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### LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT

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**Maintaining Source Language in Translating Holy Book:  
A Case of Translating Al-Qur'an into Indonesian**

**Baharuddin**

**Abstract**

*Translation involves two or more languages in practice. This undoubtedly activates the conflict between the source and target language. When translator tries to help readers understand fully the concept of the source text, he will sacrifice the source language to maintain the target. In this terms translator will have difficulties to balance between those two languages. Maintaining both is much more problematic in translation practice. Shifting between theories of translations does not automatically help translator to maintain the contents of the text transferred into target language. Distorting as well as inserting translator's idea then is impossible to avoid. Mastering culture, history, sociology and many other disciplines in both source and target language will then help very much the action of translating. The next problem then occurs if it is related to law and religious teaching. Since holy text is sacredly honoured by the believers, translator is potentially sentenced to be sinful and to lose his profession. The alternative solutions are leaving the original text (Arabic) put side by side with the translation, undertaking borrowing and calque, and annotating on the target text.*

*Keywords: Sacred Text, Language Maintaining, Translation*

**1 Introduction**

Al-Quran as the holy book of the Moslems has beautiful verses featured with specific diction and stylistic sentence structure that has never been constructed by any writer and speaker or man of letters in the world. The Moslems believed that it was revealed to His messenger Mohammad p.u.h. as a guide that guidelines the life of human being and of righteous man who believed in God (QS, 2:2). Islam, as the second big religion in number of embracers/adherents over the world after Christian, is now widespread around the world of non-Arabic origin (Arabic: *'ajamiy*) while Al-Quran itself is in Arabic. It is a basic demand that Al-Quran needs to be understood by the embracers/adherents of Islam who, in different ethnics, speak different languages. It is also demanded that Al-Quran be translated into the local language of the Moslems (Depag RI, 1971). Translation, however, remains translation and would never be the second original. That is why the translation of Al-Quran will never be considered or called Al-Quran. Al-Quran is in Arabic language (QS, 12:2) and will never be fully equivalent to its translation into any languages. Al-Quran scientists agreed that al-Quran must not be translated and any translation of it will be considered the opinion of the translator by citing it (Madjid, 1992).

In fact, Al-Quran has been studied since the beginning of its revelation. Many mufasssirs (commentators) of Al-Quran forwarded their ideas in interpreting the content of Al-Quran. Following Jakobson that rewording is one way of translating; the translation of Al-Quran has been carried out since the spreading of Islam in Arab peninsula. Explaining the meaning of the verses of Al-Quran using the Arabic language is the way the commentators operated to make the content of Al-Quran clear for common (layman) embracers/adherents of Islam who, in that time and place, spoke different dialect of Arabic.

The study on the translation of Al-Quran especially into non-Arabic languages, however, is very limited. There are actually many translations of Al-Quran into English and other languages. To my knowledge, only few scholars in translation studies have conducted the study. Hatim (1997a) studied textually surah YA SIN in terms of reference switching. Faishol (2003) studied metaphor in Al-Quran, but not in context of translation studies. Liusti (2003) of Udayana in her S2 thesis studied the translation of Al-Quran especially surah al-ma'idah. However the focus of her study was on the translated text without referring to the original. What she studied was the structure of Indonesian language in the translation of *surah al-ma'idah*. Murtadho (2005:111-115) (other Indonesian scholar) studied metaphor of specific terms '*nûr*' (light) and '*zulumât*' (darkness) which, according to him, are applied to three different references; same metaphor, combination of metaphor and sense, and sense only.

Metaphoric verses of Al-Quran are sometimes so hard to identify that different commentators and translators may disagree with one another. When one commentator may think one verse is metaphoric, the others may think it is not. The concept of metaphoric verses may also be interpreted differently as each language and culture is aware of metaphor in different way.

Thus, in terms of this contrast comprehension of metaphoric verses, the study on the translation of Al-Quran either as the process or the product is urgently required to reduce the extension of different interpretation of quranic verses. Terror in the name of Islam is one consequence that must be avoided. Elimination of such bias interpretation can possibly be carried out through deep study on the text of Al-Quran within the original Arabic version. Interpretation and also the study on the second non-original version (translations into any languages) will never be enough, although the study on the original will also never be enough either, but at least can reduce the diversities.

## 2 Translation Theories

Jakobson (1959/2000; Munday, 2001;) categorized translation into three; rewording (intra-lingual translation), translation proper (inter-lingual translation) and transmutation (inter-semiotic translation). Translation, according to Bell (1991; Munday, 2001), has three meaning; the process, the product and the concept. Munday (2001) called the last meaning as the subject field of translation itself. The word translation is conventionally used in two different senses. The first is in the sense that translation is the produced text in target language that is derived from the source text. This is also called *translatum* (Munday, 2001; Venuti, 2000; Vermeer, 2000). The second sense is the action of translating text. Vermeer called it *translatorisches Handeln*. In Indonesian, we also find these two senses indicated differently by two words – *terjemahan* (*translatum*) and *penerjemahan* (*translatorisches Handeln*).

Larson (1984) underlined three important kinds of word in terms of lexical equivalents. When the word has its real equivalent since the SL and the TL both have the shared concept, translation then becomes an easy task. But when there is an unknown concept being involved in the building of the text, the task of translator will be harder and potential to fail in transferring the message. Key terms are other kind of UT that needs more explanation and consistency. UT is a keyword in translation and will be discussed later in its own part in this in this paper.

### 2.1 The Nature of Translation

Translation is done and functioned as the bridging messages from one to another language in order to get a clear understanding over text within communication. Transaction happens in the brain of translator during the translation is beyond what is imagined. The interest of each language involved is very high. Each will attempt to be maintained either in form or content. Thus the clash then is unavoidable until the translator decide the aim of translation. Unit of translation as one the tools employed very often the translation will be helpful to solve every problem raised during the action.

Newmark (1998) defined UT as the smallest segment of an SL text which can be translated, as a whole, in isolation from other segment. Citing W. Haas, he added 'as short as is possible and as long as is necessary'. This means that it could be the word, phrase, or sentence even text in advanced level. In terms of literary translation, especially translation of poetry, morpheme can also be the unit of translation to really adopt the style of the source text. Even in certain case, smallest grammatical unit such as morpheme can be considered a UT (Pinchuck, 1977). From a text-linguistic perspective, however, single word can no longer be considered sufficient as a UT (Hatim, 2001). According to Vinay and Darbelnet (Munday, 2001; 59-61, Nord, 1997:68) UT is *le plus petit segment de l'énoncé dont la cohésion des signes est telle qu'ils ne doivent pas être traduits séparément* (the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually). Thus if one word can stand alone to give a certain meaning, it will be one UT that can independently be translated into TL's certain word. In linguistic approaches UTs range between the rank of morpheme or word or vary between phrases and sentences and the whole text in accordance with equivalence requirement. In pragmatic approaches UT includes the more complex relationship between semantic-pragmatic value of the type text. Bassnett and Laver (Bassnett, 1990) even claim that the basic UT can be the culture of the involved languages.

### 2.2 Language Maintenance in Translation

In translation, maintaining every property of source language during the action of translation is very important. The idea or the message and the linguistic features should be preserved. It is the right of the source language to be maintained. Take a look at what has long been happening to many important languages of the world such as Sanskrit language in the east part of the world and Latin language in the west part. More and more language of the world will perhaps experience the same tragic extinction (Baharuddin, 2007, 2009).

In terms of sacred text language of Al-Qur'an, Arabic is fortunately maintained all the time. What happened to Arabic that make it become the kind of standard and non-standard (fush-ha and non-fush-ha)

is normal. The pragmatic side and use of language make every language in the world have two sorts of standard and non-standard, formal and non-formal, academic and non-academic. What is important is that the language is still maintained and used whether in academic atmosphere, formal situation, or other imperative and principal circumstances.

The role of translation in extinguishing the language is big. But as we see that translation plays its role in that area to preserve knowledge and text. Without translation, Bible probably was lost, from Hebrew to Aramaic and Greek languages. The effort of maintaining Bible as sacred text is very big and significant. Masoretes (as what Jewish scholars well-known) sometimes look do not care the language as long as the message consisted in the text is preserved. If they, the Masoretes, think that the idea or content available in the text is very essential, linguists on the other hand always think about considering the maintenance of language. Each side, whatever side we are in, is very important and can be helpful to other. Just like the two sides of coin, one is important for the other. The idea and the message in one side and the language other side both need attention. In conclusion, maintaining language as well as maintaining the idea or messages consisted in the source language is necessarily inescapable.

### 2.3 Sacred Text Translation

The history of Bible translation is the standard history of translation action. Most translation theories rely on the theory of translating the Bible. The largest translation in number and the most widespread translation of a text is the Bible translation. Bible has been translated up to now into thousands of languages. All these translation is acknowledged as Bible. It is very much different from the condition of Arabic that is always in Arabic. The translation of it will never be officially accredited as Al-Qur'an. Thus the action of translating it is done very carefully and sometimes the action will sacrifice the target language. This is without risk. The biggest risk is that the content or idea consisted in the target language might be minimum in terms of minimizing the mistake in translating sensitive text. *Ulama* especially in Indonesia as the translator consider that as what-the-so-called 'preserving the form' in the source text 'by sacrificing the idea' in the target language (Hatim and Munday, 2004). In this terms, identifying UT as part of translation action is very important step.

As Larson (1984:195) identified three different lexical concepts in translation, this would be the last of the three (shared, unknown, key word) where the terms of SL may not be found in TL, or have a very little equivalence in level of words. Although the word of SL text is considered as one UT, the term might have to be translated into long phrase in the TL text. Key word, as Larson defined, is word which most often represents an essential or basic concept of the text. Al-Qur'an, besides its name, has a large number of key terms that repeatedly occur in different occasion. The terms could possibly have different referents from that in different *surah* or verse. Al-Qur'an is mostly self-explaining. The meaning of a word (key word) is explained in the next verse of the same *surah*. In the first *surah* of Al-Qur'an, the word Allah (God, in Dawood's translation), for example, is defined as the Lord of Universe, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Judgment.

*Alhamdu lillahi                      rabbi al?alameena*

Praise for-Allah    lord uinverse

"Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe"

001.003

*Alrahmani                      alraheemi*

the compassionate    the merciful

The Compassionate, the Merciful.

001.004

*Maliki yawmi aldeeni*

King day (of)judgement

Sovereign of the Day of Judgment.

Allah that is praised is explained to be the Lord of the Worlds, then, the Beneficent, the Merciful, and the Master of the Day of Judgment. All words that are used to define the word Allah are the attributes of Him as the Lord of the Universe. Without these attributes, the world is nothing. The word Allah is defined not only in this *surah* but also in other *surah*. In other *surah* we may find other definition within His attributes.



### 3 Translation of Al-Qur'an into Indonesia

There have been many versions of Al-Qur'an translation in Indonesia. *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya*, by the Department of Religious Affair (Departemen Agama) Republic of Indonesia, with its revision in 1989 and 2002, *Terjemah Al-Qur'an*, by Prof. Mahmud Yunus, *An-Nur* by Prof. T.M. Hasbi Ash-Siddieqy, and *Al-Furqan* by A.Hassan are some examples available now in Indonesia. Some other translations and *tafsir* by many *ulamas* are also available to Indonesia Moslem to read. The most affordable and obtainable translation is by Department of Religious Affair of RI.

The translation of each might not be very much diferent from one another. The case of borrowing, calque, and annotation is common to help the reader of Arabic-illiterate moslems understand the content of Al-Qur'an.

#### 3.1 Borrowing

The case of translating sacred text other than Al-Qur'an, the case of translating Al-Qur'an into English, and the case of translating it nto Indonesian is one point that might catch the eye of many translators. Borrowing is almost found in every verse (ayat). At least the name of Allah is not translated to maintain the concept of Allah which is different from *tuhan*, *dewa* or any other deitic name. The following is the translation of the very first *ayat* of Al-Qur'an:

*Dengan menyebut nama Allah Yang Maha Pemurah lagi Maha Penyayang*[1].(Depag RI, 1971)

This translation is cited from the most widespread translation of Al-Quran in Indonesia and accredited as standard by the major ulama in Indonesia.

#### 3.2 Calque

Borrowing the word such as *sholat*, *zakat*, *hikmah*, *islam*, *iman*, *takwa*, and other hundreds of word is not enough to translate Al-Qur'an into Indonesian. The problem is that Al-Qur'an consists of text and terms that may be in Arabi itself is rarely used not only in the time when it is revealed but also in modern world. This is to consider that al-Qur'an has poetic language and diction. Thus in terms of this alque is unavoidable. Calque is a special borrowing by which translator can make his translation make sense with new meaning of half idiomatic expression.

(yaitu) mereka yang beriman[13] kepada yang ghaib[14], yang mendirikan shalat[15], dan menafkahkan sebahagian rezki[16] yang Kami anugerahkan kepada mereka.

The bolded expression in the above translation is a special borrowing of what we call calque. The translation of ayat 3 of Al-Baqarah is telling us that *muttaqien* is those who believe in and spirits and unseenable world, doing prayer, and giving charity for goodness. But the translator used the literally translation of the original text of Al-Qur'an by tranfering the word into Indonesion diction. This happen almost from the beginning to the last *surah* of Al-Qur'an.

#### 3.3 Annotation and Documentary Translation

What we mean annotation is 'an explanatory note or critical comment that is added to the translation of Al-qur'an into Indonesian. This is considered very important to lead the readers into what is intended by the original Arabic text of Al-Qur'an. This is very important to not distort the maning of the text. The potential distortion made by and in the translation may cause one generation of Moslems go into riot. The American very much hate Osama for the interpretation of one word '*jihad*' of al-Qur'an. Thus the annotation then is very crucial. The folowing is the example of annotation.

*Dengan menyebut nama Allah Yang Maha Pemurah lagi Maha Penyayang*[1].(Depag RI, 1971)

[1] Maksudnya: saya memulai membaca al-Fatihah ini dengan menyebut nama Allah. Setiap pekerjaan yang baik, hendaknya dimulai dengan menyebut asma Allah, seperti makan, minum, menyembelih hewan dan sebagainya. Allah ialah nama zat yang Maha Suci, yang berhak disembah dengan sebenar-benarnya, yang tidak membutuhkan makhluk-Nya, tapi makhluk yang membutuhkan-Nya. Ar Rahmaan (Maha Pemurah): salah satu nama Allah yang memberi pengertian bahwa Allah melimpahkan karunia-Nya kepada makhluk-Nya, sedang ar Rahiim (Maha Penyayang) memberi pengertian bahwa Allah senantiasa bersifat rahmah yang menyebabkan Dia selalu melimpahkan rahmat-Nya kepada makhluk-Nya.

The *Penyayang* as the translation of 'ar-rahman' should be distinguished from its twin word 'ar-rahim' although they were both derived from the same root *rahima*. The variation of Indonesian words are not sufficient to do the same as that of the Arabic. Thus, long explanation called annotation is put to help layman readers. For non layman or Arabic-literate readers of Al-Qur'an, translation within such specific style of language as the translation of Al-Qur'an into Indonesian is not enough. He might have different idea of one or to words or expression from the translation. In this case he might want to read the original Arabic to clarify the his understanding on the translation. Nord has proposed the theory of translation that is related to authentic document. *Documentary translation*, as what she called it, is the translation of text where the original should be put side by side. Such translation seems to be used by Departement of Religious Affair in translating Al-Qur'an.

#### 4 Conclusion

Al-Qur'an is sacred by the embracers of Islam. They made it as the source of rule and role of way of life. Law, regulation, social relation, psychological motivation, dream on future life are atached to this Holy Book. It is revealed by Allah in one human language of Arabic. There is no Al-Qur'an in the world in non Arabic language. The translation of it is never ever considered translation and must not be cited to be *dalil/hujjah* in Islam. Translating it then become one of the most sensitive translation all along the history of translation. Indonesian version of the translation Al-Qur'an adopted some possible theories in relation to the satisfaction of the translation itself. Borrowing, special borrowing as well as annotation and documantary translation are carefully applied. Thsi has been reducing the conflict between one and another interpretation of the translation.

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