

STUDENTS' CHOICE OF TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES AND QUALITY OF THEIR TRANSLATIONS

Issy Yuliasri

Universitas Negeri Semarang (Unnes), Indonesia

Issy.yuliasri@gmail.com

Abstract

Translation is a complex task that involves source language and target language with different systems and cultures. The different language systems and cultures may cause problems in translation, and so translators need to use variety of translation techniques to deal with such problems in order to get good quality translation. This paper is based on an analysis of students' translation works in 2 English-Indonesian Translation classes in an EFL Context in Indonesia. The subjects of the study were sixth semester students of the English Department of the State University of Semarang (Unnes). The study is limited to their choice of translation techniques (Molina & Albir, 2002) and how such choice affect the quality of their translations. A comparison was made between the translations done by those in a class with prior lecture on translation techniques and those in a class without such prior lecture to see if there was any difference in their use of translation techniques. A further analysis was then made on the quality of their translations. Questionnaire was also given to find out how students perceived the problems in translation and how they explored translation techniques to deal with the problems.

Introduction

Translation is defined as “*rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text*” (Newmark: 1988). So, a translator, in his task of translating, must be able to comprehend the source text in the source language, and then render the text in the target language for comprehension by the target readers. Thus, it requires the translator of the mastery of reading comprehension in the source language and writing in the target language. That is the minimum requirement of a translator's skill. PACTE (Process of Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation) research group has even proposed translation competence consisting of 6 sub-competences: bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistic sub-competence, professional competence, psycho-physiological competence, transfer competence, and strategic competence (Melis and Albir, 2001).

It is obvious that translating is a complex task that requires complex integrated skills. This is further affirmed when we see what the process of translation is like. Nida (1964) describes the process of translation as consisting of (1) analyzing the source text, (2) transferring the text into the target language, and (3) restructuring for natural acceptable translated text in the target language.

Despite its complex task, the 5th semester undergraduate students of the English Department of the State University of Semarang (Unnes), Indonesia, has the course of English-Indonesian translation. In this semester, their expected level of English is about intermediate or upper-intermediate level. It is therefore a challenging task to teach the students translation. As translating task involves two languages with two different systems and cultures, some problems may arise in the process of completing the task, and students undertaking translation course will potentially face the problems in practicing translation. It is therefore assumed that students need to be taught the different translation techniques for them to explore in their practice of translating.

This informal classroom study aims to find out whether lecture and modelling on the use of 18 translation techniques as proposed by Molina & Albir (2002) such as adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation enhances students' performance in their translation performance.

Method

This study was done to the 5th semester students of the English Department of Unnes the academic year 2014/2015. Two classes of English-Indonesian Translation course were used, consisting of 32 and 25 students respectively. One class was given translation exercises with prior lecture and modelling on the use of the different translation techniques, and the other class was given translation exercises without such lecture and modelling of translation techniques.

After a series of translation practices for 10 weeks, the same test was given. Students of both classes were asked to translate an English text of translation theory. Below is the text they had to translate into Indonesian:

Since translation is regarded as a kind of communicative behavior, different communicative functions may require different translation strategies. Nord (2001) went on saying that “if the purpose of translation is to keep the function of the text invariant, function markers often have to be adapted to target culture standards” (p.45). Nord defined the process of translation as a target-culture substitute, whose aim is to function for the sake of the target receiver, for a source-culture text. Therefore, within the framework of functionalism, translators should be aware of the relationship between the target text and its audience which is supposed to be similar to the one that exists between the original text and its readers. On the other hand, translators should consider the relationship between the two corresponding texts; i. e. the target text and the source text. In brief, as Nord (p. 39) believes that “translators should be guided by the function they want to achieve by means of their translation and be able to use the intended communicative function of the target text as a guideline.” In a similar vein, Nida (1964) made a clear-cut distinction between two types of equivalence in translation, namely formal and dynamic (or functional) as basic translation orientations. “Formal equivalence” focuses on the ST structure, in other words, the faithfulness of the message itself, in both form and content. While, full naturalness of expression is achieved only by “dynamic equivalence”. Therefore, “the message has to be tailored to the receptor’s linguistic needs and cultural expectations” (Munday 2001, p. 42). To achieve such complete naturalness of expression, Nida (1964a, pp. 167-8) went on to say that adaptations of grammar, of lexicon and of cultural references are essential. In his own perspective, the ST language should not interfere with the TT language; and this is done by minimizing the foreignness of the ST setting. (pp.167-8) Producing a similar response is the basis of Nida’s „the principle of equivalent effect“. It is in fact one of the four basic requirements that Nida stressed in his theory of dynamic equivalence, according to which, he considers the receivers of the TT along with their cultural expectations as key factors in any successful translation process (Munday 2001). (source: <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol03/01/14.pdf>).

This research was done to see whether the class with lecture and modelling on the use of different translation techniques would use more variety of translation techniques than the one without, and whether their choice of translation techniques affected the quality of their translations. Students' translation works and questionnaires

Findings

Students' Translation works

Assessing the results of students' translation works, it is surprising to see that there is no difference in the use of translation techniques between the two groups. In both groups, literal translation technique is the most dominant technique used (87% in the class with prior lecture of translation techniques; 90% in the class without prior lecture of translation techniques). Other techniques used in similar ways between the two groups are adaptation, borrowing, reduction, generalization, and calque. In both groups there is no evidence of the use of other techniques such as modulation, compensation, and transposition, etc., which professional translators would use.

With the literal translation dominating their works, and the poor mastery of reading comprehension (as indicated in their translations), the quality of the students' translation in both groups in general is not satisfactory. Only 8 out of 32 students (25%) show good translations in the group with previous lecture on translation techniques, and only 5 out of 25 students (20%) show good translations in the group without previous lecture on translation techniques.

The students' translation works also reveal another problem; there seems to be problems in comprehending the source texts, and it seems to relate with their mastery of grammar. This can be seen from the way they translated the text. There was misunderstanding or miscomprehension of the text, particularly in cases of long and complex sentences. It is obvious that most students have difficulties in translating complex sentences, particularly those containing long noun phrases. It can be concluded that students' problems in comprehending the source texts seems to relate with their mastery of grammar. Below are the examples of students' common errors in translating (focusing on the bold text). Back translations of students' translated are also provided.

Example 1:

- Source Text : if the purpose of translation is to keep the function of the text invariant, function markers **often have to be adapted to target culture standards.**
- Target Text 1 : seringkaliadaptasikanpadastandar target budaya
- Target Text 2 : seringkaliharusmenyesuaikanpadastandartagetbudaya.
- Target Text 3 : kadangharusdisesuaikan denganmenargetkanstandarbudaya.
- Back Translation 1 : often adapted to the standard of cultural target
- Back Translation 2 : often have to adapt to standard of cultural target
- Back Translation 3 : sometimes have to be adapted by targeting the cultural atandard

Example 2:

- Source Text : Therefore, “the message **has to be tailored to the receptor’s linguistic needs and cultural expectations**”.
- Target Text 1 : harusdikhususkankebutuhan linguistic receptor danharapanbudaya.
- Target Text 2 : harusdisesuaikan dengan receptor, kebutuhanlinguistikdanharapanbudaya.
- Target Text 3 : harusdisesuaikan dengankebutuhan receptor linguistikdanharapanbudaya.
- Target Text 4 : harusdisesuaikan denganreseptorkebutuhanlinguistikdanekspektasibudaya.
- Target Text 5 : harusdisesuaikan denganpenerimakebutuhanlinguistikdanharapanbudaya
- Back Translation 1 : must be specified to the linguistic need of the receptor and cultural expectation
- Back Translation 2 : must be adjusted with the receptor, linguistic need, and cultural expectation
- Back Translation 3 : must be adjusted with the linguistic receptor need and cultural expectation
- Back Translation 4 : must be adjusted with the linguistic need receptor and cultural expectation
- Back Translation 5 : must be adjusted with linguistic need receiver and cultural expectation

The examples of students' common mistakes above show that students have problem with grammar, particularly the noun phrase pattern. It is somehow understandable because the noun phrase patterns of English and Indonesian are opposite; English uses the modifier-head pattern, while Indonesian uses head-modifier pattern. This also reveals that students' mastery of the English grammar is not sufficient to cope with the level of difficulty of the source text, so that their reading comprehension of the source text is also poor.

Questionnaires

Besides the translation works, the findings are further triangulated with the results of the questionnaires given to the students. The questionnaires reveal that majority of the students (both groups) consider the texts quite difficult (75% and 70% respectively), although they are familiar with the subject matter. Interestingly, majority of those in the group with prior lecture of translation techniques (80%) claim they know the different techniques, but find it difficult to apply them in their translation task; some said because they were afraid of producing wrong translations. This shows that students are not confident in using different translation techniques. It is understandable that with level of difficulty of text beyond their level of comprehension, students do not have the capacity of exploring different translation techniques in accomplishing the task. It can be tentatively concluded that perhaps the practice of using different translation techniques would only be useful if the students' mastery of the language is sufficient to deal with the text.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The 5th semester students under study cannot cope with translation of 'difficult' texts (particularly those containing long complex sentences and long noun phrases). Their knowledge of translation techniques does not necessarily help them when dealing with difficult texts; they tend to use faithful translation method, and do not dare to explore the different techniques.

To enable students to cope with the difficult translation task, students should be equipped with good mastery of English grammar for better comprehension of the (English) source texts. It is therefore suggested that the lecture, modelling, and practice of using the different translation techniques should be done after making sure of the sufficiency of the students' mastery of the source language to cope with the text. More practice in using the different

translation techniques is needed, not just lecture and modelling. More importantly, the difficulty level of the text should be of consideration.

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Biodata:

Issy Yuliasri has been a lecturer at Universitas Negeri Semarang (Unnes), Indonesia, since 1990. Her research and publications cover ELT and translation studies. Her latest conference presentations were at IATIS Conference in Belfast (2012), ICTS Conference in Bangkok (2014), ELTLT and TEFLIN Conferences in Indonesia (2014 and 2015).