



UNIVERSITAS  
INDONESIA

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FAKULTAS  
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# THE 2016 INTERNATIONAL TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING SYMPOSIUM

12 - 13 August 2016

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

## TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING THEORY AND PRACTICE: TEACHING, TECHNOLOGY, AND ASSESSMENT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS' POWERPOINT SLIDES

- (1) Sue Ellen Wright
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### PRESENTERS' PAPERS

THE TRANSLATION TECHNIQUE ANALYSIS ON UTTERANCES EMBODYING IMPLICATURES FOUND IN THE SUBTITLE OF FAST & FURIOUS 6 AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE TRANSLATIONS <i>By Ahmad Yusuf Firdaus &amp; Firgo Amelia</i>	1
PROMOTING SIMULTANEOUS MULTIPLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUBTITLING PRACTICE <i>By Alvin Taufik</i>	10
DEALING WITH IMPLIED MEANINGS IN COURT AND MENTAL HEALTH INTERPRETING <i>By Andika Wijaya</i>	15
CATEGORY SHIFTS IN FOUR BILINGUAL STORIES ( <i>LANDI LANDAK YANG KESEPIAN, USUL SANG LANDAK, RUSA YANG SOMBONG, AND BUAYA YANG SERAKAH</i> ) BY SHANTY – DAFFA MEDIA PUBLISHER <i>By Devi Rosmawati</i>	23
TRANSLATING ACADEMIC TEXTS: BRIEF GUIDELINES <i>By Doni Jaya</i>	34



TRANSLATION SHIFT OF PREDICATE ELEMENT IN <i>THE MAGIC OF BELLE ISLE</i> <i>By Dwi Haryanti</i>	47
MULTIPLE ROLES OF A TRANSLATOR IN THE CASE OF ONLINE NEWS TRANSLATION <i>By Muhammad Ersan Pamungkas</i>	57
NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE & IDEOLOGY IN LITERARY TRANSLATION: A STUDY ON STUDENTS' TRANSLATION OF AMY TAN'S <i>TWO KINDS</i> SHORT STORY <i>By Esriaty S. Kendenan</i>	65
THE EQUIVALENCE OF TRANSLATING EYE CONTACTS/MOVEMENTS AS NON-VERBAL MESSAGE IN THE NOVEL 'TWILIGHT' <i>By Farida Agoes</i>	79
LEGAL TERMINOLOGY IN THE ENGLISH – INDONESIAN LANGUAGE PAIR AND ITS CONNECTION TO THE TEACHING OF LEGAL TRANSLATION <i>By Haru Deliana Dewi</i>	90
TRANSLATING RECIPES, CHALLENGES AND TECHNIQUES <i>By Hetty Hartati Novita</i>	106
MAXIMIZING AVAILABLE SPACES TO CONVEY MEANING: THE STRATEGY OF SPACE UTILIZATION IN JAPANESE <i>MANGA</i> TRANSLATION INTO INDONESIAN LANGUAGE <i>By Himawan Pratama</i>	114
TEACHING TRANSLATION OF TECHNICAL TEXTS THROUGH THE MODIFICATION OF PEER ASSESSMENT AND INTERNET BROWSING <i>By I Gusti Agung Sri Rwa Jayantini, I Komang Sulatra, and Putu Chrisma Dewi</i>	123
SUCCESS IN TRANSLATING FRENCH PROVERBS INTO INDONESIAN <i>By Ismirani Mardalena</i>	130
INDONESIAN TRANSLATIONS OF ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND: READABILITY OF CULTURE-BOUND WORDS <i>By Issy Yuliasri &amp; Mohamad Ikhwan Rosyidi</i>	143
TEACHING TRANSLATION: USING TEXT GENRE AND COLLABORATION <i>By Kurnia Ningsih</i>	151
THE USE OF THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH IN ENGLISH IDIOM TRANSLATION <i>By Lisa Armelia &amp; Cut Novita Srikandi</i>	156



TRANSLATORS' BACKGROUND INFLUENCE REVISITED: ANGELELLI'S RUBRIC SCORE AT WORK <i>By Melly Sumant Cintyaning Ayu &amp; Harris Hermansyah Setiajid</i>	172
THE VARIATION OF TRANSLATION OF REPORTING CLAUSES IN DIRECT SPEECH <i>By Muamaroh</i>	183
APPLYING SIGHT TRANSLATION TECHNIQUE IN AN INTERPRETING CLASS <i>By Ni Luh Putu Krisnawati &amp; Sang Ayu Isnu Maharani</i>	193
TEACHING STUDENTS TO TRANSLATE EROTIC LANGUAGES: PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE <i>By R. Arief Nugroho &amp; Sulistini Dwi Putranti</i>	200
HIJAU IS NOT (ALWAYS) GREEN: EQUIVALENCE AT WORD LEVEL IN TEACHING BASIC LEVEL INDONESIA – ENGLISH TRANSLATION <i>By Ratna Erika M. Suwarno</i>	208
THE USE OF TRANSLATION TOOLS AND HOW THOSE TOOLS IMPROVE THE TRANSLATION WORKFLOW <i>By Ririn Indah Permata Sari</i>	217
AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES AND QUALITY OF COLLOCATIONS IN THE NOVEL ENTITLED THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RINGS <i>By Salman Mashudi</i>	223
TEACHING TRANSLATION/IDIOMIZING TRANSLATION <i>By Siti Kudriyah</i>	230
ASSESSMENT IN TRANSLATION RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND INDUSTRY <i>By Sugeng Hariyanto</i>	236
THE ROLE OF CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES* <i>By Sukirmiyadi</i>	245
TEACHING TRANSLATION OF NEWS TEXTS: STEPS AND SUGGESTIONS <i>By Yopi Thahara</i>	246
THE TRANSLATION OF DUTCH VOICE IN AN ACADEMIC TEXT TO INDONESIAN <i>By Zahroh Nuriah</i>	253



## INDONESIAN TRANSLATIONS OF ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND: READABILITY OF CULTURE-BOUND WORDS

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### Abstract

*This research aims at comparing how culture-bound words (CBWs) are translated in five different Indonesian translations, i.e. the one published in 1978, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010 by different translators and to what extent the translations are readable to the target readers. The research uses a qualitative comparative approach. Four hundred sixty three (463) data of English CBWs and their five different Indonesian translations were collected. The data were divided into five categories as proposed by Newmark (1988) plus one additional category as proposed by Aixela (1996). Analyses were then made to see how they were translated by five different translators. Further analyses were also made to see how readable the translations are as perceived by the target readers. To find out their readability, 25 respondents were given readability rating sheets for each of the published translations. The findings show that on one hand the translators share the same problems in translating material culture, particularly in translating food. On the other hand, different translators also face different problems in translating other categories of CBWs, such as animals and gestures. The readers' readability rating shows that majority of the translations of CBWs are readable. However, each of the five translations has some portion of CBWs that are unreadable. Comparatively, the 2009 translated edition has the highest cases of readable CBW translations, followed by the 2005, 2011, 1978, and 2007 translated editions.*

**Keywords:** culture-bound words, readability, translation

### Introduction

The story of Alice has survived for more than a hundred and fifty years since *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* was written by Lewis Carroll in 1865. Its cultural distance between then and today, however, is obviously wide. Reynolds (n.d.) believes that "much of the earliest children's literature concerned with saving children's souls through instructions and by providing role models for their behaviour (<http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/perceptions-of-childhood>).

The original *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* was written in English and has been translated into many different languages by many translators around the world. Lindseth (2015) has listed 7,609 editions of *Alice* in 174 languages published. In Indonesia, five different translations of *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* have been found. The first translation entitled *Elisa di Negeri Ajaib* was translated by Julius R. Siyaranamual and published by PT Gramedia, Jakarta in 1978. The second, entitled *Alice di Negeri Ajaib*, was translated by Isnadi and published by Liliput, Yogyakarta, in 2005. The third, entitled



*Petualangan di Negeri Ajaib dan Dunia di Balik Cermin*, was translated by Sri Hariyanto and published by Narasi, Yogyakarta, in 2007. The fourth, entitled *Alice in Wonderland*, was translated by Khairi Rumananti and published by Atria, Jakarta, in 2009. The fifth, entitled *Petualangan Alice, Alice di Negeri Ajaib & Alice Menembus Cermin* was translated by Agustina Reni Eta Sitepoe and published by PT Elex Media Komputindo, Jakarta, in 2010.

The five different Indonesian translators have created different translation results, particularly in translating culture-bound words (CBWs). Such differences reflect their different perspectives or standpoints in translating the cultural materials existing in the English edition. These differences cannot be separated from the translators' background knowledge. Besides, they are probably caused by the complications in translating culture, in this case, the CBWs. As Nida<sup>7</sup> (1974) suggests, the differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than the differences in language structure.

From the discussion above, it is clear that in translating literary works cultural understanding of both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) is needed in order to produce culturally acceptable and readable translation. As Catford (1965) defines, translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language). Newmark (1988:5) also points out that translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intends for the text. Thus, translation is not only a matter of transferring words from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), but also transferring the SL culture to the TL culture. In addition, translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two culture traditions (Toury 1978:200). Thus, hopefully the cultural traditions as reflected in the text in the SL can be transferred in accordance with the existing culture in TL community.

In the case of translating *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the translators applied his/her understanding of culture. According to Newmark, 'cultural word' refers to objects or activities with connotations that are specific to one community (Newmark, 1991). In line with Newmark, Gambier refers to such concepts as "culture-specific references" and asserts that they connote different aspects of life, such as education, politics, history, art, institutions, legal systems, units of measurement, place names, foods and drinks, sports, and national pastimes, as experienced in different countries and nations of the world (Gambier 2004). Translating culture needs understanding of culture specific items. Newmark (1988) classifies the culture-specific items into five types. They are ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, gestures, and habits. Ecology refers to flora, fauna, hills, winds, plains, and all the geological and geographical features. Material culture (artifacts) consists of food, clothes, houses and towns, and transports. Social culture consists of work and leisure. Organizations consist of customs, activities, procedures, and concepts: political and administrative, religious, and artistic. The last is gestures and habits. All these cultural specific items are embedded in culture-bound words (CBW). Another item of CBW, as proposed by Aixela (1996), i.e. proper name, is added in the analysis of CBW translation in this study.

As translating CBWs could be problematic, it is therefore interesting to find out how readable the translations of CBWs are in the five different translated editions. Readability refers to how easy a text is to read and understand. Readability of the translated culture-bound words is the focus of discussion in this paper. The aims of writing this paper is to describe how culture-bound words are translated in five Indonesian translated editions and how the translations are perceived by the target readers in terms of their readability.



## Methodology

The approach used in conducting this research is a qualitative approach. This is evaluative research on the products of translation, in this case translations of culture-bound words in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (AAW) into the aforementioned five different Indonesian translations as follows: (1) *Elisa di Negeri Ajaib* (1978); (2) *Alice di Negeri Ajaib* (2005); (3) *Petualangan di Negeri Ajaib dan Dunia di Balik Cermin* (2007); (4) *Alice in Wonderland* (2009); and (5) *Petualangan Alice, Alice di Negeri Ajaib & Alice Menembus Cermin* (2010).

The research addressed the problem of how culture-bound words in the *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (AAW) novel were translated into Indonesian as reflected from the products of the translations of CBWs as compared to the original text. In doing so, the culture-bound words of the original English text and the translations into 5 different editions were collected and then classified according to Newmark's (1988) classification of CBWs into five types, i.e.: (1) ecology, which is further divided into some sub-categories, such as flora, fauna, winds, plains, and hills; (2) material culture (artifacts), which consists of some sub-categories, such as food, clothes, houses, and transports; (3) social culture, which has a relation with the social life of a country including work, leisure, and games; (4) organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, and (5) gestures and habits. In addition, another category as proposed by Aixela (1996:59), proper names, was also considered in the analysis.

The research also assessed the readability of the translations as viewed by the target readers. In this case, around 25 readers consisting of children and teenagers (13-19 years old) were used as respondents for each translated edition. They were asked to read the translated novels whose CBWs had been marked and given numbers according to the numbers of the data. After reading, they were asked to rate the readability using the readability sheets provided. With the rating sheets, they rated the bold CBWs in each clause containing CBWs with score 3, 2, and 1. Score 3 means readable (easy to read/understand), score 2 means not quite readable (a bit difficult and necessary to repeat reading to understand), and score 1 means unreadable (difficult to understand or associate with).

## Findings and Discussion

There were 463 *Culture-bound words* (CBWs) found in the novel. They were translated based on translators' perspectives in understanding the different cultures of England and Indonesia. Some of the CBWs were translated in the same way by the five different translators, showing that these kinds of CBWs were among the easy ones and did not cause problems in translating. The translations also got high readability scores from the readers, as they were mostly of words familiar to the readers. There were also CBWs that were translated differently by the five translators. The different translations represent the translators' different perspectives of the SL culture and at the same time also show the problems they encountered during the translation process.

The readability rating done by the respondents shows that in all the five different translations, the 1978, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010 editions, majority of the translated CBWs have high readability rate (score 3). However, in all the five translations there are cases of translated CBWs that are not quite readable (score 2) and unreadable (score 1). The recapitulation of the readability rating is presented in percentage in Table 1.



Table 1  
Percentage of Readability Rating

% READABILITY														
1978 Edition			2005 Edition			2007 Edition			2009 Edition			2010 Edition		
3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1
70.86	22.63	6.51	85.12	10.27	4.61	64.36	21.91	13.73	86.19	10.57	3.24	78.46	17.03	4.51

If we compare the readability rating of the five different translations, we can see that the 2009 translated edition has the highest percentage (86.19%) of translated CBWs with high readability (score 3), followed by the 2005 edition (85.12%), the 2010 edition (78.48%), the 1978 edition (70.86%), and the 2007 edition. This shows that the 2009 translated edition is perceived to have the most readable translated CBWs, followed by the 2005, 2010, 1978, and 2007 editions successively.

An example of a CBW that results in similar translation and has high readability is given. The original text is given first, and the 1978, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010 editions of translations are given successively afterwards. The original text "...and pour the waters of the Nile" was translated into "...*lalu menuangkan air sungai Nil*" (then pour the water into the Nile) (1978), "...*dan menyepuh sungai Nil dengan cahayanya.*" (and gild the Nile with its light) (2005), "...*Dan menuangkan air Nil*" (and pour the Nile) (2007), "...*Dan menyemburkan air seperti sungai Nil*" (and squirt water like the Nile) (2009), "...*Dan menumpahkan air Sungai Nil*" (and spill the Nile water) (2010). The phrase *the Nile* was translated into *sungai Nil* (*Nile river*) and *Nil* (*Nile*), which are understood by the Indonesian readers. This can be seen from the readability rating of this particular item which shows highest readability; it got the highest percentage (100%) of score 3. It indicates that all readers understand the phrase *sungai Nil* or *Nil* as the translation of *the Nile*.

Another example showing high readability is translation of the phrase "that poky little house." The original text is "I shall have to go and live in that poky little house" and was translated into *Dan saya harus pergi berdiam di rumah yang apak itu* (And I have to go staying in that poky house) (1974), *Ini berarti aku harus pergi dan hidup di rumah kecil dan sempit seperti dia* (It means that I have to go and stay in a little and narrow house like his/hers) (2005), *Aku perlu pergi dan tinggal di rumah yang kecil dan sempit itu* (I need to go and stay in that little and narrow house) (2007), *Aku harus pergi dan tinggal di rumah kecil yang sempit itu* (I have to go and stay in that little house that is narrow) (2009), *Dan aku harus pergi dan tinggal di dalam rumah yang kecil* (And I have to go and stay in a little house) (2010). The phrase "that poky little house" here was translated into different translations such as *rumah yang apak itu* (that poky house) (1978), *rumah kecil dan sempit seperti dia* (a little and narrow house like his/hers) (2005), *rumah yang kecil dan sempit itu* (that little and narrow house) (2007), *rumah kecil yang sempit itu* (that little house that is narrow) (2009), and *rumah yang kecil* (a small/little house) (2010). Despite the different phrases chosen by the different translators in translating the phrase, the readers' response was positive. They understood the translated phrases well and thus gave high readability score.

Next example showing high readability is the translations of the phrase "the pool of tears" in the clause "She soon made out that she was in the pool of tears which she had wept". The different translations of the clauses were as follows: "*Tapi kemudian ia ketahui juga, Ia berada di dalam genangan air matanya sendiri*" (However, then she knows as well. She is in deep puddle of her tears) (1978), "*Ia lalu menduga air asin itu tak lain adalah genangan air matanya sendiri saat ia menangis tadi*" (She then thinks that that salty water is nothing but her own tears when she cried) (2005), "*Kemudian dia menyadari bahwa dia berada di dalam kolam airmata yang dikucurkan*" (Then, she realizes that she is in the pool of tears dropped)





(2007), “*Akhirnya Alice segera menyadari dia berada di lautan air mata yang dia cucurkan*” (Finally, Alice soon realizes that she is in the sea of tears she dropped) (2009), “*Ia sedang berada dalam kolam air mata yang berasal dari tangisnya*” (She is in the pool of tears originated from her tears) (2010). In this case, the phrase “the pool of tears” was translated differently into *genangan air mata* (puddle of tears), *kolam air mata* (pool of tears), and *lautan air mata* (sea of tears) that show a similar meaning in Indonesian. The words *genangan* (puddle), *kolam* (pool), and *lautan* (sea) that make up the phrases signify loads of water in Indonesian readers’ perception. The readers understood that those translated phrases represented lots of water; in this case, lots of tears. The translated phrase, thus, got mostly high score of readability (more than 80 percent respondents gave score 3).

Different from the above examples that show similar and readable translations, there are cases when translating CBWs poses some problems to the translators. An example is represented by the translations of gesture/behavior category of CBW as realized in the clause “Alice kept her eyes anxiously fixed on it”. The phrase “kept her eyes anxiously fixed on it” is translated into *memandang ke arahnya dengan rasa kuatir* (looked at it anxiously) (1978), *menatap tikus itu dengan gelisah* (looked at the rat anxiously) (2005), *tetap melihat dengan harapan semakin nyata* (kept looking with more obvious hope) (2007), *terus menatap si Tikus dengan cemas* (kept staring at the Rat anxiously) (2009), and *memperhatikan si Tikus dengan penuh perhatian* (watched the Rat attentively) (2010). The word *memandang*, *menatap*, *melihat*, and *memperhatikan* as chosen by the translators have different senses in Indonesian, although they might have a similar meaning. Also, the word “anxiously” is translated into *rasa kuatir*, *dengan gelisah*, *cemas*, and *dengan penuh perhatian*. *Rasa kuatir*, *gelisah*, and *cemas* indicate a similar meaning, i.e. anxiety. On the other hand, *penuh perhatian* has a different meaning; it indicates intensity in looking at something. Interestingly, however, the readability rating result speaks differently. Indonesian readers mostly understand those translated phrases, and this particular translation got more than 80 percent of score 3 for high readability.

In the case of food category, Carroll’s phrase “roast turkey” in the clause “It had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast” was translated into *panggang burung kalkun* (turkey bird roast) (1978), *ayam bakar* (grilled chicken) (2005), *kalkun panggang* (roast turkey) (2007 and 2009), and *kalkun bakar* (grilled turkey) (2010). Different translations were found from different editions (except the 2007 and 2009 editions). The word *turkey* was translated into *burung kalkun* (turkey bird) (1978), *kalkun* (turkey) (2007, 2009, 2010) and *ayam* (chicken) (2005). Another word, *roast* was translated differently, such as *panggang* (roast) (1978, 2007, 2009) and *bakar* (grilled) (2005, 2010). Despite the different translations, the readability rating for the 1978, 2005, and 2007 Indonesian translated editions shows 70-80 percent high readability (score 3), and for the 2009 and 2010 Indonesian translated editions show more than 90 percent high readability. It indicates that Indonesian readers accept or understand the translated editions, especially the 2009 and 2010 ones.

Another example of CBW’s under food category is the word “toffee” in the clause “It had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast.” The word *toffee* was translated into *manisan* (sweets) (1974), *gula-gula* (candies) (2005), *toffee* (2007 and 2009), and *kue coklat* (chocolate cake) (2010). The different translated editions indicate different perception of “toffee” in cultural context and also show problems posed by the translators. Comparing the readability rating results, the 1974 Indonesian translated edition had 52% for 3 score, the 2005 Indonesian translated edition had 48% for score 3, the 2007 Indonesian translated edition had 60% for score 3, the 2009 Indonesian translated edition had 72% for score 3, and the 2010 Indonesian translated edition had 78,3% for score 3. The results show that some Indonesian readers had difficulty



in understanding the translated word or in associating it with the referent or object in their mind.

Still in the same line, "It had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast" the phrase "hot buttered toast" was translated differently. It was translated into *roti panggang mentega yang panas* (hot butter roast bread) (1978, 2009, 2010), *roti bakar* (grilled bread) (2005), *mentega bakar* (grilled butter) (2007). The translation result shows different ideas in perceiving "hot buttered toast." Surprisingly, as seen from the readability rating, Indonesian readers understand the meaning of *roti panggang mentega yang panas* (hot butter roast bread), *roti bakar* (grilled bread), and *mentega bakar* (grilled butter) in the given context. The result shows that more than 80% respondents gave high readability rate (score 3), which means that they understood the phrase contextually.

Besides food, translating animal names also creates different problems to different translators. An example of an animal category is the phrase "guinea pigs" in the clause "The poor little lizard, Bill, was in the middle, being held up by two guinea pigs." This phrase was translated into Indonesian differently. In the 1978 edition it is *tikus besar* (big mouse), in the 2005 edition it is *binatang bertelinga kecil dan tak berekor* (an animal with small ears and no tail). In the 2007 edition it is *babi* (a pig), in the 2009 edition it is *marmot* (a marmot), and in the 2010 edition it is *tikus putih* (a white mouse). Those differences represent different translators' perceptions of the phrase "guinea pig." Hornby (1995:530) defines "guinea pig" as "a small animal with short ears and no tail"; perhaps from this dictionary definition then the translators associate the phrase accordingly. Observing the result of readability rating, most Indonesian readers had difficulty in understanding the phrase. For the five different translations only 15-48% respondents gave score 3, and majority gave score 1 which means unreadable or difficult to understand contextually.

Often the translators used the same approach or chose the same translation technique in solving the problem of translation and accomplishing the translation task. For example, they used the borrowing translation technique when translating "Canterbury." However, this same decision in translating the word does not necessarily result in high readability. Most Indonesian readers did not understand the word. Similar to "Canterbury", the phrase "Edgar Athelling" is also difficult to understand for Indonesian readers; the Indonesian translation of five different editions is the same, which shows the same decision taken by the translators in dealing with the translation problem, and yet it gives low scores of readability.

Another example showing low readability is the expression "An arm, you goose!" It has a cultural meaning as a mocking expression. It is translated differently into Indonesian, i.e. *keledai!* (donkey!) (1978), *angsa bodoh!* (stupid goose!) (2005), *bodoh!* (stupid!) (2007), *dungu!* (dumb!) (2009), and *tolol!* (dumb!) (2010). Most translators rendered the sense of stupidity in their translations. The word "*keledai*" (donkey), for example, is a representation of stupidity in Indonesian; for example, there is a saying "*hanya keledai yang jatuh dua kali dalam lubang yang sama*" (only donkeys will fall into a the same hole twice). The words "*bodoh*" (stupid!), "*dungu*" (dumb), and "*tolol*" (dumb) also explicitly carry the meaning of stupidity. Different from these three translations, the word "*angsa*" (goose) does not usually carry the sense of stupidity. Combined with the word "*bodoh*" (stupid), however, the sense of stupidity is actually there. Nevertheless, Indonesian readers seem to have difficulty in capturing in their mind the image of "goose" as a figurative language. They lack of cultural sense and meaning of this expression. It bears gap of cultural understanding between the translator and the readers. Probably it is this gap that causes a low score of its readability.

The low readability rate is also given to the translations of the word "clubs" in the clause "First came ten soldiers carrying clubs". The word "club" is translated into "*gada*" (1974), "*tongkat pemukul*" (2005), "*alat pemukul*" (2007) "*tongkat*" (2009), and "*tongkat*"



(2010). When the word “clubs” is translated into *gada* (local culture-specific: a kind of large stick to hit people/enemies), *tongkat pemukul* (hitting stick), *alat pemukul* (hitting tool), and *tongkat* (stick), Indonesian readers seem to have difficulties in understanding the translations. The meaning of the different Indonesian translations does not make sense for the Indonesian readers. The translation still bears the residue of questioning the perception within their mind culturally.

## Conclusion

Culture-bound word (CBW) is among the problematic aspects in translating. Some portion of the translated CBWs in five different Indonesian translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has low readability and causes problems to the readers in understanding the texts. Analyses of the five different translations show that, on one hand, the translators share the same problems in translating material culture, particularly in translating food. On the other hand, different translators also face different problems in translating other categories of CBWs, such as the animals and gestures. The readers' readability rating shows that the big portion of translations is readable. However, each of the five translations has some portion of CBWs that are unreadable. Comparatively, the 2009 translated edition has the highest cases of readable CBW translations, followed by the 2005, 2010, 1978, and 2007 translated editions.

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**Acknowledgements:**

We would like express our gratitude to the Rector and Chief of Research and Public Service Center (LP2M) of Unnes for supporting the research with funding. Our thanks also go to our students Martinda Intan Permatahati, Nur Majid Wahyu Wardhani, Puji Lestari, Ria Fajar Rizkiyani, and Wawan Anggriawan for the data collection.

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