

RAISING AWARENESS TOWARDS CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH CULTURAL SUBSTITUTION STRATEGY IN TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity has made a subject worth studying. Technology, which is now in its full force, is delimiting boundaries. Distance no longer matters. We can see what is happening on the far corner of the world by logging in to the Internet. Nevertheless, there is a sense of irony: The closer we are to each other, the more suspicious we are. We can see a growing violence between two nations or two cultures. Misunderstanding between two different cultures is escalating to the point of worrisome.

Translation is considered as a means to bridge a gap between two different cultures. With translation, misunderstanding and suspicion can be reduced, because people of two different cultures can communicate well and comprehensively. One of the translation strategies to help cultural understanding between people is cultural substitution, in that it shows that in spite of the differences, some similarities can be found through tracing their semantic properties. The paper examines this translation strategy by comparing the semantic features of culturally-loaded terms to find the similarities and the differences. This strategy can be used to enhance students' cultural awareness and perception on the cultural diversity in their environment.

Key words: *cultural substitution, semantic properties, cultural awareness*

INTRODUCTION

Culture has now been disseminated all over the world. A culture of a country does not only spread on regional basis, but also to far away countries. Japanese culture, for example, does not only spread to the countries near Japanese but also to the Europe, America, and African countries. And to get involved in that phenomenon, people need language as a means to help them culturally literate.

In that context, translation has a role to transfer the message of one language of one social group into other languages of another groups by entailing a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding, and encoding. Translation should not be merely in the form of translating the language but also in translating the cultures because interlingual translation cannot be done without having deep knowledge about the culture and mastering the language of that culture (Larson, 1984:162).

Still according to Larson, culture differences between the source and target language become a difficult problem for a translator. Some source languages (SL) concepts may have no lexical equivalence in target languages (TL) because of differences in geography, customs, beliefs, worldview, and various other factors (1984:163). Each language is influenced by the culture where it is spoken. The Javanese words, such as *mitoni*, *kebaya*, *wayang*, cannot be easily translated into English because English has no equivalence for those words.

This cultural difficulties in translation can be overcome by applying some strategies. One of the strategies is cultural substitution. This strategy enables translators to close the wide gap between two differing cultures.

METHODOLOGY

Larson states that translation was described as the process of studying the lexicon, the grammatical structure, and the communication situation of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine the meaning (1984:153). Translators are constantly looking for lexical equivalents between the source language and the receptor language. Therefore, a translator should be the one who has an adequate knowledge about SL and TL structures and cultures, since some SL concepts may have no lexical equivalence in TL.

Cultural substitution is applied when certain concepts that are not exactly the same but can be found in the TL. Cultural substitution always results in some distortion of meaning and should not be used unless the other possible solutions have proven insufficient.

ANALYSIS

This strategy is performed by substituting cultural-specific items or expressions that occurs in the SL with the TL items which have different proportional meanings, but which are likely to have the same impact on target readers.

The followings illustrate how cultural substitution strategy is applied in the English translation of Pramudya Ananta Toer's *Bumi Manusia* by Max Lane.

1. *clurit* → giant sickle

Clurit in *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) is defined as a tool like sickle with a curved blade used to cut grass, etc. (1990:159). *Clurit* is translated into a 'giant sickle'. 'Sickle' in *Encarta Webster's College Dictionary* is defined as 'a short-handled implement with a curved blade used for cutting tall grass or grain' (2005:1342).

This is problematic since *clurit* is common in SL environment, but it cannot be found easily in TL environment. However, we can check its accuracy by analyzing their semantic properties.

<i>Clurit</i>	Sickle
+ farming tool	+ farming tool
+ weapon	- weapon
+ single blade	+ single blade
+ curved blade	+ curved blade
+ handled	+ handled

It can be seen from the semantic properties above, there is one characteristic of *clurit* that does not exist in 'sickle' is 'weapon'. *Clurit* symbolizes the honor and virility of Madurese men. They use *clurit* as a weapon. In the meantime, 'sickle' in TL environment is not a typical weapon.

2. *takir* → food container

<i>takir</i>	food container
+ side-dish container	+ all food container
+ made of banana leaf	- made of banana leaf
+ folded quadrangular	- folded quadrangular
+ pinned two sides with palm-leaf rib sharpened on its tip	- pinned two sides with palm-leaf rib sharpened on its tip

From the semantic properties above, it can be seen that many losses can be found in the TL translation. *Takir* is culturally non-existent in the TL environment so that efforts to substitute it culturally with 'food container' results in somewhat unnatural translation.

3. *belati* → dagger

<i>belati</i>	dagger
+ weapon	+ weapon
+ sharp-pointed tip	+ sharp-pointed ti
+ double-bladed	+ double-bladed
+ like short knife	+ like short knife

The above shows a perfect cultural substitution. All concepts of *belati* can be conveyed into 'dagger'. There is no change of meaning as the result of contextual relation because the concept of *belati* contains a single functional concept as a weapon.

4. *sampur* → sash

<i>Sampur</i>	sash
+ for traditional dance	- for traditional dance
+ a long-narrow cloth	+ a long-narrow cloth
+ used around shoulder or waist	+ used around shoulder or waist

Sampur is defined as long-narrow cloth worn in dancing (KBBI, 1990:778). It is worn around a dancer's shoulder or in his/her waist. This concept is non-existent in TL environment because there is no

such traditional dance in the SL environment. ‘Sash’ in *Encarta Webster’s College Dictionary* is defined as a long strip of cloth tied around the waist or over one shoulder for ornament or a part of ceremonial dress (2005:1286). The definition is too general because it refers to several different things in SL environment, such as *selendang*, *selempang*, *stagen* and so forth.

4. *mitoni* → baby shower

<i>mitoni</i>	baby shower
+ ceremony to thank the Almighty for protecting the future baby	- ceremony to thank the Almighty for protecting the future baby
+ celebration of 7 th month pregnancy	- celebration of 7 th month pregnancy
+ the future mother is showered with flowered water	- the future mother is showered with flowered water
+ prayer for the successfulness of the delivery	+ prayer for the successfulness of the delivery
- giving names for the future baby	+ giving names for the future baby
- gifts from invited guests	+ gifts from invited guests

Although many losses are found in the semantic property of TL, it is compensated with some gains, such as giving names for the future baby and gifts from invited guests. All in all, although there are no one-hundred percent equivalences in the cultural substitution since there is no cultures which are exactly the same, the cultural substitution strategy is helpful to close the gap between two differing cultures.

Cultural substitution strategy is beneficial to widen readers’ horizon when reading translated texts. Knowing that their SL cultures have some similarities with TL cultures enable readers to respect and appreciate other cultures. This cultural awareness eventually leads them to understand their counterpart of different cultures more sincerely. Among the differences between cultures, still some similarities can be found. When cultural awareness increases, mutual understanding between cultures can be achieved more easily.

CONCLUSION

Different cultures potentially cause rifts between cultures. Translators as mediator of cultures might play a significant role to close the gap between cultures by applying cultural substitution strategy. This strategy which tries to replace some SL material not found in the TL environment by some TL equivalence is helpful to make readers aware that although there some inherent differences between cultures, still some similarities can be found, thus leads to mutual understanding between cultures..

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