

# SOME DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING SCIENTIFIC TEXTS

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## A. INTRODUCTION

English Translation is an important aspect to complete the professionalism in English skill. It is not only important to be learned in university, but more than that. It is a must if you want to make money from it. Good in speaking English is not enough yet. You have to strengthen it by doing a good translation also. According to Larson (1984:3) translation is basically a change of form. These forms are referred to as the surface structure of a language. In translation, the form of the source language is replaced by the form of the receptor (target) language. The change of form should not change the meaning of the real text. It means that there is a

change in form not change in meaning.

To do that a translator should have some strategies to translate the source language to the target one. However, no matter how long the text is, the translator may find some difficulties in translating the text especially if the text is scientific one. Therefore, this paper will discuss about some difficulties in translating scientific text from English to Indonesia.

## B. DISCUSSION

As we mean above that to translate from the source language to the target one means re-express meaning from the source to target. We may not even change the meaning unless to change the form only. The translators

who know both the source language and the receptor language well can often make the transfer from one form to the other very rapidly, without thinking about the semantic structure overtly. However, there must be some difficulties in translating text especially scientific one because the translators should have good knowledge about the target language and vocabulary of scientific field, for example: the word “medical” (taken from the text “Strategies in Teaching and Translating ESP: Medical) should be translated to bahasa Indonesia into *kedokteran, medis, pengobatan, or buku-buku yang berhubungan dengan medis*. This one should be concerned by the translator since it can affect the meaning of the real text. As follow, there are some difficulties we may find in translating scientific text:

#### **a. The lexicon**

According to Larson (1984:6) the first characteristic which has a very direct bearing on principles of translation is meaning components that are combined into lexical items but they are “packaged” differently in one language than in another. The translator should know how to analyze the lexical items (words) of the source text in order to translate them. The words that are used by the original writer may have different meaning in the target language so that he/she must have good knowledge about the two languages and scientific vocabulary. He/ she may not guess the meaning because one word may have many different meaning in the target language, for example: the word “medical” (taken from the text “Strategies in Teaching and Translating ESP: Medical) should be translated to English into *kedokteran, medis, pengobatan, or buku-buku yang berhubungan dengan*

*medis*. The translator seems to be wise to determine which word is good to be translated into Bahasa Indonesia. Of course, it should depend on the situation and context of the text itself since it is scientific. Therefore, it is rather difficult because the words in this field consist of highly technical words, sub technical words and common terms of science itself. They are not commonly used in daily communication and will sound strange when we hear that for the first time. This is the first difficulty of translating scientific text.

#### **b. Translating Concepts**

Sometimes we may find that no exact equivalent between the words of English and the words of Bahasa Indonesia for example: in sentence “...where the customs could check the content of the diskette” (page 72: paragraph 1-line 8). The word “customs”

there is rather confusing what to translate. In the dictionary the word “custom” without plural -s means *kebiasaan, adat* and the word “customs” with -s means *pajak, bea, cukai, pabean, duane*. If we apply word *kebiasaan* or *adat* into the translation the sentence will sound weird. But if we apply the second word the sentence will be vaguer. From the sense of translating, the word customs here means something or someone that works to check something inside. It is really hard to choose which one is better. Sometimes it is dilemmatic to translate it into Bahasa Indonesia, but we have to be professional because as a good translator he/she should know how to improve this difficulty as long as it does not change the intention of the writer. Because of this, sometimes it is also necessary to translate one word of the source language by several words in the receptor language

in order to give the same meaning. Sometimes the opposite is also true.

### **c. Lexical Equivalents**

It commonly happens to translator getting difficulties in finding lexical equivalents in the target language. The translator is hard to find objects or events which are not known in the receptor culture. It is no word that is available for the translation. Therefore he/she has to know that translation is not only working with two languages but two cultures also. Equivalence in idiom and in grammar and in syntax maybe important, but equivalence in terms of experiences and concepts tapped is most important of all. Perhaps there is no word in receptor language that may become the translation of a word in source language. It may be because of the differences of culture,

geography, customs, beliefs, or other factors. It makes the translator's job more difficult. For example: the abbreviation of ESP that stands for English for Specific Purposes. These words are not commonly be used by people in Indonesia because in Indonesia there is no Bahasa Indonesia for Specific Purposes. It will be fine if the translator only translate them literally without any context. But it will be a big mistake if there is a deep meaning inside them, but if the translator wrongly translates them the readers will not understand. It must have a contextual meaning that is used by Indonesian. That is what the translator finds to make the readers of receptor language think that what they are reading is not a translated one. Besides, scientific communication depends on two sets of rules laws of nature and the principles of language. Effective scientific translators must understand not only fundamental science

they are translating but also the principles of two written languages: source and target. With that understanding comes the recognition of cultural differences which fosters respect in querying an author. Equivalence in idiom and in grammar and in syntax maybe important, but equivalence in terms of experiences and concepts tapped is most important of all.

**d. Having No Wider Choice of Scientific Vocabulary**

Medicine is a field of knowledge in accelerated scientific and technological development that each year may incorporates a large number of new terms into the medical lexicon. it is only much later on that the first attempts to translate these terms start to timidly appear, and this leads to further problems: for a lot of words, it is not easy to find suitable corresponding terms in Bahasa Indonesia, thus making translation

difficult. It will be easy to translate if we have good choice of vocabulary. We are able to combine word by word to be a good text. The problem will emerge when the translator has no wider choice of vocabulary, especially scientific one. It will be difficult for translator to translate it. For example: *sub technical word*. The translation of sub technical word cannot be found in Bahasa Indonesia. So the translator should have wider choice of vocabulary to translate it. It also relates to the translator's competence whether she/he understands what to do or not. But having few choice of vocabulary will take long time for translator to finish the task. Sometimes it is because of the background of translator itself, maybe he/she is not really familiar with the words. It can not be translator's fault only, the limited number of scientific vocabulary in Bahasa Indonesia is one of the problems. We may not ignore that

there are lots of words in which Bahasa Indonesia does not have compared to English. The translator should find another word that can represent the word or even explain it in order to make the reading clear.

#### **e. Style of translating**

Working as translator is not only working as scientist, but also working as an artist. Translator as scientist means that he/she should master the applied linguistics skill into his/her translation. Firstly, He/she should have good knowledge about both languages; source and target language. Beside that he/she also has to find the good dictation to express what the writer of the source language means. Finally, the translator should know the topic of what is being translated. Meanwhile, translator as artist means that he/she should be smart in combining words in order to get easy

reading by the target language readers. He/she must find a good style of art in translating especially scientific text to reveal messages from the original text. The beginner translator should find difficulties to combine science and art. The problem is that the beginner has not got experiences yet from translating scientific text, so it will be so difficult to choose good way to express messages to target language. Talking about translation also means talking about two cultures differences. The differences of semantic, structure, and syntax system are different, included from Indonesia to English. Therefore it is difficult for the beginner to translate English style words into Indonesia. For example:

“If you want to send the translated text after office hours, you should wait for another day to send it” (page 72)

The translation may be:

1. *Jika anda ingin mengirimkan teks yang sudah diterjemahkan setelah jam kantor, anda harus menunggu hari lain untuk mengirimkannya*
2. *Jika anda ingin mengirimkan teks yang sudah diterjemahkan setelah jam kerja maka anda dapat mengirimkannya dihari lain*

The two translations above are may be correct, but the translator should feel which one is equivalent to the style in Bahasa Indonesia. The second sentence may be more appropriate. If he/she translates it in a wrong way and style, the meaning of the sentence will be blurring. Therefore it demands translator to be patient, careful, and accurate because it is pretty hard to find the equivalence of style in English and Bahasa Indonesia.

### **C. CONCLUSSION**

Translation is not an easy thing. It involves all basic skills you have in English. Translating scientific text is

another matter. You have to accurately recognize the culture and the context of the text itself. Even a professional translator will get difficulties in translating it. It includes difficulties in translating scientific lexicons, translating scientific concept, finding lexical equivalence, having no wider choice of scientific vocabulary, different style of translating, etc. However, as a translator, you should improve your competence in this field in order to get confidence from the readers. As Larson (1984:3) says that translation consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context, the translator must

find suitable strategies to re-express meaning clearly into the target language. at the first time, the translator must realize that the problems he/she faces while translating, then he/she may consult the dictionary. If it cannot solve this problem yet, it is better for the translator to consult with the professionalism that

related to the scientific study. For example when you are translating medical text you may go to doctor that know the words in the text. If this one may not resolve your problem, you may have a research and find by yourself the meaning of the text that causes the difficulties in translating scientific text.

## Reference

Larson, Mildred L. 1984. *Meaning-Based Translation*. United States of America:  
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