

Translation Brief in Translation Procedures of Nonmaterial Cultural Elements

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ABSTRACT

Translating source text is more than transferring the meaning into the target language text. As a task, translation does other aspects too. Other aspects are not merely parts of the translation strategy as a whole. They also have their significance too. It is found that a translation brief is given to the translator prior to the task given. The brief functions as a guideline for the translator to carry out his task. At the same time, the translator can use any translation procedure as long as he can transfer the source message into the target language text. A translator still has his own discretion in using a particular translation procedure. This paper discusses the influence of a translation brief in the translation procedures of nonmaterial cultural elements in English nonfiction text, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* into Malay language. Findings from analysis show that there are seven translation procedures used to translate the cultural elements identified. It is also found that a translation brief does influence the translation procedures.

KEYWORDS: Translation Strategy, Translation Procedures, Editing.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is an activity which necessarily involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions" [19]. As this statement implies, it is undeniable that translators are frequently faced with the problem of how to translate the cultural elements in a source text and of finding the most appropriate technique of successfully conveying these aspects into the target language. Problems faced may vary in scope depending on the linguistic and cultural gap between the two (or more) languages concerned [9].

It is true that translating cultural element in a text can cause difficulties, but it does not mean that they cannot be translated [4]. The translator can rely on various methods, strategies, procedures or techniques to deal with such problems.

Translation procedures used sometimes are influenced by the guideline given to the translator [12]. This guideline or translation brief, acts as a guide for the translator to carry out his task. The translation brief is set specially for intended target text. This is due to the fact that each translation task is designed to cater to specific audience [5, 11]. In short, each translated text has its own set of criteria that needs to be fulfilled. At the same time, the translation brief also helps the translator to produce translation as stipulated in the objectives of the task set by the publisher of the translation text.

This article discusses the translation procedures of nonmaterial cultural elements in English nonfiction text into Malay. It also discusses the influence of a translation brief in the translation procedures used. Discussion in this title is based on a research entitles *Translation Strategies of Nonmaterial Cultural Elements in English Nonfiction Text the World is Flat: A Brief History of the Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* into Malay.

METHODOLOGY

Discussion in this paper is part of findings of the above mentioned research. There are two research methods used in order to collect data for the discussion. An interview with the publisher of the translation is carried out to gather information on the translation brief of the translation task. The interview is also aimed to understand the objectives of producing the translation text.

Textual analysis and comparison are also carried out in order to identify the nonmaterial cultural elements in the source text and to identify the translation procedures used to translate them. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* (The World is Flat) by [2-3] is used as the source text of this

analysis (ST). This text is read thoroughly to identify the nonmaterial cultural elements. These data are categorized into cultural categories based on the cultural categories suggested by [8]. The elements identified then compared to their equivalence in the translation draft (TD) to analyse the translation procedures used. Analysis on the translation procedures is done according to the Translation Procedures by [8]. TD is a translation produced by the translator. This TD has not been edited by any editor except the translator himself. This analysis could help in determining whether the translation complies with the translation brief set.

NONMATERIAL CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN THE WORLD IS FLAT

What is cultural element? In this article, culture is defined as a manifestation and shared patterns of interaction and behaviors, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. It is an enigma that consists of concrete and abstract components [18] and can be divided into two groups, material and nonmaterial cultures.

Material culture is the physical evidence or concrete objects that are created, used, kept and left behind by past and present cultures whereas nonmaterial culture is the abstract creations of society that influence behaviour and direct socialization. The components of nonmaterial cultures include (i) knowledge and beliefs (cognitive components), (ii) norms and values (normative components) and (iii) symbols and language as symbolic components [15, 17].

Besides influencing human whether through knowledge and belief, norms and values or language and symbol [15, 17], nonmaterial cultural elements can also shape the behaviour of members of a society. For instance, the system of a country's administration is considered as the 'power that be' that can determine the behaviour of a society.

Nonmaterial culture is difficult to understand and interpreted literally without understanding the context or situation. For example, a celebration of a festival celebrated by a society is different from other societies and has its own significance to the society. The lifestyle as well as the daily norms also differs from one society to another. These differences, in turn, clearly depict the nonmaterial culture within a society.

The nonmaterial culture is intertwined with its material counterpart due to the close relationship between both [15]. For example, the manner of eating in a specific society may depict both material as well as nonmaterial culture. A good example would be the tools or cutlery used by certain societies [1]. Eating with hands is a norm for some societies whereas eating with chopsticks and spoon and forks are norm for other societies. These practices have been a norm in their daily lives. Tools used are the material cultural elements and are parts of the nonmaterial cultures.

Textual analysis on the source text finds that there are 179 of words, phrases, clauses and sentences containing nonmaterial cultural elements selected manually from the text. It is found that these words, phrases, clauses and sentences can be categorized into three categories based on the culture categories by [8]. They are (i) ecology, (ii) organization and (iii) social.

Words such as snow, winter are categorized in ecology category in this research. Organization, activities, procedures or concepts (which include artistic, religious, political and administrative subcategories) include words or phrases like monarchy, democracy and liberal. Words, phrases, clauses or sentences that explain or refer to the social cultures in a society are categorized as social cultural elements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Translation Brief of the Translation

Translation brief is a group of information given to the translator [14] and acts as a guideline for the translator to translate the text. Translation brief usually contains (i) the function (s) of the intended text, (ii) the target text audience(s), (iii) the prospective place and time of text reception, (iv) the medium over which the text will be transmitted and (v) the reason (motive) for the production or the reception of the text [11].

Once the objective of the soon to be translated text is recognized, the characteristic of the required translation will then be easily identified. In fact, the target readers and motives as well as the objectives outlined may also assist the translator in choosing the appropriate translation procedures and presentation style so as to ensure that the translated material is understood without any hindrance.

With reference to the task, in practice, the information in points (iii) to (v) is usually not stated clearly by the publisher. Instead the responsibility of conveying this information falls on the in-house staff appointed because they are the actual people who are involved in the producing the TT [13]. As for this task, publisher of *The World is Flat* translation has decided that (i) the translation functions as book for general reading, (ii) target-text audience is the general public of Malaysia, (iii) must be translated as literal as he can and (iv) apply the most commonly-used Malay language grammar and vocabularies unless there is no equivalence for the source language words or terms.

A translation brief does not specify the method nor manner in which a text needs to be translated but it can act as a useful guideline for translators in deciding the appropriate method. Therefore, a translator should be able to translate a text more effectively with the aid of a translation brief.

Translation Procedures Used to Translate Nonmaterial Cultural Elements

Analysis finds that there are seven translation procedures used to translate the nonmaterial cultural elements identified in the nonfiction text.

Transference

Transference is a process of transferring a word of the source language into a target language text including transliteration and transcription. This word is a loan word and therefore, does not change the original form of the source that is translated into the target language. This procedure is commonly used when there is lack of vocabularies of the target language [8].

Findings shows that the spelling and pronunciation of words transferred or borrowed are still the same as in the source language. But, it is obvious that these words are written either in italic or normal.

ST: ... as in America on Halloween.

TD: ... sama seperti di Amerika semasa Halloween.

ST: ... said to him, "Namaste", a common Hindi greeting.

TD: ... berkata kepadanya "Namaste", satu ucapan salam Hindi yang lazim.

In Malay language, it is a norm if terms or words that are borrowed from other languages are written in italic. These two terms are examples of such. The words Halloween and Namaste are written in italic in the translation. It is noticed that whatever language borrowed from, if the terms or words are alien to the language and audience, they are italicized.

However, if the terms are no longer alien to the Malay language, they will not be italicized. This can be seen in words or terms that are now part of the language vocabulary.

ST: liberal

TD: liberal

Without any changes, the word liberal in the source text is transferred into the target language. This word is also not italicized in the translation text due to its understanding by the Malaysians. Furthermore, it is now part of the Malay language vocabularies.

Naturalization

In order to make some words familiar to the target language audience, naturalization can be used. It adapts word(s) in the source language first to the normal pronunciation, and then to the normal morphology of the target language. It accomplishes transference [8].

ST: ... tradition of meritocracy-a tradition that is also carried on in Korea and Japan ...

TD: ... tradisi meritokrasi-satu tradisi yang dilakukan di Korea dan Jepun ...

ST: ... Spanish monarchy to become wealthy and powerful.

TD: ... monarki Sepanyol untuk menjadi kaya dan berkuasa.

Both terms meritocracy and monarchy, categorized as organizational terms are translated using naturalization. It is obvious seen that there are changes in the spelling of the words. The -cr- consonants in meritocracy and -ch- consonants in monarchy are substituted with Malay language consonants in order to abide the rules of Malay language grammar.

It is evident that the spelling of these terms only involves changes in the necessary elements to ensure that the original spelling is retained as much as possible. In the Malay language, the foreign consonant of -ch- which is pronounced as -k- is replaced with the letter -k- in the Malay spelling system [10] and the consonant -cr- is replaced with -kr- in the Malay language. These terms only borrow the sounds from the source language and amend the spellings according to the Malay spelling system which is the target language.

Through-Translation

Through-translation is commonly used to translate common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds literally [8]. It is also called calque [20] or loan translation by other scholars. Through-translation is used only when they are already recognized terms in the target language. The best example is the names of international organizations that usually consist of universal words that may be transparent for some languages [8].

ST: While a Muslim woman sits on India's Supreme Court, no Muslim woman is allowed even to drive a car in Saudi Arabia.

TD: Tatkala wanita Muslim berada di Mahkamah Agung India, tidak ada wanita dibenarkan memandu kenderaan di Arab Saudi.

Every word in the proper noun Supreme Court has been translated with its equivalence and written according to Malay language grammar rules. This translation has modified the structure of the proper noun in the target language. The difference in both languages structures can be clearly understood through the diagram below.



Figure 1: The structure of trough-translation

Mahkamah Agung is written according to the Malay language Hukum D-M (Diterangkan, modified word-Menerangkan, modifier). Word that modifies the noun is always written after the word modified. This is opposed to English grammar. In English, the word that modifies is usually put in front of the word modified as seen in Supreme Court. In this case, the translator abides the translation brief given to him.

Literal

Literal translation is also defined as word by word translation. It occurs when a source language word, phrase, clause or sentence is translated into a target language word, phrase, clause or sentence without concerning much about style but adapting the text to the target language syntactic rules [8] with minimal adjustments so that it sounds both correct and idiomatic (in terms of word order, functional words, etc.). In [20] words, literal translation is a direct transfer of a source language text into an idiomatically and grammatically appropriate target language text and it is the translator's task to observe the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the target language.

ST: The Indians, for instance, take the view that the Moguls come, the Moguls go, the British come, the British go, we take the best and leave the rest-but we still eat curry, our women still wear saris, and we still live in tightly bound extended family units.

TD: Rakyat India misalnya berpandangan bahawa Moghul datang dan pergi, British datang dan pergi, yang baik kami jadikan teladan yang buruk kami jadikan sempadan-tetapi kami masih makan kari, wanita kami masih memakai sari, dan kami hidup dalam keluarga besar yang kukuh ikatannya.

This sentence highlights the social culture of the Indian community that still retains its traditional values despite being under foreign invasion previously. As exemplified, the nonmaterial culture includes the habit of having curry as their delicacy, the wearing of saris and having large close knit families. These habits and way of life is regarded to be parts and parcel of the norms and culture of the Indian community.

Every meaningful word in the clause but we still eat curry, our women still wear saris and we still live in tightly bound extended family units is translated literally into the target language text. Literal does not mean the position of every word in the source text is retained in the target language text. This can be explained clearly as in the diagram below.

We still eat curry, our women still wear saris.
Kami masih makan kari, wanita kami masih memakai sari.



Figure 2: The structure in literal translation

Phrase our women is translated using through-translation into the target language text. This occurs because the Malay grammatical system places the word that explains after the word that is explained. For this matter, the word we explains the word women. In this context, our women is not considered to be a nonmaterial culture but a part of nonmaterial culture as identified in *The World Is Flat*. Therefore, the clause needs to be studied as a whole and not in bits and parts.

In this sentence, phrase our women is not material cultural elements. It is part of nonmaterial cultural elements identified. Therefore, this sentence should analysed in a whole. In this sentence, kami (our) describes the word wanita (women). It is clear that the Hukum D-M is applied in translating the phrase or women as in Supreme Court which is translated using through-translation.

The word saris in the source text is translated as sari without -s- in the target language text. This is common in Malay that when there is a word or modifier that shows its plural form, the noun that follows need not be spelled with -s-. The word kami (we) shows plurality in the sentence. Therefore, the word sari is appropriate enough.

The translation of the clause produces an exact translation. This example shows that the translator tends to abide the translation brief given and tries to translate literally as possible as he can. At the same time, the grammar of the target language is also abided by.

Recognized Translation

Institutional terms are commonly translated using officially recognized translation [8]. Findings show that, other than transference, most of the institutional terms in the source text are translated using recognized translation.

ST: Yet in the sixty years since World War II, our standard of living has increased every decade,...

TD: Meskipun begitu, semenjak 60 tahun selepas Perang Dunia II, taraf kehidupan kita telah meningkat setiap dekad, ...

Proper noun World War II in the source text is translated with its recognized translation, as Perang Dunia II in the target language text. In this research, every translated institutional term is referred to the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka's (Institute of Language and Literature) dictionary and glossary to ensure its authenticity as a recognized translation before it is considered as one. At the same time, if the translation used is accepted and recognized by the Institute Terjemahan dan Buku Malaysia (Malaysian Institute of Translation and Books) as the publisher of the translation text, the translation will be counted as recognized translation for terms translated.

Descriptive Equivalence

The meaning of a source language word is explained in several words in the target language when it is translated using its descriptive equivalence [8]. Descriptive equivalence differs from functional equivalent. Descriptive equivalent emphasizes more on describing the cultural word. This translation procedure is also used in translating *The World is Flat*.

ST: It could be and should be the Taiwan of the eastern Mediterranean, but instead it is throwing in the towel to atheistic China on the manufacture of one of Muslim Egypt's most cherished cultural artifacts.

TD: Ia boleh dan sepatutnya menjadi Taiwan bagi Mediterranean timur, sebaliknya, ia menyerah kalah kepada China yang tidak pun mempercayai kewujudan Tuhan, dalam menghasilkan salah satu artifak budaya orang Islam Mesir yang paling dihargai.

The term atheistic in the source text has been translated with its descriptive equivalence in the target language text. The description of the term is given instead of using the naturalized word (ateis) in the translation. The phrase yang tidak mempercayai kewujudan Tuhan (do not believe in God's existence) is used to translate and describe the meaning of the term.

ST: They do this in defiance of their authoritarian governments, who prefer to use their media not to encourage honest debate

TD: Mereka lakukan perkara ini demi penentangan terhadap ketaatan sepenuhnya terhadap kerajaan, yang cenderung menggunakan media mereka bukan untuk menggalakkan perdebatan yang jujur, ...

In this sentence, the noun phrase authoritarian governments is translated with its description in the target language text. Ketaatan sepenuhnya terhadap kerajaan (full obedience to the government) is used to describe the meaning of the phrase in the source text.

These two examples show that the translator is trying his best to give a clear understanding of terms or phrases that could lead to ambiguity. The description used is more understandable by the target audience. In this sense, it seems that the translator is abiding the translation brief given.

Couplet

Couplet is procedure that combines two different procedures [8]. It observed that there are two couplets used to translate the text.

ST: His view was that it was the jihadi fighters in Afghanistan, of which he was one, who had bought down the Soviet Empire by forcing the Red Army to withdraw from Afghanistan (with some help from U.S. and Pakistani forces).

TD: Pada pandangannya ia adalah pejuang jihad di Afghanistan, termasuklah beliau, yang telah meruntuhkan Empayar Soviet dengan memaksa Red Army (Tentera Merah) untuk berundur daripada Afghanistan (dengan sedikit bantuan daripada tentera A.S. dan Pakistan).

ST: Another was “God”. Lots of people searching for Him or Her.

TD: Selain itu, merupakan “Tuhan”. Ramai orang yang mencari maklumat tentang Tuhan.

These two sentences are examples of the use couplet as translation procedures in translating The World is Flat into Malay. In the first sentence, transference and note are used to translate the proper noun Red Army. Red Army in the source text is retained and transferred into the target text as it is. At the same time, this term is given its literal translation in the parentheses.

In the latter, literal and modulation are used to translate the sentence. Modulation reproduces the message of the source text in the target language text in conformity with the current norms of the target language, because of the dissimilar perspectives in the source language and the target language [20]. In this sentence, God is literally translated as Tuhan in the target text. Tuhan is the equivalence of God given by [6], the official Malaysian English–Malay Dictionary. It is observed that the phrase Him or Her in the sentence is translated with the same equivalence of God. This phrase is translated with specific modulation as Tuhan in the target text. In Malay language, God or Tuhan has no gender. Phrase Him or Her is not suitable to be used in the sentence since it will stir the sensitivity of the society. Therefore, the word Tuhan is the best translation for the phrase.

From the discussion, it is obvious that the translator has tried his best to ensure that the translation produced complies with the translation brief given. The translation brief does not tell the translator the strategies, procedures or methods to be used or what to do in detail but it provides general information on how to approach the source text. But, it gives an idea to the translator on how to translate and which words to use.

This is evident in the use of the translation procedures. The translator can use any procedures that he thinks can help him to produce a translation that fulfil the criteria and convey the message of the ST [13]. If the translation produced does not meet the criteria or requirements, the translator may have to correct it, but if the translation is correct, editing will follow. Findings show that there are times that the editor agreed with the translation produced and if the translation does not meet the requirement, editing is done to it [7].

CONCLUSION

Translation procedures used to translate nonmaterial cultural elements [16] in the English nonfiction text can be said as procedures comply with the translation brief given. Translation brief given acts as a guide for the translator.

The translator can use any procedures that he thinks can fulfil the translation brief. If the translation produced does not meet the requirement, editing is carried out.

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