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Translation Neutrality Questioned: Politic and Diplomacy: A Case of Text of Timor Leste (Dis) Integration to Indonesia

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Abstract:

Sensitive text or text in such sensitive domain as religion, law, politic, diplom¹⁰y, etc. is always risky to translate. Different interpretation of text in this domain takes a big role in distorting the meaning of the original content of the text. The process of translation in general, on the or⁷hand, involves two or more languages which have different features, different culture, and different development. Translation, on the other hand, is rewriting of the original text within the original language. All rewritings work with the contents and the form of the language. The viewpoint or the angle from which domain the translator sees the text is another factor that influence the neutrality of translation. The V-plat theory of Newmark may need more extension to find the next more neutral translation so that lost and gain could be maximally eliminated if not terminated in terms of neutrality. The way the translators try to transfer the meaning of certain words as precise as possible to meet the original text and to describe the condition beyond the text to satisfy interested parties may be proposed with some modification.

Keywords: Neutrality, translation, politic, diplomacy, sensitive text

1. Introduction

Many studies have been conducted on the translation and pragmatics. Some publications have also been issued in relation to translation, discourse, text, communication, politic. pragmatics and diplomacy. Some of them are related to this discussion in its own degree of significance to review. Some researchers conducted studies in the field of translation in relation to pragmatic use of the translation result. Some researches issued their findings and some also have been published as new theories in translation studies. Venuti (2000, 2011, 2021) compiled some material, papers, ideas of many theories in this field.

There have been many dichotomies in the theories of translation. As the example, it is necessary to mention the dichotomy of literal-free translation, formal-dynamic translation, functional-documentation translation, and what looks like the summary or the most compromising theory of translation dichotomy proposed by Newmark, semantic-communicative translation. Beyond that 'neutrality' in translation seemed to be very expensive for some reasons and in certain domains (sensitive domains). What is meant by sensitive domain may also be defined and re-defined in terms of the level of sensitivity which may vary and differ in other cultures, customs, religions and politic.

Important documents in law, politics, diplomacy, religious teaching and the so which influence the life of people could be highly sensitive beside those that are possibly interpreted differently by different people and in different context and domain. Religious text is considered sacred and that is why it could be the most sensitive. The religious word of scripture (holy book) which is respected as the word of God should be translated carefully in order not to lead the people into the wrong understanding. The risk of translating such text may influence the application of the teaching consisted in the scripture as well as the faith believed. Other domains such as culture and profane may be included as sensitive domain in which some text may be translated differently from the original text. Some culture-bound terms may last in ambiguity. In politics and diplomacy, never only one party that has interest in a subject. Other countries, even not from the region, take their own roles to solve a problem that may affect their interests. No one of those countries wish that their political insights and power be degraded by a single even little problem. Big countries made block to protect their power and influence on other countries that they think as potential market and potential allies. In this term, language, communication including the translation will be the focus of concern to maintain those power, interest, block, market, and link.

As language (any language) is considered *sui generis* because of its specificity either in lexicon, pronunciation, forms of writing, sentence structure or the structure of information, translation then becomes very complex and wide-ranged. In terms of its relation to pragmatics, the translator as the agent of transferring message may have his own tendency. The neutral translation may be difficult to grab. In transferring the message, translator will hardly elude all his knowledge of the field and text before commencing the translation. Thus, can a translator put himself in neutral position in transferring the message as what is intended by (the author of) the text?

The ethics of translation has frequently been considered to comprise of the translator expecting a completely outer viewpoint on their work, contemplating it simply according to the client's perspective: thinking, for instance, that

precision is the main conceivable objective of translation; that the translator has no option to a closely-held conviction or understanding; that the completed item, the deciphered text, is the main thing that is essential (Robinson, 2005). Yet the naturalness of the translation should be reserved to reach readability of the ideas, messages, and the original content of the text.

2. Naturalness in Translation Theories

Naturalness means that the language used in target text (the translation) sounds natural to the readership (clients and targeted readers). The theory of this 'naturalness' is referred to by Nida's theory of equivalence and the German scholar Koller's *skorrespondenze* and *aquivalenze* (Koller, 1979; Munday, 2001; Nida, 2021; Pym, 1997). Newmark (1988), on the other hand, insisted that the translator have to ensure two basic procedures to meet the naturalness:

- The translation should make sense
- The translation reads naturally, when it is written in ordinary language, and the common grammar, idioms, and choice of diction meet that kind of certain situation, the translation could be considered natural. Newmark described that ten translator may translate an expression differently but with the translators' own idiolect, rather than the author's idiolect, as long as it naturally reads.

Nida (Nida, 2021; Nida & Tiber, 1969; Panou, 2013) as he distinguishes between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, sees that dynamic equivalence is targeting the audience and the effect of the message. The target text words should have the same or equivalent effect to the targeted audience as the source text words.

Although Nida and Newmark employ different approaches to the naturalness of the translation, they both point to the same target of naturalness that readers or audience will not be annoyed by the strangeness of the translation which may be affected by the source language structure. According to Nida (1964) in his early work introducing the science of translation, the success of translation depends above all on achieving equivalence response. The four basic requirements he proposed were: a. making sense; b. conveying the spirit and manner of original; c. having a natural and easy form of expression; d. producing a similar response.

Comparing Nida's requirement to that of Newmark's, it seems that point b and d are only the effect of point b of Newmark. Or probably, Newmark did not mark it as important. The point is that natural translation will give the effect that the translator wants. And this seems to be all included in the meaning of naturalness, since pragmatic view the process of transferring is influenced by such factors as described by Basil Hatim (Hatim, 2013): a. SL/TL code of properties, possibilities and limitations; b. how reality is perceived and partitioned; c. linguistic, stylistic and aesthetic norms; d. translation traditions; e. client specification.

Point e here in some ways refers to the same point as point d of Nida, which specifies the effect targeted. Since the equivalent effect is still being questioned for its specifically targeted readers in term of time and place including culture, what then should be employed to measure the effect of the TT and ST on different targeted audience? This question may be of a very bothersome (Munday, 2001, 2008, 2016)

In the case of Harry Potter printed series (not the movie), naturalness of translation will affect confusion in some ways. For a clear instance, in world where Harry Potter lives, sun may set at over six or seven o'clock. Even sun may set less than three o'clock before midnight (Chapter 21 of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban). If it should be translated as it should be, either *literally*, *freely*, or even *faithfully* into Indonesia, the text will never have the same effect to the target readers (Indonesian) as that to the readers of the original ST in their own country. Indonesian children will 'bullshit' the plot of the story because sunset in Indonesia never happens at the time less than three hours before midnight. Back to the naturalness of translation that is based on the dynamic equivalence of Nida and the communicative translation of Newmark, it probably can be said that natural translation is freer and freer than *free* or *oblique* translation. Naturalness is not only in the lowest level of unit of translation but also in the highest level of text and discourse. If this is to happen, leveling the naturalness will involve the two-polar dichotomy of *structuralism* and *systemic-functionalism* in linguistic theory.

3. Dichotomy in Translation

The phenomena of controversy in the development of translation practice and theory cannot be considered to be negatively bad. One theory will be suitable for certain text in which other theories are not good to be applied for one or some reasons. Literal translation is not always better than the free one. Idiomatic translation is not as useful to certain text as faithful translation. Instrumental translation as what has been proposed by Nord (2006, 2018) will not be appropriate for legal text or sacred text as holy books. Documentary translation will be more aptly relevant. In this case, the issue of equivalence in translation can be assessed in terms of missing and omitted information.

Assessing the translation of holy books within the single framework of translation theory may result in difficulties. The concept of direct-oblique translation proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (Munday, 2001; Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000) may also be accessed to assess the translation process. In the case of translation into close family language, for instance, literal translation and *calque* is well applied. Borrowing, in the other hand, is good for translation of text consisting of semantic gap between the involved languages. In cases where mentioned strategies are not possible, oblique translation must be used. The procedure of transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation are covered in this oblique translation.

The term equivalence is used by many different theorists. Nida (Nida, 2021; Panou, 2013) distinguished formal and dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence is what Vinay and Darbelnet proposed as the procedure in oblique translation. Not to be confused with Nida's term, Koller (Koller, 1979; Pym, 1997) also used formal equivalence in terms of

¹² 'expressive equivalence' referring to form and aesthetics of text including word choice and particular individual stylistic features of the original text. Hatim and Mason (2019) are being developing it into newly introduced strategy.

Referring back to Hatim and Munday's *form-content* strategy/concept, in terms of equivalence in meaning and correspondence in form, it is a good idea that the writer will see how the strategy of *form-content* are applied in translation of some proper nouns relating to names mentioned in the studied surah. The strategy of *form-content* is relatively new in translation as it is proposed in Hatim and Munday's book published in 2004, especially in relation to translation of names of persons, names of places and other proper nouns that have specific sense of meaning. Whether this strategy is applicable in translating holy book is another fact that should be raised to the surface of translation practice, especially in sacred text (Hatim & Munday, 2019a, 2019b).

4. Politic/Diplomatic Text Translation

In the domain of politic and diplomacy, especially in the situation when East Timor hold the referendum, the word *annex* (English) is comprehended and interpreted differently by the two side of Indonesia and Australia along with the East Timor. Indonesia or most Indonesia people interpreted the word *annex* as the integration of the East Timor people into Indonesia. The East Timor people who love to live with their Indonesian brother also interpret the word as the integration of the East Timor into Indonesia as the other west part of the island did. However, the following narration about that integration, although in Bahasa Indonesia, reflected that the negative-sense word 'mencaplok' is also used by Indonesian writer/journalist.

Terbentuknya NKRI jugatidaklepasdari masa kolonialismeBelandadimanadaerah yang nantinya menjadi bagian dari NKRI adalah daerah bekas jajahan Hindia Belanda pada tahun-tahun menjelang lahirnya NKRI. Sedangkan Timor Timurbukanlah daerah jajahan Belanda, melainkan Portugis. Sehingga dapat dikatakan jika Indonesia-lah yang 'mencaplok' Timor Timur.

Namun yang menyebabkan Indonesia 'mencaplok' Timor TimurtidaklepasdariintervensiAmerikaSerikatterhadap Indonesia. Sebab, pada saat itu sedang berlangsung perang dingin dimana dua negara besar yaitu Amerika dan Uni Soviet saling berlomba menyebarkan ideology masing-masing ke padanya. Amerika mengkhawatirkan jika Timor Timurtidakbergabung dengan Indonesia, maka Timor Timur akan terpengaruh ideology komunis Uni Soviet (seperti kita ketahui bersama bahwa Indonesia secara halustelah menganut ideology yang dibawa Amerika) sehingga Amerika Serikat harus mengintervensi kebijakan Indonesia pada waktu itu. (<http://blog.umy.ac.id/kukuh/kontroversi-lepasnya-timor-timur-dari-indonesia/>)

This narration refers to the situation that there is still background of conflict between west and east blocks (US-USSR). This text explains about the reason why Indonesia annexed the East Timor. The long background of Indonesian annexation of East Timor began from the different perspective on whether Indonesia raised from the ex-Netherland expanses or the Majapahit large territory. It is good, however, to see other interpretation of the word *annex* within different context and perspective.

Perlawanan rakyat yang di gerakkan dari Viqueque ini merupakan awal dari keinginan rakyat untuk berintegrasi dengan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia. tuntutannya integrasi sebenarnya sudah muncul sejak awal tahun 1950- an (<http://www.angelfire.com/space2/asnam/sejarah.html>)

This text shows that Indonesia accepted the people willing of being integrated into Indonesia which, in that time, considered having been independent from Netherland. The people of East Timor before the integration thought that they were not independent yet from Portugal while their brother from the west part of the island had been able to live free and integrated as the independent nation.

Pada tahun 1953, beberapa tokoh Timor Portugis yang telah mendengar kemerdekaan atas dirisaudara-saudaranya Timor Barat (NTT) serta mendengar bahwa Pemerintah RI telah berhasil menyelenggarakan suatu konferensi bangsa-bangsa Asia-Afrika di Bandung tahun 1955, yang melahirkan keputusan mendukung kemerdekaan dari pindaan kolonial bagi setiap bangsa. Pada tahun 1955 itu sebenarnya sudah ada rencana pemberontakan dari pemuda-pemuda di Dili. Para pemuda itu lalu menyebar-luaskan rencananya yaitu ke Kabupaten-kabupaten. Secara perlahan-lahan lahir perasaan nasionalisme di kalangan pemuda Timor Portugis.

The above text talks about the background of the East Timor integration where Indonesia as independent country had successfully held an International Conference of Asia-Africa in Bandung in 1955. The successful conference was a good reason why East Timor wanted to integrate into Indonesia and to be independent from Portugal. In such background the talks English word *annex* could precisely be translated as *integrasi* (or *integration* in English). There are many other English words correspond to the word *annex* actually such as *take over* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2643535>), *invasion* (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/30/east-timor-indonesias-invasion-and-the-long-road-to-independence>), *occupation* (<https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/indonesian-occupation-of-east-timor/m03nthb1?hl=en>) or even *colonialism* (Jones, 2012). Each of those words may represent the sameness in fact, but what is comprehended in each word is interpreted differently either positively or negatively in sense. 'Intervention' is another negative-sense word to refer to what Indonesia had done to East Timor. This word, however, along with the other words are interpreted negatively by Indonesian people. Thus, if translated by pro-Indonesian translators, those words will be transferred as *berintegrasi* (English: *integrate*) rather than *mencaplok* (English: *annex*). The (un)neutrality of translation, then is affected by the position or the pro-contra side of the translator. As Baker (2006) emphasized that 'neutrality is an illusion, and thus uncritical fidelity to the source text or utterance also has consequences that an informed translator or interpreter may not wish to be party to'.

5. Conclusion

Neutrality is a utopia which never be achieved in translation process and practice. Some factors can never be estranged and expelled from the work of translation. The translator, along with his experience, knowledge, way of life, belief, politic view, culture, education, and skill, is the dominant factor that makes translation un-neutral. The time of when the translation process is carried out is another factor that may talk into the choice of word/diction that ensemble the word in between the source and target text. Fidelity is the most used term that may be closer to what is meant by neutrality. However, 'the notion of fidelity is the moral and the operative heart of enterprise' (in translation conduct) as Larson(2008) stated.

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