

## Conference Paper

# Multimodality in Audio-Verbo-Visual Translation

Yan Mujiyanto and Sri Wuli Fitriati

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

## Abstract

Until the end of the 20th century, a part of applied linguistics, translation still focuses primarily on verbal rendering. Language elements are explored extensively in translation studies. The explorations include concepts of equivalence, shift, modulation, and untranslatability. That texts are not only in the form of verbal languages but also audio, visual, gestural, and digital ones has triggered translation studies to explain phenomena arising from the rendering of intersemiotic texts. This study aims to explain the application of multimodality in the translation of verbo-visual text including the degree of accuracy, naturalness, and acceptability of Indonesian texts translated from English. The object of this study is English Audio-verbo-visual texts and their translations in Indonesian. The types of texts in question include various textual genres commonly existing in dubbing, subtitling, comic and comic rendering. The data for this study were obtained through documentary studies and were analyzed using the concept of phenomenology. The results of this study indicate that each text type has its own characteristics so that intersemiotic translation can be different from one rendering to another. The multimodality of translation may bridge the transfer of meaning in intersemiotic rendering, especially from English to Indonesian.

Corresponding Author:

Yan Mujiyanto

yanmujiyanto@mail.unnes.ac.id

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## 1. Introduction

Translation Studies cover a very vast area. This term can be interpreted as a basic theory or concept of the act of transferring semiotic meanings in certain types of media into their counterpart semiotic meanings conveyed in other types of media. Jacobson (1959; also see Bassnett-McGuire 2002, p. 23) distinguishes three types of translation: (1) the intralingual translation which he calls rewording, (2) the interlingual translation or translation proper, (3) intersemiotic translation or transmutation. Intra- and inter-lingual translations are referred to as the interpretations of linguistic signs, while intersemiotic translation is referred to as the interpretation of linguistic signs using nonverbal system and vice versa. In other words, it can be distinguished between (1) verbal or lingual translation that can be classified as intralingual and interlingual translations and (2) nonverbal translation that can be categorized as intrasemiotic and

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intersemiotic nonverbal translations. The combination of the two modes of translation results in (3) verbal-nonverbal translation that may involve intrasemiotic or intersemiotic rendering.

Verbal translation can be interpreted as a study of the transfer of meaning involving language, both oral and written. The transfer of this type of language can be in the form of an intra-language translation or translation between languages. Intralingual translation contains a study of the act of transferring the meaning of language in the scope of one language but with a different variety. This type of translation can also be called monolingual translation. The classic novel in English entitled *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Twain (1884), for example, has been rewritten with the same title in a number of versions, regarding both the content and display format. Among the versions regarding content, there are several versions commonly called the simplified series. For example the basic vocabulary versions - 850 word count, the versions with 1500 word counts, and so on.

If the transfer of meaning involves two or more verbal languages, then the act is called interlingual translation. Translations that focus on the transfer of meaning of this type can be classified into bilingual and multilingual translation. Bilingual translation involves only two languages, the source language and the target language. For example, the translation of a novel written by Mangunwijaya (1981) into English entitled *The Weaverbirds* (1989) only involves Indonesian as the SL and English as the TL. Translation of the novel into such languages such as Japanese, German, and Dutch is another example of bilingual translation. Multilingual translation can involve three or more languages, namely one SL and two or more TL. The first target language can be SL for the translation into the second, third, and other TL. For example, Sartre's trilogy novel entitled *Roads to Freedom* has been translated into a number of languages, including in Indonesian, which was done by Anton Kurnia (2004).

Verbal-nonverbal translation can be interpreted as the practice of transferring meaning involving lingual and semiotic media. With the many media of nonverbal communication that can be involved in this type of translation, verbal-nonverbal translation can be classified according to which media are involved in the translation practices. For example, the transfer from a performance art to a graphic art. The painting entitled *Barong Dance* by Soedjojono, certainly did not arise from wishful thinking but was born as a result of creation based on the painter's observations of a live performance, namely barong dance, as part of ritual ceremonies in the culture of Hindu communities in Bali. *The Barong Dance* was then translated further into a tissue box made of ceramic with

the same title. The latter creations are of course initiated by the barong performance with significant modifications.

Nonverbal or semiotic translation is defined as a study of the transfer of semiotic meaning from verbal media to nonverbal one, or the other way round. The meaning that is originally conveyed with a graphic medium is rendered to the meaning that is seen and heard, for example, in the form of a cinema. In this type of translation, descriptions, narratives, and arguments in a novel are transferred to a performance; the story and dialogue among the characters are presented solely by relying on audio-visual media so that the meaning which is originally in the graphic form is transferred to intralingual meaning is eventually transferred further into interlingual meaning in the form of graphics. For example, the title of a novel *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck (1939) was translated into *Amarah* (Damono 1999) through a visual form dominated by red and black colors with a silhouette of grape leaves, factory buildings in black, and red grapes, the foreground of the cover is the word "Amarah" which is the equivalent of the English word "Wrath". The story titled *Mangir* by Pramudya Ananta Tour (2000) might be inspired by an art show with the same title. Alternatively, the story was born from a folk tale passed down orally from generation to generation. Whatever the origin, the story of Pramudya Ananta Toer is a transfer of meaning from the audio-visual media to verbal media using graphic media in the form of writing.

The concept of the translation proposed by such experts as Nida (1964), Catford (1965; 1969), Larson (1983), Bassnett-McGuire (1980; 1993; 2002), Newmark (1981; 1988; 1991), Bell (1992), Baker (1992), House (1988; 1993), and even Halliday (2001) only covers a small part of a vast universe that can be classified as a translation act. Termed as 'a house of many rooms' (Neubert and Shreve in Hatim 2001, pp. 8-10), translation is no longer regarded as a part of applied linguistics. In a house called Translation, there are so many and varied activities; each moves in its own realm. The realm of verbal, auditory, visual, gestural, and digital translation; each is further divided into an increasingly specific domain, develops in its own 'space' and raises its own problems. Translation studies strive to make various observations, experiments, comparisons, and explorations to bring out certain theories, concepts, and models that are related directly or indirectly to the phenomenon.

This study aims to explain the application of multimodality in the translation of verbo-visual texts including the degree of accuracy, naturalness, and acceptability of Indonesian texts translated from English.

## 2. Methodology

The object of this study is English texts and their translations in Indonesian. The types of texts in question include various textual genres commonly existing in translation proper, interpreting, film subtitling, and comic stories. The data were obtained through documentary studies and analyzed using the concepts of phenomenology. The steps of the data analysis include identification, classification, reduction, interpretation, and inference.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Audio-visual translation

According to Matkivska (2014), while audiovisual translation involves rendering verbal components of video, the main feature is synchronizing verbal and nonverbal components. In connection with this translation area, translators not only work with text but also with aspects such as dialogue, sound effects, images, and video atmosphere. G. Gotlieb (as quoted in Matkivska, 2014) categorizes four main channels of information that must be considered when translating, namely (1) verbal audio channels; (2) nonverbal audio channels; (3) verbal and visual channels; (4) nonverbal visual channels. The existence of a semantic sign, which forms meaning, provides a transfer from one semiotic aspect to another semiotic aspect in audiovisual translation. Thus, two semiotic contents were formed, namely the SL semiotic content and its translation (Pisarska, Tomaszkiwicz, 1998, p.214). Thus, the equivalence concept that is common in interlingual rendering, also called translation proper, has a new interpretation that is greatly expanded according to the character of multimedia translation. Equivalence in audiovisual translation is not only in the form of equality between linguistic elements in two languages but also an adequate relationship between verbal and nonverbal structures in the original work and its translation. Herbst (1994) suggests three levels of equality differentiation, namely the meaning of text, synchronicity, and text function (Herbst, 1994, pp. 227-237).

Audio-visual translations include media, multi-medial, multimodal, and screen translations that include rendering verbal messages into visual and auditory messages and vice versa. This translation often involves gestural and digital images. Two types of multimodality translation that often get excessive attention are dubbing and subtitling. While dubbing is called the process of message rendering that uses acoustic channels, subtitling is visual and involves written translations superimposed on the screen. In



**Figure 1:** A question orally asked in a foreign language has been subtitled into English. This subtitle is then rendered for viewers speaking Indonesian.

addition to these two types of translation of multimodality, there is a type of less common audiovisual translation called "voice-over". (pp. 141-142).

Luyken (as quoted in Chiaro, p.144) shows that dubbing is a process that refers to the replacement of speech in the SL through sound channels as close as possible in terms of the time sequence, wording and lip movements in the dialogue in the SL. Dubbing was intended to make the actor, who initially spoke in SL, heard talking inside TL so that the viewer could enjoy the film without being constrained by the use of SL which he did not master. Luyken (1991) claimed that dubbing involved six steps from the process of rendering messages to the TL (p.78), i.e. (1) script and dialog sheet mapping, work on a copy of the concept while mapping and marking; (2) initial translation that serves as a basis for further work; (3) the election of the dubbing actor; (4) text layout and translation processing by considering synchronizing with actor mimics; (5) recording process; (6) editing and confirming the final translation of the audiovisual product.

Subtitles are referred to as 'rendering verbal messages in film media into different languages in the form of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in accordance with the original written message' (Gottlieb as quoted in Chiaro, p. 148). (Hurt, Widler, 1998) adds that subtitling which is a "translation representation of dialogue in films in the form of titles" is usually presented at the bottom of the image on the screen. Subtitles in TL usually appear and disappear according to the dialog section in SL and are added to the bottom of the screen as a result of the post-production phase.

Following Jacobson's translation classification, Gotlieb (1998) classified three types of subtitles as follows. (1) Intra-lingual subtitles which are also called vertical subtitles because they change perceptive modality, i.e. oral texts are converted into written text without significant changes); (2) inter-lingual subtitles called diagonal subtitles because they change the perspective of modality and language; (3) open or non-optional subtitles which are an integral part of the film or tele-program; (4) closed or optional subtitles that are represented in the form of tele-text that can be seen using a correspondence decoder.

### 3.2. Verbo-visual translation

The study of verbo- visual translation, initiated by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006), was carried out by Van Meerbergen (2008), Schnotz (2005), Mayer (2005), and Ketola (2015). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) developed a multimodal concept called "visual design grammar" to study ways in which meaning was created through visual communication. Applying the Halliday Functional Management System for image analysis and visual design, they see grammatical forms as resources in social semiotics where all modes of communication - whether visual, verbal or auditive - are assumed to have the potential to realize three metafunctions, namely (1) ideational metafunctions, (2) interpersonal metafunctions and (3) textual metafunctions (2006: 41-44). Each semiotic mode makes use of different resources to realize this metafunction, and some modes are more equipped with special resources to express a particular function than others (van Leeuwen 2001; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

Van Meerbergen (2008) explores the way multimodal analysis is integrated into descriptive models for translation analysis. Because picture books such as comics combine ways of visual and verbal expression, the study of two semiotic modes must be included in the translation analysis of these types of texts. Translation of picture books that includes rendering ST visual elements with verbal elements in the target text is done in tandem with the production process. In this collaboration, the translation of picture books leads to the avoidance of certain cultural elements in the picture so that the physical appearance of the images in TL ignores the semiotic aspects when these images are placed in the context of a particular text. By using multimodal analysis as part of the translation analysis, semiotic interactions that change between verbal language and visual language can enable the study of how the semiotic content of images changes when placed into the verbal and socio-cultural context of TL.

Literary translation, especially for children, can be influenced by social cultural and pedagogical norms of TL (see for example Shavit 1981; Ben Ari 1992; Heldner 1995; Surmatz 1996; O'Sullivan 2005; Lathey 2006). In addition, economic factors are also important in translating this type of literature. Therefore, O'Sullivan (2005: 101), for example, suggested that the translation of picture books be designed internationally for global markets with world cultural equality. Several studies on the translation of picture books show that certain cultural elements both represented in the form of words and images are modified or modified to conform to the target cultural norms (see for example O'Sullivan 2005: 86-87). Sometimes, translating words in picture books leads to loose narrative interactions between words and images (O'Sullivan 1999; Nikolajeva and Scott 2001: 29-41).

Citing Schnotz 2005, 57; Mayer 2005, 3; Schnotz and Bannert 2003, 143; Schnotz and Kürschner 2008, 177, Ketola (2015) proposed two theories, i.e. the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) multimedia learning and the theory of understanding images of the Integrated Theory of Text and Picture Comprehension (ITPC). He considered that between the two theories there were a number of similarities in assumptions about the process that occurred during understanding reading the pictorial text. According to Ketola, both theories assume that (1) the human brain processes information in two channels, namely verbal and visual, and (2) the reader chooses, organizes, and integrates verbal and visual information to understand pictorial text.

CTML suggests that to understand the meaning of the text the reader chooses relevant words from the verbal text and matches them with the relevant parts of the picture. Then, according to the theory, relevant verbal and visual information is prepared by placing verbal models on verbal channels and visual models in the visual channel (Mayer 2005, 38-40). Furthermore, it was stated that the two models were then integrated by mapping the elements and relationships between one model and the other, and linking it with previous knowledge. Thus, information is obtained from combining the two modes to produce an integrated representation (Mayer, 2005, 40). Mayer views integrated representation as an effective form of information and retrieval management. Therefore, pictorial text may be easier to understand than verbal text alone (2002, 352-353; 2005, 31-32). If the model proposed by Mayer is used to explain the process of translating verbo visual texts, the steps needed between other translators (1) read small segments of source text, (2) choose verbal and visual information contained in the text, (3) represent coherence between verbal information and visual information,

(4) integrate both types of information with the help of prior knowledge to formulate an expression in TL that describes the representation of the two text modes.



Figure 2: Approximation of verbal and visual meaning. Source: <https://www.picbon.com/tag/hiandlois>.

Meanwhile, ITPC questions the parallelism of word and image processing by emphasizing that verbal text and images are based on sign systems and use different principles of representation: oral texts are descriptive representations related to conventionally presented content. Instead, images are representations of iconic signs related to the content they represent (Schnotz and Kürschner 2008, 177). This theory assumes that when processing verbal text and images, readers build descriptive mental representations. Because image features differ from verbal text features, ITPC believes that each of them cannot be mapped with each other to create an integrated model.



Figure 3: Various ways of representing verbal and visual messages on the cover of *The Name of the Rose*. Source: [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/119073.The\\_Name\\_of\\_the\\_Rose](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/119073.The_Name_of_the_Rose).



### 3.3. Multimodality in intersemiotic translation

According to Aso (2012), a special emphasis can be placed on the definition of the advertising message as a multisemiotic message (Snell-Hornby, 2006) or multimodal message (Munday, 2004: 213). There is considerable overlap between these two concepts, but it is important to highlight the fine difference between them.<sup>6</sup> The multimodal message combines 'different modes of verbal and non-verbal expression' (Snell-Hornby, 2006: 85), for example, when texts are combined with audio or images; that is, the use of two or more communication channels through which one can receive information, all technically within the same semiotic system of language. The peculiarity of a multisemiotic or intersemiotic (Jakobson, 1987: 429) message is that different sign systems, verbal and non-verbal, interact (Snell-Hornby, 2006: 85), so intersemiotic relations are established between two or more different modes. In terms of translation, Jakobson (1987: 429) affirms that translation between verbal and non-verbal sign systems is possible; as a result, it is possible to convert verbal content into non-verbal content.

Thus, if two or more sign systems and modes take place in an advertisement, it can be questioned that a mere linguistic translation<sup>7</sup> will not be fully complete without taking into account the extralinguistic components present in the source advertisement. Adab (1999: 97) remarks that in spite of the relevance of a linguistic approach in the translation of advertising material, the translation procedure seems incomplete when other non-linguistic communicative resources used in the advertisement are overlooked. However, in practice, it is actually not rare to limit the task of translators to linguistic transfer, and even not provide them with any other content than the verbal content of the text, which could have a negative impact on the success of the product in a foreign country since only one part of a carefully designed campaign will have been adapted in isolation.

## 4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that each text type has its own characteristics so that the models of translation can be different from one rendering to another. The multimodality model of translation may bridge the transfer of meaning in intersemiotic rendering, especially from English to Indonesian.

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