

Translating texts of Humor: Science, Art or Skill?

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Abstract: The question of whether translation is science, art or skill seems to be still discussed until now, and it is still unclear what the answer is. Some say that translation is a science because it requires a complete knowledge of the structure in the preparation of the two languages concerned and the translation must be done based on theories of language. Some say translation is art because it requires artistic talent to reconstruct original text in the form of products that are suitable for readers who are unfamiliar with the original and to release the text from ‘previous dependence on cultural knowledge’. Meanwhile, some say that translation is a skill because it requires the ability to overcome difficulties in translation, the ability to provide translations that are not suitable with the target language, and it requires training under supervision. In this paper, we discuss about the role of these three types of translations in the translation of text of humors. We used analytical descriptive method, which began with selecting the type of humor that will be translated and comparing it with the results of the translation, then analyzing it to see which type is translation of text of humor: science, art or skills? The study found that translating humor can be considered as a science because it requires knowledge of language, especially when translating wordplay type of humor. In addition, in the translation of humor, art is needed in the search of matching words in the target language, so as to have a high effect of humor. Meanwhile, in the translation of humor there is no need for skills that require training, as found in oral translation which requires speed.

Keywords: translation, humor, art, science, skill

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I. INTRODUCTION

Is translation science or art? This problem has long been asked, but until now there is still no answer. There might be no definite answers to that. But for translators around the world, from ancient times to the present, this is not a problem for them in carrying out their duties, both as a science and an art. It is possible that translation is art and science (Cao, 2007: xi). Translating from one language to another, according to Bell (1991), is science and art (Battacharyya, 2015: 1).

Translation as an artwork is an artistic reproduction and translation as a process is an original creation. Translation as a form of a borderline case at the interface between reproductive art and original creative art (Levy, 2011: 58). Gabr (2001: 2) considers translation as a skill because it requires training, which is training under supervision, and as science, because it must be based on language theory. Meanwhile, Herzfeld (2003: 110) considers literary translation as art, because it is used for releasing the text from “previous dependence on cultural knowledge” (Ordudari, 2008).

Translation is science, art, and skill. It is called science because it requires complete knowledge of the structure and arrangement of the two languages concerned. It is called art because it requires artistic talent to reconstruct the original text in the form of products that are suitable for readers who are unfamiliar with the original. It is called skill because it requires the ability to overcome difficulties in translation, and the ability to provide translations that are not suitable with the target language (Elenatoader)

Some scholars, such as Theodore Savory, define translation as an art. Other scholars, like Eric Jacobson, define it as a skill. Then others, like Eugene Nida, define it as science. Meanwhile, Horst Frenz says that translation is neither a creative art nor therapeutic imitative art, but it is in between. Translation is not just an imitation of a text. There is a creative process in it. Although creativity is an essential criterion in translation, it needs to follow certain general rules so that the functions and efficiency are in the right place. (Ray, 2008: 19). Translation, as creative literature, is an art. This requires several methods to be successful and be able to continue artistically. (Ray, 2008: 26)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Similar to slang and everyday language, humor is also often problematic when translated, so it becomes an issue for translators. Something very funny in the original language, can fail to be amusing as much in the target language, unless there is a long explanation that describes the humor. According to Robert Chandler, humor tends to be very easily lost in translation. Martin Riker agrees that the most successful translation of humor is more likely to be replaced than literally translated, which is replacing humor from the original language with comparable humor in the target language. Wordplay is a distinctive feature in each native language. The equivalent must be found in the target language. Sometimes it is not simple to do or so it needs to be cut or a different wordplay is created or the flexibility of the wordplay is kept up. In such cases, the translator and editor must decide which is more important between a literal translation or word play made in the text. (Paul, 2009: 49)

Humor is often known as a barrier for translators. There is even a paradigm that says that humor cannot be translated. To understand a culture that cannot be translated, we must understand the characteristics of humor. Humor occurs when rules are not followed, when expectations are made and not realized, and when discrepancies are carried out in other ways. A special problem in humor translation is that humor relies on implicit knowledge (Vandaele: 149).

Vandaele (2002: 150) said that the main problem for the translators of humor is the difference between humor before translation and translated humour, as well as the difference in the the assessment of the humor by the translator (Antonopoulou, 2004). Translating humor from one language to another is difficult. The main challenge in understanding humor and translating humor is the problem of ability and sociocultural differences (Baranauskiene, 2012)

III. METHODS

To be able to translate humor properly, we should consider several aspects, namely the social aspect, because humor carries out social roles; cultural aspects because without this aspect, humor will not work well; and aspects of language, because aspects of language are closely related to the cultural aspects and the translator aspect. Paris (2010) suggested that in translating humor well it must be done by two linguists: a linguist who is an expert in the original language and another is an expert in the target language (Liendo, 2013). In addition, the types of humor must also be known. Al-Harthi (2006: 17) divides humor into several types, namely *Jokes*, which are common types of verbal humor, usually in the form of oral conversations. There are two forms, namely *narrative jokes* and *question and answer jokes*. Narrative jokes are the same as stories, and the answer can be found in the main idea. Jokes are divided into several parts, namely long jokes without main idea, question and answer jokes with silly answers, short jokes with witty comments; *Wordplay*, whose the most used technique is a game of intrinsic and figurative meaning. Freud said this wordplay was a fertile source in humor: *Irony*, which is divided into three, namely *verbal irony*, *situational* and *dramatic*. According to Gibb, verbal irony occurs when someone says a word or phrase with the opposite meaning. Meanwhile, situational irony, according to Lagerwelf, occurs when there is a gap between what is expected logically and what happens in reality. While dramatic irony, according to Demster, is when there is a difference between what is thought by the audience or the reader, not the same as what is done by a character.

In addition to the above types, there are also other types, namely *Parody*, which is imitating something serious in a funny way with the intention of insinuating. Korkut distinguishes Parodies into *parody of the text and personal style*, namely parodies that imitate certain pieces of literary work, certain forms or phrases written by certain authors, or styles from certain authors; the *parody genre*, which imitates the type of literature that has certain styles and habits and *discourse parody*, which mimics the philosophical, religious, social and ideological language of a particular group or activity. *Satire*, which is a Writing that contains ridicule against someone, social groups, institutions and others with the intention of provoking. Satire is divided into *direct satire*, which is expressed directly to the reader or listener through the main character or other characters in the same work and *indirect satire*, namely ridiculing characters because of their behavior, thoughts, comments or story style; *Sarcasm*, which is a form of short humor that uses humorous language with the intention of ridiculing its victims.

Another type of humor is *Spoonerism*, which is a verbal error that occurs because the speaker accidentally changes the tone or letter on two or more words, causing a funny effect. Spoonerism is divided into three, namely *anticipation error*, for example using my bike - take my bike: beef noodle-beef needle, teep a cape - keep a tape; *Putdowns and Self-Denigrating Humor*, which is self-humiliating humor. *Retorts*, namely humor in the form of question and answer and the answer contains funny elements; *Teasing*, humor that is tempting. *Banter*, which is humor that contains jokes. *Register Clash*, which is humor that contains high or formal language usage in an inappropriate place. *Catchphrases*, namely humor in the form of slogans.

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The steps that must be taken in the translation of humour texts, according to Attardo in Al-Harhi (2006), are as follows. Firstly, the translator should change the original language to the target language. In this case, the translator may freely use paraphrasing to obtain the humorous effect of the humor. Secondly, the translator should reproduce the humor by using another narrative, if the humor is not in the target language. The third step is to replace individual targets or groups in the original culture with those in the target culture. The fourth step is to replace the situation in the target culture with a more suitable one, if there is no such situation in the target culture. The fifth is replacing the background of the character according to the target language and the sixth is changing the story if it is not in the target language. In order to see whether translating humor includes science, art or skills, consider the following example.

Hiji poe Bu Mirna guru SD kelas lima keur nerangkeun hal kawajiban nuntut elmu. Sanggeus nerangkeun tuluy Bu Mirna nanya ka barudak kelas lima.

Bu Mirna, "Barudak, ari nuntut elmu teh kawajiban saha? Naha kawajiban Ibu atawa maneh?"

Barudak, "Maneeehh.....!" Ceuk barudak saur manuk.

Bu Mirna baeud

Sumber: <https://www.ketawa.com/2008/10/5137-nuntut-elm.html>

The text of humor on Sundanese, if translated into English, means something like this:

One day, Mrs. Mirna, a fifth grade elementary school teacher, explained about the responsibility of studying. After explaining, then Mrs. Mirna asked the fifth graders.

Mrs. Mirna, "Children, whose responsibility is studying? Your mother or you? "

Students, "You ...?" Said the children together.

Mrs. Mirna frowns.

Looking at the text of the original language and the target language, there is no changes, both in terms of form and content. Likewise, from the humor aspect, it can still be maintained. This shows that there is a text of humor that is not difficult to translate. This text can be translated into any language, without losing the humorous effect. It is unlike the case in the following text.

BBM naik, hidup tambah SIMANUNGKALIT

Harga2 NAEK, SAGALA PANDAPOTAN MANURUNG,

Banyak SIHOTANG

Hidup bagaikan mendaki TOBING

Tak ada lagi HARAHAHAP

Kepala pusing sampai SIBUTAR BUTAR

Rambut rontok dan nyaris POLTAK

Jumlah rakyat miskin sudah PANGARIBUAN

Anak-anak menangis MARPAUNG-PAUNG

Otak sudah SITOMPUL

Tapi kita masih dimintasabar SITORUS

Jangan putus HARAHAHAPkatanya

Mintalah PARLINDUNGAN,

supaya BONAR-BONAR selamat ...

BUTET dah... !!

Sumber: <https://www.ketawa.com/2005/04/3415-horas-bah.html>

This text can be categorized as a funny text, because it is full of wordplay. This is one example of text that is difficult to translate, because most of the words contained in it are the names of clans from a particular ethnicity that cannot be translated. The funny part of this text is found in the similarity in pronunciation between Batak clan names and the everyday language used in Indonesia, as well as the following:

Names of Clans	Words in Indonesian National Language
Simanungkalit	Semakin terlilit
Naek	Naik
Sagala	Segala
Pandapotan	Pendapatan
Manurung	Menurun

Sihotang	Hutang
Tobing	Tebing
Harahap	Harapan
Sibutar-butar	Mutar-mutar
Poltak	Botak
Pangaribuan	Ribuan
Marpaung-paung	Meraung-raung
Sitompul	Tumpul
Sitorus	Terus
Parlindungan	Perlindungan
Bonar-bonar	Benar-benar
Butet	Buset

After searching for the equivalent, the text sounds like this in Indonesian:

*BBM naik, hidup tambah SEMAKIN TERLILIT
 Harga2 NAIK, SEGALA PENDAPATAN MENURUN,
 Banyak HUTANG
 Hidup bagaikan mendaki TEBING
 Tak ada lagi HARAPAN
 Kepala pusing sampai BERPUTAR-PUTAR
 Rambut rontok dan nyaris BOTAK
 Jumlah rakyat miskin sudah RIBUAN
 Anak-anak menangis MERAUNG-RAUNG
 Otak sudah TUMPUL
 Tapi kita masih diminta sabar TERUS
 Jangan putus HARAPAN katanya
 Mintalah PERLINDUNGAN,
 supaya BENAR-BENAR selamat ...
 BUSET dah... !!*

When translated into English, the text roughly reads this way.

*Fuel oil rises, life gets increasingly twisted
 Prices rise, all income decreases,
 Lots of debt
 Life is like climbing a cliff
 No more hope
 (My) head is dizzy that it's spinning
 Hair loss and almost bald
 The number of poor people is already thousands
 Children are crying
 The brain is dulled
 But we are still being asked to be patient
 Do not give up hope he said
 Ask for protection,
 To be completely safe ...
 Hell ... !!*

This text of humor is what Robert Chandler mentioned about humor is lost in translation. The humor text above, after translated into English, now looks like a poem expressing one's heart and is no longer a text of humor that can make people laugh.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, it is shown that there are texts that can be translated directly without changing the contents of humor. There are also texts that lose its sense of humor, hence it must be changed by finding a match that is more suitable. Finally, there are texts that cannot be translated at once because both of its form and content can change, hence eliminate its elements of humor.

In general, texts of humor that cannot or are difficult to translate are texts in which there are wordplay or culture-related elements of humor. Based on these findings we concluded that in essence, translating humor can be said to be a science as it requires knowledge of language and culture, and it can also be called art and skill because keeping the humor content and rearranging it into a text of humor in a different language requires the translator to be artistic and skilled.

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