can have his or her own technique of doing the translation of a text. Reading the whole text is quite common step to start the work. Reading the whole text and trying to get the whole main ideas can be useful for the translator to get tuned in with the genre of the text or anyone who has a better command of either the source and the target language is good to clarify the content of the text.

Finally, to end the discussion, the writer would like refer to the nature of translation, that is the transfer of meaning rather than word-for-word renderings. It is understandable, therefore, that it is a skill, science and art.

2. Suggestion

In the process of translating English into Indonesian or Indonesian into English, re-checking the usage of the words in English to English dictionaries should be done whenever in doubt.

To get ourselves familiar with the terms or language in publication, we can take articles of similar titles or topics from an Indonesian and English newspaper. For example, an article in *The Jakarta Post*, which has a similar topic with an article in *Kompas*, can help enriching our vocabulary

Students are often asked to translate without being given any introduction to the kind of material they will be working on. As a result, they are not mentally prepared for the activity. This is a weakness the writer wished to avoid. The warm-up activities are important acts in starting teaching translation. These are generally oral tasks designed to set the students thinking along specific lines.

In translation classes, if sometimes some teachers feel that they do not know for sure how to teach translation, probably teachers can think of the ways to increase the students' awareness of the importance of their participation in the process. Entering the class without any preparation and just do the spontaneous translation for a few lines will not contribute anything to improvement in fluency and proficiency.

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