

How Burton Raffel Translated Chairil Anwar's "Aku": An Analysis in Poem Translation

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the translation of Indonesian poem entitled "Aku" by Chairil Anwar, which is translated by Burton Raffel. The poem was written in 1943 and depicts the struggle of the natives of Indonesia to achieve independence from their colonizer. This paper wants to see how the poem is translated into English by a non-Indonesian who does not have social, cultural, or even historical background like Indonesian people. The focuses of the analysis are in the semantics and syntax as cultural and conceptual phenomena; the works of dynamic, pragmatic, equivalence; and the conveyance of ST message through the translation. Based on the analysis, it is found that the works of dynamic and pragmatic equivalence are needed in translating the poem because they can accommodate flexible relationship between the elements of SL and TL such as social and cultural concepts conveyed or depicted by the poem.

Keywords: dynamic equivalence, poem translation, pragmatic equivalence

INTRODUCTION

Translating literary works has always become a controversial thing in translation field. It requires the preservation of aesthetic, taste, and meaning when the works are transferred from source language to target language. One of those literary works is poetry. According to Jakobson, poetry is claimed to be untranslatable because the form of words in verse contributes to the construction of the meaning in the text (Hatim & Munday, 2004). However, many facts and phenomena are against this claim. The proof is the fact that there are many poems from one language are translated into other languages around the world. The proof shows that translating poetry from one to another language is a possible thing to do. However, Dharwadker (2008: 139) stated that "Only a poem can translate a poem", which means that a poem must be translated

also as a poem. Therefore, translating poetry can always become an interesting subject to discuss.

This paper analyses the Indonesian to English translation of a famous poem of Indonesia, entitled "Aku". The poem was written around 1943 by a famous Indonesian poet named Chairil Anwar. At that time, Indonesia had not been independent and was still under the colonization of Japan. It is possible that the writing style of this poem was influenced by the social condition at that time. Chairil Anwar belongs to the 1945 generation writers. His writings incorporated the themes of individualism, death, and existentialism (TheFamousPeople.com, 2015). He is famously known as "Si Binatang Jalang" ("The Wild Beast") because of his poem entitled "Aku". His poems are also internationally known by people around the world. A book which

compiles the translation of Chairil Anwar's writings was published by Burton Raffel (Raffel, 1993).

"Aku" has also become a popular poem among Indonesian students. In Indonesian language class, this poem has always been introduced to students and used as a learning material, even since the students are in the elementary school. As an Indonesian student, the writer is also

"Aku"
(Chairil Anwar)

*Kalau sampai waktuku
'Ku mau tak seorang 'kan merayu
Tidak juga kau*

Tak perlu sedu sedan itu

*Aku ini binatang jalang
Dari kumpulannya terbuang*

*Biar peluru menembus kulitku
Aku tetap meradang menerjang*

*Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari
Berlari
Hingga hilang pedih perih*

Dan Aku akan lebih tidak peduli

Aku mau hidup seribu tahun lagi

As it has been mentioned in the previous paragraph, the published translation of "Aku" was done by Burton Raffel. He is not an Indonesian and surely does not have the

familiar with Chairil Anwar's "Aku". It reflects a story about someone who wants to show his existence and struggle against the oppressing situation in the world. Since it was written during the colonization around 1943, it is possible that this poem wanted to address and depict the struggle of Indonesian against its colonist for achieving independence. Therefore, it can also be said that "Aku" somehow has historical relation with Indonesia.

"Me"
(Translated by Burton Raffel)

When my time comes
I want to hear no one's cries
Nor yours either

Away with all who cry!

Here I am, a wild beast
Driven out of the herd

Bullets may pierce my skin
But I'll keep on

Carrying forward my wounds and my pain,
attacking,
Attacking
Until suffering disappears

And I won't care anymore

I want to live another thousand years

same historical background as Indonesian people. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how Raffel brings "Aku" to his language without losing its meaning, value,

and also taste. In order to see that, this paper analyses three domains consisting of (1) the semantics and syntax as cultural and conceptual phenomena, (2) the work of pragmatic, dynamic, and formal equivalence, and (3) the conveyance of ST message through the translation.

ANALYSIS

Translating a poem from one language to another language is an act of promoting literature through translation. According to Dewi (2016), promoting literature through translation does not only attempt to improve the literary culture but also to satisfy the curiosity of knowing different cultures from different countries. Culture itself can be the set of ideas, practices, and experiences (historical background) of a group of people (Rong, 2013), and it might differ from one group to another because it is also interpretative and can be viewed from many perspectives.

It means that when a literary work or a text is translated, the translation should be able to transfer the cultural concept in the text from one language to the target language in its cultural concept without losing or reducing the main point being employed through the work or text. It is also supported by Dharwadker (2008) who states that literary translation has to bring the reader of target language to the literary tradition and culture of the first language. Therefore, translating a poem will involve the transferring of cultural concept mentioned before.

In order to be able to transfer the cultural meaning of the source text, it is necessary

to see the whole picture of the text. Since “Aku” and its translation will be the subject for analysis, it is better to see the whole or contextual meaning presented in the poem itself. As it has been mentioned in the introduction, “Aku” depicts the struggle of Indonesians against the colonizers in order to gain the independence. This indication is shown by the word *peluru* meaning *bullets* in English, which somehow depicts the situation during war time. The fact that the poem was written in 1943 can also be another indication. The word *binatang jalang* which is translated as *wild beast* by Burton Raffel, might be seen as referring to the natives of Indonesia who were considered as second or lower than the colonizers at that time and also how the phrase also illustrates how the natives desire freedom, like a caged wild animal trying to break free. This indicates that whole meaning can influence the way the translator translated the poem.

After seeing the whole picture of the text, the analysis sees how the poet was translated by analysing the translation of each stanza. In “Aku”, each stanza contains one phrase or several phrases. This typology will also later influence the translation in establishing hierarchical equivalence level for meaning, purpose, or intention delivering (Puchala, 2011).

In order to analyse the translation of the poem, the writer did a simple coding in order to distinguish the translation phenomena of each stanza. The coding can be seen in table below.

Table 1. Utterances

Stanza	Utterances		Phenomena	Explanation
	Indonesia	English		
First	<i>merayu</i>	Cries	Pragmatic equivalence	Social context
First	<i>tidak juga kau</i>	Nor yours either	Dynamic equivalence – Syntax	Changing sentence form
Second	<i>tak perlu sedu sedan itu</i>	away with all who cry	Dynamic equivalence – Translation shift	Social context
Third	<i>Aku ini binatang jalang</i>	Here I am, a wild beast	Dynamic equivalence – Syntax	Changing the sentence form
Third	<i>Kumpulan</i>	Herd	Dynamic equivalence – Syntax – Semantic	Word choice
Fourth	<i>Aku tetap meradang menerjang</i>	But I'll keep on	Dynamic equivalence – Syntax	Changing sentence form
Fifth	<i>Berlari</i>	attacking	Register and Pragmatic equivalence	Social context
Fifth	<i>pedih perih</i>	suffering	Pragmatics equivalence	Social context

The coding focuses on utterances (words or phrases and clauses) which are translated beyond the formal equivalence in the stanza. In other words, those utterances are considered to have undergone a hierarchical process which brings them into that kind of translation.

Based on the coding, there are three equivalence phenomena involved in translating the poem “Aku”. They are dynamic equivalence that happens in word

and sentence level, pragmatic equivalence that involves register and happens in word level, and formal equivalence that happens in some lines in some stanzas. The discussion of phenomena in each stanza is explained as follows.

The Works of Dynamic and Pragmatic Equivalence

In the first stanza, we can see the phenomena of pragmatic equivalence and also dynamic equivalence. In the second

line, there is a dynamic equivalence phenomenon in the sentence level. It is a translation shift where the form was sacrificed (changed) in order to emphasize the meaning and also the poetic elements in the poet itself. It is possible that the taste will decrease or lose if the formal equivalence which is form-bound is employed to translate because it does not necessarily convey the meaning. The dynamic equivalence phenomenon also occurs in the third line in the sentence level related to agreement of the use of *nor* and *either*. In the formal form, the use of *nor* is usually paired with *neither* but it was denied by the translator. It happens possibly because poem is considered to be not grammatically-bound in English.

Kalau sampai waktuku When my time comes

'Ku mau tak seorang 'kan merayu I want to hear no one's cries

Tidak juga kau Nor yours either

Meanwhile, the pragmatics equivalence phenomenon occurs in the second line as in the word *merayu* which is translated into cries. The word *merayu* literally means persuade or seduce in English. However, Raffel translated it as cries instead of *seduce* or *persuade*. It is possible that the result of this translation appeared after it underwent hierarchical process. Raffel might consider that word *persuade* somehow is not enough to be the equivalence of the word *merayu* because the poem depicts something about struggle that possibly took place at war time because struggle using persuasion can be considered not enough to win war. However, the word *seduce* is also not suitable since it contains sexual meaning which is clearly not presented in the text. Therefore, the word *cries* can be the closest pragmatic equivalence since it might represent the word *persuade* and contain meaning such as forcing and represent what people do in

struggle to get something when a mere persuasion is not enough.

The second stanza consists of only one clause. There is a dynamic equivalence phenomenon occurs in syntactic (sentence) level in order to employ the meaning which might be difficult to employ.

Tak perlu sedu sedan itu Away with all who cry!

In this stanza, the utterance is translated as above rather than *crying is not needed*. This dynamic equivalence phenomenon in syntactic level involves a translation shift which changes the word classes and their functions in the utterance. The main focus here is on the word *sedu sedan* which means *more than crying*. Instead of finding the hierarchical equivalence of word *sedu sedan*, the translation sacrificed the form in order to convey the meaning of *more than crying*. It is possible that the translator considers that *sedu sedan* refers to the cry of more than a person that is closely related to *more than crying*. It is indicated by the use of *all who cry*, where *all* can be considered as a plural subject and affect the word *cry* as a verb for plural subject. Then, this also affects the translation of *tak perlu* to *away* instead of just *no need* because both can mean *ordering something* or *someone to go away* but *away* is syntactically and semantically more matched than *no need* in addressing *all who cry* that is considered as more than one person.

In the third stanza, there is a phenomenon of dynamic equivalence which involves translation shifts and semantic fields. The dynamic equivalence phenomenon can be seen in the first line.

Aku ini binatang jalang Here I am, a wild beast

Dari kumpulan terbuang Driven out of the herd

The first line was translated as *Here I am, a wild beast* instead of *I am a wild beast*. The translation decided to sacrifice its form in

syntactic level in order to get the tone or taste of the clause. The translation *I am a wild beast* is necessarily able to convey meaning. However, Raffel's version sounds more aesthetic and poetic because it is less formal and non-form-bound. Meanwhile, the semantic phenomena can be seen in second line in the word *kumpulan* which is translated into *herd* instead of *band*. In this case, the translation involves the semantic field of the whole stanza. The stanza talks about people which are metaphorized as animals by Chairil Anwar. Accordingly, the translator did not use the word *band* because the word might have closer association with group of humans instead of group of animals, while the word *herd* is closely related to group of animals. Moreover, the semantic phenomenon gives contribution in maintaining the metaphor which is employed by the source language text. This phenomenon is in line with the principle of translation that proper unit of translation must not be at word level but higher (Dharwadker, 2008), which means that it must be textual level rather than word level.

The phenomenon in the fourth stanza is quite unique. It happens in the second line of the stanza. Besides, the second line is related to the first line of the preceding stanza. As a result, the analysis will be conducted by using the last line of the fourth stanza and the first line of the fifth stanza.

Aku tetap meradang menerjang But I'll keep on

Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari Carrying forward my wounds and my pain, against the colonist. This translation also involves register since the translation also

Berlari attacking,

In this part, there is a phenomenon of dynamic equivalence that involves a translation shift. This happens because the word *meradang dan menerjang* is not directly translated using equivalent words in order to maintain the form. Since the word *meradang* is closely related to *luka*

which is translated as *pain*, the word *menerjang* is closely related to the word *berlari*, and both words are closely related to *kubawa* because of its prefix *me-*, it is possible that the translator tried to shift and mould the translation into the syntax level by using the semantic relation between those words. As a result, the prefixes *me-* in *meradang* and *menerjang* influence the translation of *kubawa* into *carrying*. Another result is in the translation of the word *berlari* which becomes *attacking* because of the influence of *menerjang* which consists of the meaning of *moving forward* and *striking something in front*. Therefore, the translation can be seen as being able to keep the connection of the last line of the stanza with its preceding line in the next stanza as well as to deliver the message.

Besides, referring from the previous phenomenon, the translation of the word *berlari* to *attacking* can also be analysed from the point of view of pragmatic equivalence. Firstly, the whole context has to be observed where this poem refers to a person who is metaphorized as a beast which struggles to live. The meaning of this metaphor is the colonized (Indonesians) who struggled for their independence and freedom. Secondly, the relation of each stanza has to be observed where this poem metaphorizes the hunted colonized by using a picture of a shot animal as in the fourth stanza. Consequently, the word *berlari* is translated into *attacking* because the poem wants to depict the struggle of Indonesian

Another phenomenon in pragmatic equivalence that involves register also occurs in the second line of the fifth stanza in the word *pedih perih*.

Hingga hilang pedih perih Until suffering disappears

The word *pedih perih* has meaning more than just painful. As a result, it would be not enough to elaborate the meaning and feeling, if the translator chose the word *pain*. Besides, the whole or cultural meaning of the poem is related to the Indonesian history of being colonized. Therefore, the translator needs to use a register in order to be able to elaborate the cultural and contextual meaning presented in the poem and find the equivalence word that pragmatically suitable to translate the SL words. As a consequence, the final translation of Raffel is *suffering* from the word *suffer*, which is hierarchically higher than the word *pain*. Besides, the suffix *-ing* also indicates a progressive mental process which elaborates that *pedih perih* is something that has been already happening for a certain period of time.

The Work of Formal Equivalence

There are also several lines and stanzas which are translated by only employing the formal equivalence. In translating those lines and stanzas, the translator is able to maintain the formal form of the sentence. There is no need for dynamic, sentence deconstruction, or even hierarchical analysis for finding equivalence, which results in the breakdown of form-bounding because the translation has already been able to deliver the meaning, taste and its aesthetic by using the formal equivalence.

Kalau sampai waktuku When my time comes

(line 1, stanza 1)

Dan Aku akan lebih tidak peduli And I won't care anymore

(stanza 6)

Aku mau hidup seribu tahun lagi I want to live another thousand years

(stanza 7)

The list above shows the lines and stanzas which do not undergo the changing that is

beyond the form-bounding in formal equivalence.

Translating the Title

The last analysis is about how the translator translates the title. As it has been mentioned in the first section, the title “*Aku*” is translated into “*Me*” instead of “*I*” by the translator. In English, the word *me* and *I* have different meaning and function. The word *I* is usually used as the first-person pronoun and usually functions as a subject in the sentence, while the word *me* is usually used as the third person pronoun and usually functions as the object of the sentence. It is possible that the final translation become *me* can be addressed as the phenomena of pragmatic equivalence and register. The whole picture drawn from “*Aku*” can be considered as a picture of victims (object who receive the acts) of the oppressive world (colonialism). As a result, the word “*Aku*” as the title will be suitable, if it is translated into “*Me*” rather than “*I*”.

CONCLUSION

Translating a poem is indeed not an easy work for a translator, especially if the translator is not familiar with the cultural background where the poem was written. There are a lot of things that need to be considered when the poetry is being translated. Translating poem can become a tricky task for translator (Gao, 2010). This paper has also proven that in translating the poem the translator sometimes (many times) needs to sacrifice (change) the form in order to deliver the context, the taste, or the meaning which wants to be imparted when the poem is transferred from its source language to the target language.

Based on the phenomena that occur in translating the poem “*Aku*”, it can be concluded that translating the poem mainly needs the work of dynamic and pragmatic equivalence. The dynamic view of equivalence proposed by Koller can give variable and flexible approach for

translators in accommodating the relationship between the elements in SL and TL (Hatim & Munday, 2004). Meanwhile, the pragmatic equivalence can give translators an approach based on the social and cultural context contained in the poem. Therefore, the work of dynamic and pragmatic equivalence can translate the poem from SL to the poem in TL.

In translating the poetry “Aku”, maintaining form or using the formal equivalence can still be applicable for several lines or stanzas. However, there are dynamic equivalence, pragmatic equivalence which requires hierarchical analysis, and sometimes register that is influenced by the contextual situation of the source language, needed to be applied in translating the poetry. To conclude the paper, the writer would like to inform that the translation of poetry “Aku” can be considered as a good translation of poetry. As an EFL reader who is also familiar with the poetry, the writer is still be able to feel the taste, meaning, and value of “Aku” which has been translated into “Me”.

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