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**Interlingual and Intercultural
Communication Competence**
for Quality Translation

PROCEEDINGS

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DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING HUMOR TEXTS TYPE IN THE TITLE OF YOUR PAPER HERE

Julia Eka Rini – Petra Christian Univeristy

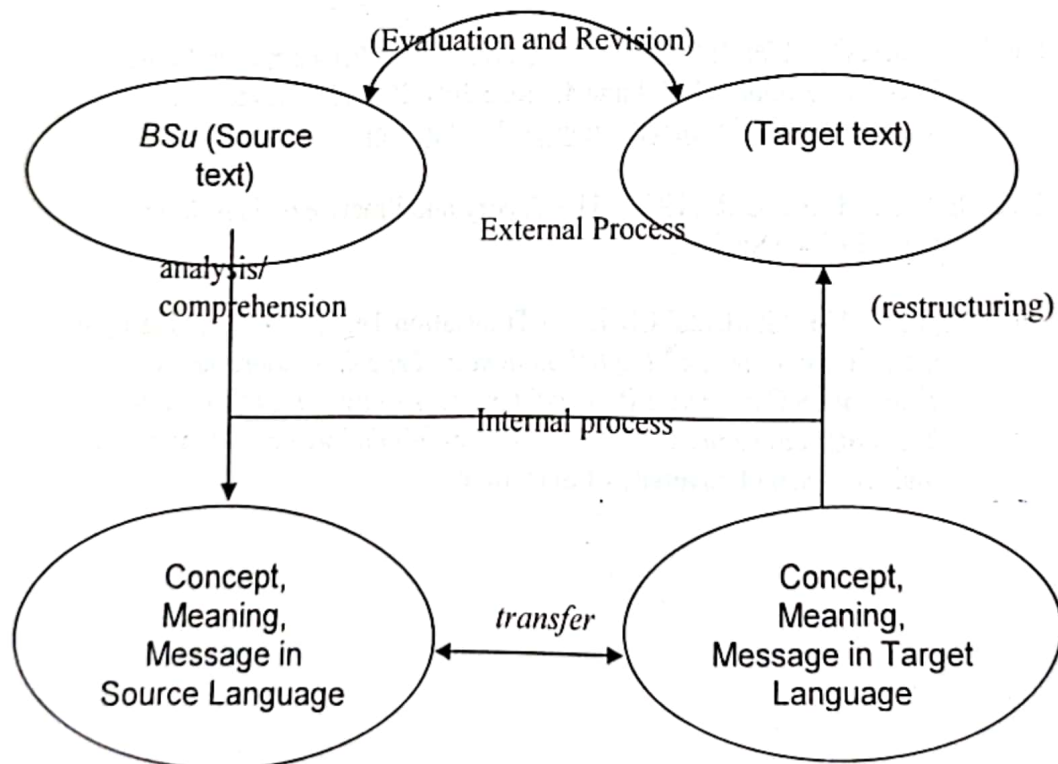
Abstract

Translation is not as simple as people think—moreover, the translation of humor texts; the translators need to transfer the humor and able to make the readers laugh. The objective of this paper is to discuss the difficulties encountered by university students in the process of translating humor texts in the class of *Introduction to Translation*. The respondents are twenty five fifth-semester students. The instruments are four short humor texts in English, which had to be translated into Bahasa Indonesia. The data are the translation product and also the students' notes of their difficulties.

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Introduction

In the class of *Introduction to Translation* the students learn to translate humor texts. Although translation is not easy, let alone translating humor texts, this kind of text is good for the students in learning translation. Based on the process of translation (Suryawinata and Hariyanto, 2003) below, the students can have a clear idea of what they have to transfer.



They have to transfer the humor and should be able to make the readers of their translation laugh when reading it. In learning to translate humor texts, there are, of course, difficulties encountered by the students. The purpose of this paper is

first, to describe the difficulties in translating humor texts, and second, to show at what stages in the process of translation they encounter difficulties

Methods

The data were taken from twenty-five students' translation. Nine students are in the fifth-semester in the class of *Introduction to Translation*; the others are in higher semesters. The data are the translation product and the students' notes of their difficulties. The students had to translate four short humor texts in English into Bahasa Indonesia. The first text was discussed after the students finished translating the texts. The discussion was about how the characters in the story were related and what the key words related to the humor. The students then were asked to revise their translation. Afterwards, the second text was given and the same discussion was done. After the discussion, the students were also asked to write the revision of the second text. Afterwards the third and the fourth texts were given, but there was not any discussion in class; the students were asked to write their own revisions. The data was taken from the students' translation before the revision. The translation of the punch line and what makes the text funny is seen as data compared to the original text in English.

Results and Discussion

The first difficulty is comprehending the joke. In the first text, *The Art of Cry*, most students cannot understand how the last utterance, ("Oh, I thought you were not in just now") related to the previous sentences about the hammer hitting the thumb, especially the utterance before the last ("But I didn't hear you cry."). The following is the correct translation.

Table 1. The correct translation

Title	Punch Line
<i>Seni Sebuah Tangisan</i>	"Oh, aku kira ibu sedang tidak ada tadi."
<i>Seni menjerit</i>	"Oh, kukira kamu tidak dirumah tadi"
<i>Seni tangisan</i>	Oh, ku kira kamu tidak disini tadi"
<i>Seni dalam tangisan</i>	" oh, kupikir kamu tidak ada di kamarku"
<i>Seni menangis</i>	"Oh, saya pikir kamu tidak disini tadi."
<i>Seni dari Menangis</i>	"Oh, aku pikir kamu tidak di sini."
<i>Seni Sebuah Tangisan</i>	"Oh, aku pikir kamu baru saja di sini sekarang."
<i>Seni Sebuah Tangisan</i>	Oh, aku mengira kamu tidak disini tadi."
<i>Seni Menangis</i>	"oh, saya mengira anda masih diluar."
<i>Kesenian dari menangis</i>	"Oh, aku kira ibu tidak ada di dalam sini tadi."
<i>Kesenian dari tangis</i>	"Oh, aku kira ibu tidak didalam sini sekarang."
<i>Berteriak Kesakitan</i>	"Oh, aku kira kau tidak disini tadinya."

Producing the correct translation, some students are not sure about the punch line. One of them clearly stated "The meaning of the last sentence is not related to the sentence". "I am not really sure about the joke that I get from the story, how to find which one is funny in the paragraph." They can translate but have difficulties to understand the punch line and thus have difficulties in understanding the joke. Although the translation is correct, it does not always mean that students are sure that they understand the joke.

For those who do not understand the joke, the punch line "Oh, I thought you were not in just now" is translated wrongly. Their various translations of the title and the punch line are put in the table below.

Table 2. Incorrect translation of those who do not understand the joke

Title	Punch Line
Seni Mengaduh	"Oh, aku pikir ibu tidak mengerti tentang seni mengaduh."
Seni Menangis	"oh, aku pikir kamu hanya tidak mendengarnya sekarang"
Seni dari menangis	"Oh, saya pikir kamu tidak apa apa tadi."
Seni menangis	"oh, aku pikir kamu barusan datang"
Seni dari tangisan	"oh, aku pikir kamu juga tidak mendengarkannya sekarang."
Seni dari menangis	"Oh, saya pikir kamu tadi tidak apa-apa."
Seni Tangisan	"O, kupikir kau baru saja terluka."
Seni menangis	"oh. Tapi sekarang ini kamu mendengarnya."
Seni Menangis	" Oh, kupikir kau tidak tertarik barusan."
Seni Menjerit	"Oh, aku kira ibu tidak tertarik. Baru sekarang."

From the students' translation, it can be seen that they do not bring out the joke—the crying depends on where the mother is, not because of the pain. That is why the title of the text is *The Art of Cry*. This makes the short text funny. If it is interpreted differently, the text is not funny.

In the following table are the examples of those who think they understand the joke, but they do not.

Table 3. Different interpretation

Title	Punch Line
Keindahan tangis	"Oh, aku kira barusan kamu belum masuk."
Keindahan Sebuah Tangisan	"Oh, mungkin karena kamu baru saja masuk."
Seni menangis	"Oh, aku tidak tahu kamu baru saja datang."

This is what the students think: "From what I understand, the text is funny because when Mrs. Johnson said "But I didn't hear you cry", Belli answered "Oh, I thought you were not in just now." So it means that if she didn't enter the room, Belli must have already been crying." This interpretation does not make the text funny. It is not an art of cry. The understanding and translation of "in" is important in bringing out the joke.

The second difficulty is restructuring the word "out" in the second text. Different interpretations occur. They have difficulties to understand that "has gone out" is actually the point that makes the short text funny. For Mr. and Mrs. Brown, they use words like *keluar*, *pergi*, *tidak ada di rumah* and those words are OK for people. If afterwards they use *padam* for the stove, the text is not funny anymore because there is no repetition of the same words. If they use *pergi* for the stove, it is not funny either because in Bahasa Indonesia that word is unlikely used for inanimate things. So, in order to have the same words for people and inanimate things like stove, the Indonesian word is *tidak ada*. This phrase can be applied both to people and to inanimate things. For people, it

means they are not at home. For the stove, a piece of equipment that burns fuel or uses electricity in order to heat a place, *tidak ada* can be used too. It is open to interpretation: there is no stove in the house or, as one students wrote, "the master and mistress of the house have gone out together with the stove (bringing the stove with them)."

In the third and fourth texts students still deal with restructuring problem, onomatopoeic word "woof". Some students do not translate it into Bahasa Indonesia. Some translate it into *guk*. In these stories students understand the joke and most of them can find the Indonesian words for "clerk", *petugas*, *pelayan*, *pegawai*. For Mr. and Mrs., some students use *Pak* and *Bu*, and some use *Tuan* and *Nyonya*.

A necessary point that students do not pay attention to

One important point that students do not pay attention is the Indonesian pronouns for the second person. As it can be seen in Table 1, 2, and 3 many students use *kamu* as the pronoun used by the child to call the mother in *The Art of Cry*. This is one difficulty in translating from English into Indonesian, since the second person "you" in English can be applied to anybody, no matter the status, age, or relationship. In Indonesian, these aspects cannot be ignored. It should be taken into consideration because it plays an important role in politeness. Thus, *ibu* is much more polite than *kamu*.

Conclusion

In translating humor texts, students still have difficulties in understanding the joke. This means that they still have difficulties in the stage of analysis or comprehension. Although they know that they have to transfer the joke, what they have to transfer is sometimes not clear. Besides the stages of analysis and transfer, the stage of restructuring is not easy either.

References

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Appendix:

The four humor texts:

1. The Art of Cry

When Mrs. Johnson entered Belli's room, she found that he was binding up his thumb. "What's the matter with you?" she asked.

"It is because of that hammer." Belli answered.

"But I didn't hear you cry."

"Oh, I thought you were not in just now."

2. It Is Out Too

One cold day, a friend of the Browns' went to visit them.

The maid stopped him at the door. The friend asked,

"Is Mr. Brown at home?"

"No, he has gone out," replied the maid.

"Is Mrs. Brown at home, then?"

"No, she's gone out."

"May I come in and sit by the stove?"

"No, it has gone out, too."

3. Mother Mouse

A mother mouse was out for a stroll with her babies when she spotted a cat crouch behind a bush.

She watched the cat, and the cat watched the mice.

Mother mouse barked fiercely, 'woof, woof, woof!'

The cat was so terrified that it ran for its life.

Mother mouse turned to her babies and said, "Now, do you understand the value of a second language?"

4. Dog Sends telegram

A dog goes into a post office to send a telegram.

The clerk gives him the relevant form and he goes to the desk to fill it in.

When he has finished, he hands it back to the clerk with the fee and the clerk reads it through.

The message reads 'Woof woof woof woof woof; woof woof, woof woof woof.'

The clerk tells the dog that, at no extra cost, he could have another 'woof' in the message.

The dog replies, "Yes, I know, but then it wouldn't make any sense!"