

## Interpreting with Attitude: *Traduttore*, But Not *Traditore*

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There are two aspects, verbal and non verbal, in teaching interpreting that are worth paying attention to. The verbal aspect pays attention to the ideas, content, or message transferred. This can be done by emphasizing that interpreters are responsible for their interpretation. The non verbal aspects cover the points to be remembered by interpreters, such as the fact that they are not speakers, occasion, outfit, appearance, background knowledge, and the knowledge of culture of both the source and the target language.

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### Introduction

The saying *traduttore traditore* (a translator is a traitor) is often mentioned when translation products are not satisfying. While translators are pretty flexible with time—despite their deadline to submit their work to the publisher or the client, interpreters are time captives. Letting the audience wait for a second is like letting them wait for a year. Although basically interpreting is also translating, the factor of time plays an important role in the faithfulness of an interpreter to make the audience not lost in translation—moreover, if the audience is a crowd. Having realized that an interpreter's job is very demanding, the training given to the students must be one that can make them faithful, in terms of content, idea, and message of what a speaker says, and also winners in the race with time. To produce interpreters with attitude, both verbal and non verbal aspects need to be given attention in the student training of interpreting.

This article is a result of many semesters practice in teaching interpreting to S1 students of English department of Petra Christian University. Interpreting was taught in one of the professional packages, called translation package. Students who were interested in translation and interpreting could take this package and were given certificates, if they finished all the four courses in the package. Interpreting was the last course in the translation package they took. Before taking the interpreting course, they should take the three other courses, which are basically written translation so that they had enough practice in transferring the idea, content, or message of the original text (English) into the target language (Indonesian). Passing all the listening courses is another requirement in taking the course. Since interpreting is an oral activity, listening ability is crucial. The training to interpret was given only from English into Indonesian. Students taking the interpreting classes never exceeded twenty in a class; therefore, it was pretty easy to train students one by one. Besides, Interpreting was a four-credit course; therefore, there was plenty of time for each student. What is described here—it is not meant to be an exhausted list in an interpreting training—was what was done in the first half of the semester. The training given had been practiced for more than four times. The material used was taken from a book on cross-cultural communication, since interpreters cannot avoid facing different cultures; in this case, at least the cultures of English and Indonesian.

## Verbal Aspects

There are at least two points that are worth paying attention to in the student training, interpreting pronouns and nuances of meaning. First, interpreting pronouns are very important since pronouns are closely related to culture, especially in interpreting English pronouns into Indonesian. English pronouns are not varied in their usage in terms of politeness. *I, you, they* in English are used in interactions with people of higher and lower status and in referring to people of higher and lower status. In Indonesia and in Indonesian, however, pronouns play an important role in showing politeness and are influenced by status, age, power, and intimacy. First person singular, *I*, can be translated into *aku* or *saya* depending on whom the person talks to. To a director of a company, for example, an employee will use the pronoun *saya* when referring to himself; one will also use *saya* when talking to an older person s/he knows. Meanwhile, *aku* will be used in speaking to peers or someone who is younger. Second person singular or plural is even more complicated to be translated into Indonesian. *You* can be translated into a number of address terms: *kamu, Bapak/Ibu, Anda, situ, Paduka, kalian* etc. Interpreters should know the right one to choose. In a formal context, such as in seminars with adult attendants, it is awkward to use *kalian* to refer to the audience. Referring to an honourable person as *dia*, instead of *beliau*, would be inappropriate.

The importance of address terms can be seen in what Baker (2011: 253) says about it.

An interesting area in which a translator needs to be particularly sensitive to the reader's expectations in a given context concerns modes of address. This covers more than the use of pronouns.... It includes the use of appropriate personal and occupational titles, various combinations of first names and surnames, title and surname, or title and first name, the use of nicknames, and the use of terms of affection such as dear or darling. Certain linguistic items may be used to address certain types of participant in order to convey implicatures which are highly language- and culture-specific.

In English a common form of address is a title plus surname, for example, Prof. Smith. In Indonesian, people are more familiar with a title plus first name, for example, Prof. Nani. Baker (2011:254) further says "as long as the translator is aware that the norms of the target language will not necessarily match those of the source language, an appropriate adjustment in the target text should solve the problem and avoid conveying unintended implicatures."

Second, nuances of meaning sometimes influence the emphasis of ideas done by the speaker. The phrase "far more important" is clearly more than just important. Therefore, rather than translating it into *lebih penting*, it should be translated into *jauh lebih penting*. Another example is the use of *maaf* and *ampun*. The English word "forgive" can be translated into these words. The context of setting and occasion will make interpreters choose. Related to God, *ampun* will be likely used; while related to man, *maaf* will be likely used.

More important and more subtle than just vocabulary is how structure and meaning are related. Baker (2011: 240) explains it clearly as follows.

... in every language there will be conventional associations between certain linguistic patterns and certain inferable meanings. ... For instance, rhetorical questions such as *isn't that an ugly building?* (instead of 'This is an ugly building') or *How can you be so cruel?* (Instead of 'You are so cruel') are

regularly used in English to express a range of emotive meanings such as indignation, shock and amusement....

In interpreting, interpreters should be sure that it is the shock, amusement etc that is transferred into the target language rather than just paying attention to word by word accuracy. Very often, in my experience as an interpreter, if the situation allows, informal language can bring the emotive meanings better than the formal one.

Third, in training students to be interpreters, it is important that they be reminded that words do not always have one to one meaning; there are also exceptions. To illustrate it, a story about an Australian interpreter who is interpreting from English into Indonesian is worth noting (Rini 1996: 64).

His translation was excellent until the time when the speaker was telling a story about a married couple. The husband said to his wife, "Honey, I will come home late today." When the interpreter translated this into Indonesian, he began with, "Maduku, ..." before, he could continue, the audience burst into laughter. Many in the audience spoke English and knew that *honey* should be translated as *sayangku* which means *my dear*. Instead, he translated it as *maduku* because honey which is produced by bees is *madu* in Indonesian. However, in the marriage context, *madu* means mistress.

Another example is prefix "in-." Words like "Impossible, inactive etc mean the opposite or negation of the words. However, "in" in "invaluable" does not mean the opposite or negation of the word "valuable." It has the meaning of "extremely useful or indispensable" (Oxford online dictionary). Another example is the suffix "-less," such as in "priceless." If "careless" means without care, "priceless" means "so precious that its value cannot be determined" (Oxford online dictionary). In Indonesian the same phenomenon also exist; *tak ternilai* does not mean "without any value", but the value cannot be measured because the value is too big to measure.

Fourth, another point for interpreters to remember is the audience. When source language culture is different from target language culture, such as English and Indonesian, words need to be carefully chosen. Culture-bound words are not easy to transfer. Words belonging in this type are kinship terms, food, metaphorical or idiomatic expressions. What is called *saudara* in Indonesian cannot be simply translated into "brother" or "sister" in English because these words mean siblings in English. When similar food is not found in the target language, the name of the food should be clearly explained to the audience if it is the focus of the speaker's discussion; if it is just an additional information, it can be just shortly explained. If there are metaphors of the same meaning in both languages, metaphors can be translated into metaphor; if not, metaphors can be paraphrased as long as the meaning is clear. For example, "between the devil and the deep blue sea" can be translated into *makan buah simalakama*. The English expression means "in a difficult situation where there are two equally unpleasant choices" (Oxford online dictionary) and the Indonesian expression also has the same meaning. However, when the interpreter cannot recall the Indonesian expression, it is better to use the word "dilemma" than translating the English expression word by word. It is harder for the audience to understand the meaning of the word-to-word translation than the one word "dilemma."

## Non Verbal Aspects

Besides verbal aspects, non verbal aspects are also important to pay attention to. As interpreters almost always deal directly with audience, interpreters should be reminded that they are not speakers. Interpreters cannot have different ideas than the speakers. Whether they agree or not to the speakers' idea, they have to translate what the speakers say. Interpreters are not allowed to do unexpected things which will destroy the speaker's intention. The example given is in a religious setting. A speaker who intends to give a sermon in a religious setting does not only communicate ideas, but very often he also builds prayerful atmosphere. In such a situation, an interpreter should not make a joke that arise the audience's laughter because if he does, the prayerful atmosphere intended by the speaker will be destroyed.

Besides that, outfit and appearance are also important to pay attention to. An interpreter cannot outweigh the speaker. In religious setting extravagant make-up and luxurious clothing are not appropriate for the occasion; moreover, if the speaker is modestly dressed. On the other hand, modest appearance is not advisable for fashion show or business context. Formality or informality must be in accordance with the situation.

Third, students have to be reminded that later, when they have graduated from the English Department and receive the job of interpreting, they have to be sure that they are familiar with the subject discussed in the event. For example, if they are not familiar with the field of medicine, they cannot be interpreters in medical conferences. If they are not familiar with Christianity, they cannot be interpreters in retreats or religious events. If they are not familiar with engineering field, they cannot be interpreters in seminars on engineering. Each field has its own terminology that refers to different object. The reference of the word "morphology" in linguistics and in architecture is different. The word "translation" itself has different meanings in linguistics and in biology.

## Student Training

Training can be done in stages. It can begin with a text of simple conversation. The following example is taken from Levine, Baxter, McNulty (1987, p.4). In this example, culture is already involved.

- Rose Arno: "I would like to introduce myself. My name is Rose Arno. If you want, you can use Mrs. or Ms. with my name."
- Naima Moud: "How do you spell your name, Mrs. Rose?"
- Rose Arno: "It's Mrs. Arno." (writing on the board) "R-O-S-E A-R-N-O. Now I'd like you to give your names. Let's start with the first person in the front row."
- Yoshi Imada: "My name is Imada."
- Rose Arno: "Imada, could you also give us your last name?"
- Yoshi Imada: "Imada is my last name. In my country, most people call me by my last name. Even my friends at work use my last name."
- Rose Arno: "Would you like us to use your first name or last name in class?"
- Yoshi Imada: (thinking) "I don't know yet. I will tell you."
- Rose Arno: "O.K. That's fine. Let's continue with the second student. What is name?"
- Magdalena Chavez: "My name is Magdalena Chavez, but people call me Lena, Teacher. That's my *nickname*."

Rose Arno: “O.K. We’ll call you Lena, and please call me Rose or Mrs. Arno.” (The teacher continues to ask the students to introduce themselves.

From my own experience of teaching interpreting to the students, problems can come up with translating the pronouns “I”, “my”, “last name,” “nickname,” and “first name.” In western customs, last names refer to family names. However, in Chinese customs, family names do not come last; the first name is the family name. Therefore, in order to be clear, last name is better translated as *nama keluarga* rather than *nama belakang*, since in Indonesia, people do not always have family names. Students usually translate “That’s my nickname” into “*itu nama panggilan saya*” rather than “*biasanya saya dipanggil.*” Students usually cannot differentiate the use of *saya* and *aku* for “I” and *-ku* and *saya* for “my”. The structure “would you like” can also be a problem, since it is a polite form in English, but the context is between a teacher and a student. In Indonesian, however, a common question will be *kamu lebih senang dipanggil dengan nama keluarga atau namamu sendiri?*

Step-by-step interpreting also deals with the length of utterances said to the students. An example of short example is given below.

There are many ways of addressing teachers and students and introducing oneself in other cultures. In many parts of the world, students must show politeness and respect to teachers; one way of doing this is not to use the teacher’s first name. Some teachers in the U.S. don’t think it is rude if their students call them by their first names. This may be their way of having a close *informal* relationship with students. In the U.S., one way to show closeness and friendliness is to use a person’s first name. This is why Rose Arno prefers to use the students’ first names. In the U.S., it is not *appropriate* for adults to call their teachers “Teacher” as Magdalena did. Only young children call their teacher “Teacher.” (1987, p.4)

Usually I give the students one sentence first. The practice is given to each student. One sentence practice might be done for one to three weeks in succession. After they are accustomed in doing one sentence interpreting, they will be given two sentences. The first sentence in the example above can be a long sentence for the students because there is conjunction “and” in the sentence. In giving the second sentence, it can be divided into two, because the students are likely to forget the second part of the sentence. The criteria applied into moving to the second level of interpreting, that is interpreting two sentences, are as follows: 1) the students can transfer the content of the one sentence into the target language correctly, 2) the students can do it at one time listening, 3) the students can interpret the one sentence right after they hear it. If the students cannot do it according these three criteria, it means that they are still not able to interpret well.

In training the students to be responsible interpreters in terms of conveying the content of what the speaker says, trainers or teachers should emphasize to the students that time plays an important role in the job of interpreters. Time will continue ticking and does not wait interpreters. Therefore, in evaluating students whether they can interpret pretty well or not, teachers can include time, besides faithfulness of content and form.

## Conclusion

Besides students' knowledge of culture, some verbal and non-verbal aspects in the student training in interpreting are very important. Right from the very beginning students should be informed that being interpreters means paying attention to the audience' comprehension about their interpretation. Interpreting with attitude means having not only knowledge about both the source and target language and their culture, but also broad background knowledge about the subject.

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## Biodata

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