CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SEEN IN THE TRANSLATION OF JAVANESE CULTURAL WORDS IN *SOEGIJA*

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Translating a source text containing cultural words into a target language may not be an easy task. A translator is confronted with a dilemma: to translate or not to translate. When the translator decides to translate the cultural words, the next questions arise. To what extent will the words be translated? What are the considerations? If the translator decides to retain the cultural words, other questions arise such as how to compensate for the incomprehensibility, how to help readers get the meaning despite the cultural barriers, and how to minimize translation loss. As translation is an intercultural communication, translating words into another language is not merely a linguistic endeavor. In interpreting the message of the source language, a translator must consider the cultural aspects of both languages so that the translation "makes sense and convey the spirit and manner of the original, being sensitive to the style of the original, and should have the same effect upon receiving audience as the original had on its audience." In translating a biographical book SOEGIJA, translators found many Javanese **cultural words and concepts** whose equivalents are not readily available in the English language and culture. Thus, translators must make adjustments to carry the message of the Javanese **cultural objects, habits and worldviews** into English while at the same time trying to keep the translation readable and interesting. This paper will emphasize on the **intercultural approach** in analyzing the translators' choice in **interpreting the Javanese worldviews and web of significations**. For that purpose, a content analysis of the source and target texts will be carried out to understand their cultural implications for translation. A discussion regarding the strategies and the cultural aspects of the source and target languages is conducted to further understand the extent to which a certain Javanese cultural word is translated into English, bearing in mind that translation loss and gain might occur in the process.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Embarking on a translation project can be both a challenging and frustrating experience, not only for novice translators but also for veteran translators. Linguistic differences may pose problems, while cultural differences may cause bigger problems. Words contain ideas, worldviews, and cultural concepts of the speech community. Indonesian adage believes that language reflects the culture of the people who speak the language. Wittgenstein once said "that the world is *my* world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of that language (the language I understand) mean the limits of *my* world" (quoted in Katan, 1999:74). Having said that, the close relationship between language and culture is undeniable. Hence, to know a language implies knowing the culture where the language is spoken.

Language could only be understood with reference to a context of culture (Malinowski 1923:305). Further, Malinowski explains that "language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture....it cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance". For translators, an understanding of the relationship between language and culture is crucial because concepts of culture may be embedded in the text and cannot be translated easily without giving the relevant "contexts of culture and situation" (Malinowski 1923:305). According to Malinowski, a language could only be fully understood, i.e. have meaning, when these two contexts (situation and culture) were implicitly or explicitly clear to the interlocutors. The role of translator is to make the ST comprehensible to TT readers by providing these contexts.

Linguistic relativity, the weaker form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, hypothesizes that the "linguistic structures of different languages, which can be very diverse, encourage or oblige their speakers to pay greater attention to certain aspects of the world at the expense of others. These structures reflect the world-view of the culture concerned" (Armstrong 2005:16). Each culture has

different and non-equivalent ways of expressing its world view. Thus, translation is not simply transferring a message from one language into another, because what one word means in one culture may have different associations in another culture, depending on the context of use. For example, in the Javanese culture, red symbolizes happiness, bravery and provocativeness. Therefore, wearing red clothes during funeral is considered insensitive to the host's grief and loss. Red is associated with the color of a certain party's banner. Wearing red during the New Order political campaign might cause someone to receive physical abuse from the "yellow" party, the Suharto's ruling party. However, in South Africa, red symbolizes mourning, while it stands for revolution in Russia. English tends to associate red with fun, excitement, courage, passion, energy, sexiness, and sometimes red can mean danger, anger or violence. These different connotations of the same color are influenced by the cultures and world views of the people.

Considering the cultural baggage and connotations embedded in each culturally-loaded word, translating a source text containing cultural words into a target language can be a time-consuming and exasperating task. A translator is confronted with a dilemma: to translate or not to translate the cultural words. Whichever decision she/he takes, another problem lies await. When the translator decides to translate the cultural words, the next questions arise. To what extent will the words be translated? What are the considerations? On the other hand, if the translator decides to retain the cultural words, other questions arise such as how to compensate for the incomprehensibility, how to help readers get the meaning despite the cultural barriers, and how to minimize translation loss.

As translation is an intercultural communication, translating words into another language is not merely a linguistic endeavor. In interpreting the message of the source language, a translator must consider the cultural aspects of both languages so that the translation "makes sense and convey the spirit and manner of the original, being sensitive to the style of the original, and should have the same effect upon receiving audience as the original had on its audience." In translating a biographical book SOEGIJA, there are many Javanese cultural words and concepts whose equivalents are not readily available in the English language and culture. Thus, translators must make adjustments to carry the message of the Javanese cultural objects, habits and worldviews into English while at the same time trying to keep the translation readable and interesting. This paper will emphasize on the intercultural approach in analyzing the translators' choice in interpreting the Javanese worldviews and web of significations. For that purpose, a content analysis of the source and target texts will be carried out to understand their cultural implications for translation. A discussion regarding the strategies and the cultural aspects of the source and target languages is conducted to further understand the extent to which a certain Javanese cultural word is translated into English, bearing in mind that translation loss and gain might occur in the process.

II. DISCUSSION
A. Translation as an Inter-Cultural Communication
Some languages are very flexible in making expressions; while others have a limited range of words. Some languages have a fluid way in manipulating words to express ideas, while some are rigid and this asymmetry poses problems for translators. Asymmetrical correspondence of the linguistic aspects in two different languages make it difficult to find the equivalents. Traditionally, translation studies tended to focus on linguistic equivalency and accuracy, by merely comparing the meaning of the original and the translated text. However, the field of translation studies has moved from translation as text to translation as culture and politics, which Mary Snell-Hornby calls the "cultural turn" (1990). Bassnett and Lefevere take this as a metaphor of a cultural move and dismiss any "comparisons between originals and translation which do not consider the text in its cultural environment" (Munday 2001:125). They "go beyond language and focus on the interaction between translation and culture, on the way in which culture impacts and constrains translation and on the larger issues of context, history and convention".

Recently, translation has been seen as an intercultural communication process in which the emphasis is placed on "the bridges that people construct to cross from one language to another" (Martin&Nakayama, 2004:218). They further posit that "languages are entire systems of meaning and

consciousness that are not easily rendered into another language in a word-for-word equivalence. The ways in which different languages convey views of the world are not equivalent." Vinay & Darbelnet exemplify that the English word brown might be translated as any of these French words, depending on how the word is used: *roux, brun, bistre, bis, marron, jaune,* and *gris* (1977, p. 261). Likewise, the Indonesian words padi, beras dan nasi are translated into rice in English with an epithet to specify the meaning. The Russian word *ruka (pyka)* means a lot of things in English, such as 'arm', 'bunch of fives', 'claw', 'fin', 'fist', 'flipper', 'hand', 'mitt', 'paw', and 'wing.' The Javanese has several words which are related to the word "carry," depending on the manner in which the thing is carried. The word *nggendong* means 'carrying something or someone on the back.' The word *ngempit* means 'carrying an object, possibly a purse or the like, under the armpit.' The word *nyunggi* means 'carrying an object on the head,' perhaps a sack of rice, a bundle of clothes and the like. How can these different concepts in a certain culture be carried across to another language? Merely working on the linguistic aspects of the text may result in incomprehensibility and poor translation readability.

Thus, translation is often beyond the scope of linguistic equivalency and accuracy, as the dynamic of intercultural communication plays an important role as well. The translation of culturally-loaded phrases may pose problems as they are dependent on the shared context, history and convention among the community where the phrases or expressions are used. This is where translators are required to be both bilingual and bicultural, in the sense that they know both the language and culture of both languages to produce comprehensible and readable translation.

As for intercultural communication, it is defined explicitly by Hatim and Mason (1997:20) quoted from Schaffner (2003:87) as follows:

> In pursuing intended goals, translators (as a special category of text receivers and producers) seek to relay to a target reader what has already been communicated by a text producer and presented with varying degrees of explicitness in the text.

Although translation is not explicitly defined as communication, Reiss (1989:107) highlights the importance of the functions of texts, text receivers, and their use of texts for communicative acts.

> Translation is a communicative service, and normally a service for a target language receiver or receivers. The normal function of a translation service is to include a new (target language) readership in a communicative act which was originally restricted to the source language community. (quoted in Schäffner, 2003)

Translation is thus seen as an interchange between the source language senders and target language receivers. In addition, translation is a communication between cultures in which the "translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other,… (Venuti 1995: 306). Translation, as Venuti further argues, "is a process that involves looking for similarities between languages and cultures—particularly similar messages and formal techniques---but it does not only because it is constantly confronting dissimilarities." The role of translators is in mediating the communication by taking into account those similarities and differences so as to enable communication and interaction across linguistic barriers.

B. Translating the Javanese Habits, Objects, and Worldviews

Good examples to illustrate the important role of cultural contexts in translation can be seen in the translation of *SOEGIJA: Si Anak Betlehem van Java*. The novel is full of culturally-loaded words and expressions which require a process of intercultural understanding in order to arrive at the acceptable equivalents for the words in questions. The novel tells about the child Soegija, who would grow and become the first Indonesian native Bishop during the Indonesian struggle of independence. This is a biographical novel which aims to recount the life of Soegija since his childhood, his schooling, and his tenure as a Bishop during the political turmoil.

Since it is a biographical novel, there are not many essential translation problems in terms of linguistic aspects. The biggest challenges in translation would be in translating cultural words. The cultural words in the novel include the Javanese words. Therefore, the focus of this paper is on the translation process of the Javanese cultural words found in the novel.

The cultural words in this paper are classified into several categories. Newmark (2006:95) categorizes cultural words into the following categories, namely: (1) ecology; (2) material culture; (3)

social culture; (4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts: and (5) gestures and habits. Examples of ecology are *sawah* "paddy field', *pulung* "shooting star", and *alas roban* "a deep dark forest". Material culture includes *takir* "palm leaf cup containing salty rice used for offerings in special cultural occasions", *kopiah* "Javanese fez of black velvet", *becak* "ricksaw", and *gedek* "walls made of woven bamboo". In addition, social culture covers words such as *pêpétan* "finding lice on someone else's head as a leisure activity" and *nongkrong* "hang out in public places with friends". Organizations and customs include *silaturahmi* "visiting friends, relatives or people of higher status to pay respect and build good relationships", while gestures and habits include *ngupil* "picking nose" and *ngapurancang* "standing in a relaxed and respectful way with both hands clasped in front of the navel and legs apart". These words are hard to translate into English because the concepts and situations where the words are used in the SL are not recognizable in the TL. The culture of the Javanese and the culture of the English-speaking countries are substantially different. Nonetheless, these cultural differences must be conveyed in the target language one way or another.

C. The Intercultural Analysis of the Translation of Cultural Words in SOEGIJA.

Based on Newmark's classification, the cultural words in the novel are (1) ecology; (2) material culture; (3) social culture; (4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts: and (5) gestures and habits. The Javanese cultural words found in Soegija include four of Newmark's categories. Words belonging to material culture include *Plengkung, Limasan, pencu, klabang nyander, jas bukak, Patangpuluhan, gedheg*. Words belonging to social culture are *trenyuh, semedhot, clemongan, baureksa,. klangenan, ajrih, asih*. Javanese customs, activities, procedures and concepts include words such as *tedak siten, jimpitan, sistem besek, candra sengkala memet, dwi naga rasa tunggal, tumbu oleh tutup*. Gestures and habits include words such as *laku prihatin, meguru, ngenger*. These cultural words pose difficulties for translators as to how to transfer the concepts into English without ruining the source text. How these words are translated into English is going to be discussed and commented in the light of intercultural communication.

As Gudykunst (2002:179) as quoted in Sakellariou (2011:235), intercultural communication is generally "conceptualized as communication between people from different national cultures...," translation is also considered as an intercultural communication in which two different cultures are communicating through a written text. In the intercultural communication, translator acts as an interpreter of the source text meaning as well as the text producer in the target language.

As in the case of cultural words, the Javanese cultural words are uniquely Javanese in which the words contain the Javanese people's concepts and worldviews embedded inside the words. In order to understand the meaning of the Javanese words, the translator needs to understand the Javanese concepts embedded in the words. For the sake of economy, not all Javanese cultural words in the novel will be discussed.

The first cultural word or expression to be discussed is the expression *candra sengkala memet*. *Candra sengkala memet* consists of the word *candra* which means "moon," sengkala" which means symbol, and *memet* which means "picture." *Candra sengkala* is derived from the word *sengkala* (Sanskrit) which means *Sakakala* or the year of Saka or Saca. Saca was a large group of Eastern Iranian nomadic group who migrated to the Java Island to teach the natives the written characters (chronogram). *Sengkalan* is used to substitute the numbers to write the year. It acts as ordinary numbers, such as zero to nine. Each number is represented by words showing the characters of the number. For example, number "one" is represented by the words *janma, tunggal, eka*, which all means one. *Candra sengkala memet*, as a whole, means a graphic representation of a date or year based on the Javanese lunar calendar.

This expression, undoubtedly, has no equivalent in English. The translator retains the Javanese expression and an additional information is added within the text by means of a parentheses, as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 1
ST   Penggunaannya ditandai dengan candra sengkala memet, berbentuk dua ekor naga saling berbelitan ekor. Dwi naga rasa tunggal, 1682 tahun Jawa, 1756. (SOEGIJA, Si Anak Betlehem van Java, p. 14)
TT   The year of moving in was represented with a symbolic *candrasengkala memet* – a graphic representation of two dragons whose tails were bound. The script under the

graphic symbol says *dwi naga rasa tunggal* (whose literal meaning is two dragons in unity). (SOEGIJA, a Child of Betlehem van Java, p. 2)

A translator will always be pulled between two conflicting poles, between fluency and accuracy, between "naturalness of expression (Nida 1964:159) and "signifying the linguistic and cultural differences in the foreign text (Venuti, 1995:20). Venuti introduces the terms domestication and foreignization. In domestication, "the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there" (Venuti, 2000:468). On the other hand, foreignisation "resists dominant target-language cultural values so as to signify the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (Venuti 1995:23). Thus, domestication focuses on replacing the source culture with the target culture, while foreignisation aims to preserve the differences of the source culture. Therefore, the degree of foreignness can show whether the translators choose to domesticate or to foreignize the culture-specific SL items.

In the excerpt above, the term *candrasengkala memet* is not translated in order to preserve the difference of the source culture. The translator brings the target readers closer to the source text by retaining the foreign terms although the translation loss is compensated.

In English, places may have some common endings such as *–burg*, as in Petersburg, Edinburg; or *–ham*, as in Birmingham, Nottingham, or Buckingham. The names of places in Yogyakarta also have certain endings. Names of places can be derived from the professions of the people or the dominant ethnicity of the people who live there. By adding word endings such as *–an, -on* and *–en* to the words, the words represent the people who reside in the villages. For example, the word Pecinan is derived from the prefix *pe-*, the root *Cina* and the suffix *–an*. *Pecinan* means a China town. Another example is Bugisan. The village was originally preserved for people who came from Bugis, a tribe in South Sulawesi. Other examples can be seen in Excerpt 2.

ST   Dan masih banyak nama-nama sejenisnya seperti Dagen, Gamelan, Gemblakan, yang mengacu pada suatu profesi tertentu. Masih ada lagi kampong yang berdasar pada penggolongan etnis seperti Pecinan, yaitu wilayah yang ditinggali etnis Cina, dan Sayidan, yaitu tempat tinggal orang-orang Arab. (SOEGIJA, Si Anak Betlehem van Java, p. 17-18)

TT   Other names such as *Dagen (undagi –* craftsman in woodwork), *Gamelan (gamel –* grass cutter for the palace horses), *Gemblakan (gemblak –* iron maker of the palace properties), all referred to particular groups of people with certain professions who resided in the areas. There were other kampongs whose names were based on particular ethnicities residing in the areas, such as *Pecinan* for Chinese people, and *Sayidan* for the Arabs. (SOEGIJA, a Child of Betlehem van Java, pp. 6-7).

Once again, the translator chose to retain the source language words and to provide the explicitation in the parentheses to supply the target readers with ethnographic explanation. The additional information is quite effective in helping the target readers get a glimpse of the Javanese words and their backgrounds.

In addition to cultural words, the novel also contains Javanese songs (or *tembang*) containing moral lessons, whose beauty might not be able to be transferred equally into English without changing either the form or the meaning. The song is included in the collection of songs called Wedhatama. The style of Wedhatama was composed in several poetic meters known as *macapat*. The Wedhatama is composed in four styles. The first part is named *pangkur* and consists of fourteen stanzas each of which has seven lines. The second part is called *sinom* which consists of eighteen stanzas each of which has nine lines. The third part is called *pucung* and consists of fifteen stanzas each of which has four lines. The fourth is named *gambuh* and consists of twenty five stanzas each of which has five lines. The song in the novel is called *kinanthi* as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3

ST   *Marma den taberi kulup*
Angolah lantiping ati
Rina wengi den anedya
Pandak panduking pambudi

> *Mbengkas kaardaning driya*
> *Supadya dadi utami*   (Dari Wedhatama pupuh 84)
> (SOEGIJA, *Si Anak Betlehem van Java*, p. 21)

TT   My child, keep being diligent all the time
    To train your heart's sharpness
    To keep ready both days and nights
    To manage your own conducts
    To master your physical drives
    So as to make you a more dignified being.
    (SOEGIJA, a Child of Betlehem van Java, p. 11).

The translator retains the Javanese song as it is in the text to preserve the beauty and form of the song. The decision to retain the song is to give a glimpse of "the other" to the target readers. However, to compensate for the translation loss, the translation of the song is provided in the footnote.

III. CONCLUSION

Translating a source text containing cultural words into a target language is an easy task. A translator is confronted with a dilemma: to translate or not to translate. In translating a biographical book SOEGIJA, translators found many Javanese cultural words and concepts whose equivalents are not readily available in the English language and culture. Thus, translators must make adjustments to carry the message of the Javanese cultural objects, habits and worldviews into English while at the same time trying to keep the translation readable and interesting.

The cultural words in the novel include include four of Newmark's categories. Words belonging to material culture include *Plengkung, Limasan, pencu, klabang nyander, jas bukak, Patangpuluhan, gedheg.* Words belonging to social culture are *trenyuh, semedhot, clemongan, baureksa,. klangenan, ajrih, asih*. Javanese customs, activities, procedures and concepts include words such as *tedak siten, jimpitan, sistem besek, candra sengkala memet, dwi naga rasa tunggal, tumbu oleh tutup*. Gestures and habits include words such as *laku prihatin, meguru, ngenger*.

To translate these cultural words, the translator chose to both translate the words and retain the cultural words. To bridge the communication, i.e. to compensate for the translation loss, additional information is provided within the text in the parentheses, brackets, hyphen, etc. For the general non-cultural words, the translator chose to domesticate the words, while for culturally-embedded words, the translator chose to foreignize them. This is intended to introduce foreign terms to the target readers by accentuating the cultural differences of the source text and to allow the "otherness" to be known by the target readers. In order to do this, the translator must be both bilingual and bicultural.

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