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Untranslated Javanese Words in Translation of Okky Madasari's Novel *The Years of Voiceless*

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Abstract

This article will try to investigate the Javanese words which are left untranslated found in Okky Madasari's novel that has been translated into English under the title "The Years of Voiceless". The research is directed to reveal the reasons that motivate the translators not to translate those words. By applying sociolinguistic theory which strongly believes that linguistic performances are influenced by extralinguistic factors, it is found that Javanese words referring to specific cultural entities, such as address terms, religious beliefs, foods and drinks, performing and architectural arts, and politics are left untranslated.

Keywords: *translation; sociolinguistics; cultural entity*

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Introduction

It has long been convinced that internally all languages are the same as others. No language is better and more difficult compared to another. The differences that arise among the languages which make one language is considered more prestigious than others are commonly caused by social factors of its speakers. So, the languages whose speakers are socio economically more dominant tend to be more highly valued than ones of the less dominant (Folley, 2001, 382). Any language, as stated in many sociolinguistic text books, is a reflection of its social conditions, and in turn will largely determine or limit how its speakers view the world. Because no society has exactly the same social structure with others, any language to some extends will obviously performs certain limitations in expressing various concepts coming from outside of its community (Carrol, 1956 212-214; Wardaugh, 1986, 212). As such, no matter how rich the vocabulary of one language might be, it will remain difficult to translate certain cultural concepts existing in other languages.

These facts are commonly found in translation works, more specifically in literary translation books. To ease the readers enjoying the translation works, the translators, especially those who hold domestication ideology, usually give explanations of every cultural word that the translators find it difficult to translate. This paper will concern with untranslated Javanese words found in

Okky Madasari's literary work entitled The Years of the Voiceless translated by Nurhayat Indriyatno Mohamed, and published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. This research will be focused on the semantic domains of the untranslated words, and try to explain the various reasons underlying the matters.

Theoretically there are at least four possibilities that concern the relation between language and culture or the social structure of the community that owns the language (Wardaugh, 1986, pp. 10-11). The first, which is considered the extreme view, states that there is no relation between language and the social structure. This view comes from Chomsky and his followers by showing the fact that many communities with similar social structures yet to have very different linguistic structures, and conversely many societies with very different social structures have relatively the same or similar linguistic structures.

Second, the structure of language is influenced by the social structure. In other words, the structure of a language is a reflection of its socio-cultural conditions. This opinion is held by sociolinguists. Third, the structure of a language determines the social structure, such as believed by Sapir and Whorf. And finally, the fourth opinion considers that the relation between language and culture is bidirectional, or they influence each other. Even though it is obviously convincing that the relation between language and culture is bidirectional, and based on the strong claims proposed by Sapir and Whorf that the influence of social culture of the speakers are stronger towards the language they use to communicate, to the sake of research purpose, the theoretical approach that will be used to frame this investigation is the second opinion.

Based on this theory, it can be assumed that the existence of Javanese untranslated words in Okky Madasari's novel is essentially caused by the great differences between the Javanese culture and the Anglo Saxon one to which both languages respectively represent. This opinion is strengthened by Nida, as quoted by Sajarwa (2016, pp. 132-133), that any translators will experience some problems in translating process arisen by at least 5 interconnected factors, i.e. (1) ecological factors related to social environment, (2) material culture related to names of handicraft, (3) social culture related to people livelihood (4) related to belief practiced by the community members, and (5) internal (linguistic) factors. Their interconnectedness will make each factor hard to differentiate among others. For translators, especially who hold on domestication ideology, will leave these cultural bounded words untranslatable (Hoed, 2003, pp. 3-5; Sriyono, 2016, p. 28).

Mc Guire states that "translation is the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and (2) the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted". In many cases, however, especially in literary work translation, such as poetry as well as novel, the translators find that culturally bounded word translations usually cause fundamental distortion for they are often left without translation. This happens because the translators do not want to shift the writer's experience and perception of the world (world view), namely concerning how (s)he views social relations, gender relations, etc. when the linguistic items are translated into other languages with very different cultural backgrounds (Mahali, 1998, p. 144).

For the whole discourse, the untranslatable elements are left as borrowings or loan words. A lot of matters have been discussed by the experts concerning translating problems, however the issues regarding what aspects cannot be translated and the reasons that underlie behind, especially related to translation of Indonesian text to English or other languages has not so far got serious attention by the experts. This problem is considered important because it can raise awareness that Indonesian culture, as represented by the untranslated Javanese words, has various cultural uniqueness that should be known by all experts particularly for those involved in translating activities. These uniqueness are hardly found in other languages, and this implies that Indonesian, the same as other languages, is a language that is also not easy to master (Wijana & Rohmadi, 2006, 90). From a language maintenance view

point, this fact will arise a kind of pride and loyalty for the speakers to continuously use and eventually maintain it, not easy to shift to other more prestigious languages.

Methodology

This research seeks to find out two main issues as what has been mentioned in the introduction. Those are the semantic domains of untranslated words found in Okky Madasari's *The Years of the Voiceless* and the reasons that underlie the matters. Close examination toward the data collection yields that the untranslated words found in Madasary's work, with regards to their semantic entities, cover several interconnected semantic domains which can be classified into: address terms, belief and religion, food and drink, traditional arts, politics, etc.

Results and Discussion

Address Terms

It is often found that the semantic components of words referring to kinship terms are very unique, and do not share in common with address terms existing in other languages. For example, Kreidler (1998, 1992) states that Russian has opaque affinity lexemes with more complicated semantic components compared to English such as svekor 'husband's father', svekrov 'husband's mother', test 'wife's father', tesca 'wife's mother', dever 'husband's brother', zolovka 'husband sister', surin 'wife's brother', svojacenica 'wife's sister'. All of these Russian kinship terms do not have one to one equivalent in English. As, such, these words will bring a lot of difficulties for their English translation (Wijana, 2014, p. 51).

In line with the rural cultural setting of the novel, a lot number of Javanese kinship terms which function as address forms or term of reference are intentionally left without being translated by the authors even though their equivalents, except *Nduk*, exist in English, as shown by the following (1) to (5):

1) *I wondered how Tinah, Paklik's daughter, managed to be so carefree.*
2) *Mbok, I want a bra.*
3) *What's a bra, Nduk.*
4) *I Could'nt afford to buy another one, Paklik said*
5) *I don't have father, Bulik.*
6) *I'm not waiting for anyone, Kang.*

English equivalents for *Paklik, Mbok,* and *Bulik,* and *Kang* are Uncle, Mother (Mom), and Brother respectively, but they are unable to totally or perfectly express all senses conveyed in the Javanese terms. Nowadays, Javanese address terms such as *Paklik, Mbok*, and *Bulik* are only used by the speakers who are living in rural areas. In urban contextual usage, the Javanese speakers prefer to use *Paman, Ibu, Bibi* for the generic terms, and among the speakers who belong to higher social economic status, they use *Om, Mama*, and *Tante* which is inherited from Dutch.

In short, it is the rural context that makes the translator insist on maintaining those Javanese terms without being translated. With regard to *Nduk*, in spite of rural sense, there is another component, namely 'child or young age' that does not exist in its English equivalent 'girl'. Therefore, this English word cannot perfectly be used to represent the meaning of *Nduk*. If English word *Child* or *Kid* is chosen to translate *Nduk*, the rural component of this Javanese word cannot be expressed. The same problem would happen if the translator faced the use of other Javanese words such as *Yu* and *(To)le* which in English words are similar though not totally identical with *Sister* and *Boy*. Address term borrowed from foreign language is also left untranslatable, such as the Chinese borrowing *koh 'brother'* in (7) and (8) below:

7) *It's supposed to be Islam, Koh. Just like everyone else.*
8) *I felt immensely relieved that Koh Cahyadi had given that man slip.*

Words Referring to Belief

Words that are used to refer to social beliefs are other linguistic elements which are found it difficult to translate, and therefore the translators just barely take these words from their original language without any effort to translate them. The words belonging to this category cover words of having several

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semantic fields, such as 'god', 'devil', 'religious leader', 'religious stream', etc. as shown by the following examples.

9) *"What? What do you mean? What did you do with the soldier?"*
"Slept…and then asked that we don't get razed tomorrow."
"Oh Allah."
10) *Gusti Mbah Ibu Bapa Kuasa, please bless my effort.*
11) *Some they said that she had promised to give something in return for the blessing, and sometimes they said that my mother had a tuyul.*
12) *Oh great heavens, now she was saying that Bejo was an offering for my pesugihan. What pesugihan? Oh Gusti, what misfortune had befallen me now.*
13) *People said that one of them must have been Old Man Sholeh, imam at the mosque.*
14) *Our conversation ended just like that. The Kyai's closing words were, "Never mind, We'll finish this our own way'*
15) *And the parties of the abangan people had also apparently merged.*

The term god is very or too generic that can be expressed by any people regardless of what religion they practice. For more specific expression, every religion or religion in any place has a specific name for referring to god. This name might be adopted or borrowed from the language of the religion's holy books or the language of the practitioners. As such the word Allah which is borrowed from Arabic in (9) and *Gusti, Mbah, Ibu, Bapa* in (10) which constitutes a combination of Javanese words *Gusti 'king', Mbah 'grandfather/grandmother', Ibu 'mother'* and *Bapa 'father'*, for gaining more expressive utterance, are left untranslated because these expressions are commonly used by the novel characters. Supra natural creatures existing in local languages is another problem in translation. The difference characteristics between the two entities, namely Javanese supra natural creatures and the English ones, tends to cause difficulties for the translators in translating them in their works. Accordingly, the words *tuyul* which refers to 'bald headed demon which serves the masters to collect money' together with its ritual terms *pesugihan* 'ritual to seek wealth' are left untranslatable because of their specific cultural senses, as shown in (11) and (12).

Religious Islam leader terms, such as *Imam* and *Kyai* do not have appropriate equivalents in English, and therefore the translator find them unnecessary to translate (13) and (14). Finally, religious stream may develop differently across Indonesian regions. Abangan is an Islamic stream implemented by Javanese Islamic people who do not fully practice 5 Islamic laws *(syariat)* (15). This word is also difficult to translate properly in English because the root *abang* has already become an idiomatic expression which is totally different from its original or literal meaning *abang* that means 'red', or may be *abang* and *abangan* do not share the same core meaning.

Food and Drink

Crops produced are also slightly or greatly different from place to place. Each culture, affected by its own taste and specific tradition, will prepare their food and drink in very specific ways. Therefore, the food consumed by people living in different regions will not also be the same. This uniqueness in turn will cause that certain kinds of food and drink cannot be found in other places. This matter will become the source of difficulties for the vocabularies that belong to such domains to translate. For more clearly, see (16) to (20) below:

16) *Tape? I want to make some tape, Mbok …Simbok lets go to the market, Mbok.*
17) *Her daughter's stall was in the center of the market, next to a stall selling dawet and ampyang.*
18) *Yu Parti had been selling pecel at the market since before she met Mr. Suyat.*
19) *I prepared all kinds of food for her, rujak, rawon, and lodeh*
20) *Every year on your name day, I cook a tumpeng and grilled meat.*

Because of cultural influence, some words exist in certain languages that are opaquer than ones found in another. An opaque expression can convey many semantic components in one lexical item which must be expressed by several lexemes if transferred in

other languages which do not share any common cultural features. So, the word *tape, dawet, ampyang, pecel, rujak, rawon, lodeh*, and tumpeng in (16) to (20) cannot be expressed by using single term but for doing so at least two or more terms (lexemes) are required. To overcome this problem, some translators will leave such words untranslated and explain their meanings as footnotes. This way is practiced by the translator of *The Years of the Voiceless*. So, *tape* is 'snack made of fermented cassava or rice; *Dawet* is 'rice flour jelly in palm sugar and coconut milk'; *Pecel* is 'mixed vegetable with peanut and chili sauce'; *Rujak* is 'mixed fruit with chili paste'; *Rawon* is 'beef stew'; *Lodeh* is 'jackfruit stew in coconut milk broth'; Tumpeng is 'cone-shaped rice dish', etc. It will certainly be very disturbing if the translator uses the longer English expressions every time he wants to refer to those specific Javanese food and drink expressions.

Traditional Performance and Architectural Arts

Traditional arts and performances are also semantic field that is often full of lexical items which is difficult to translate to other languages. Some of Javanese traditional arts mentioned in this book are *ketoprak* 'a Javanese theatrical genre', dangdut 'an Indian and Arabian inspired musical genre' and *wayang kulit* 'shadow puppet theatre'. The same as Javanese words refer to food and drink has been discussed before, the words of referring traditional arts also contain many subtle semantic features that are hardly possible to translate or transfer to other languages, let alone ones of the communities of having very different social and cultural background. For various complicated reasons, the two Javanese words above are left untranslatable, as seen in (21) and (22) below:

21) *It was said that there was just as big a crowd for the election as there would have been for wayang kulit show.*
22) *They spoke about everything from kethoprak to dangdut.*

The three Indonesian expressions wayang kulit, kethoprak, and dangdut obviously have specific semantic components that are far different from the same genre performances found in western or other Asian countries. Therefore, it will be very difficult if these words are translated as shadow puppet, traditional play, or music performance. These last three phrases lack many specific semantic components in case the translator insists on them for their equivalents. Among those specific semantic components are the stories and the characters performed in the theatre, time of performance, the types orchestra accompanied the performance, etc. (in case of *wayang kulit* and *kethoprak*) and the instruments, types of song sung and the singers' moves (in case of dangdut). By the same reason, the translator finds it unnecessary to translate the idiom *cucuk lampah* 'the person leading the procession' in the following (23):

23) *This was the cucuk lampah, the person leading the procession. Every step he took was choreographed to the sound of gamelan at the back of the procession.*

House type or building site and its functions are also considerably different across cultures. In Java, big houses of a nobleman or the rich usually have several big rooms, and two of them are *omah ngarep* 'front of house for receiving guests, holding party, family gathering, etc.' and *omah mburi* 'back of house for keeping household tools that are no longer used and crops'. There are also several or a few rooms in the back rooms that are used for sleeping, but the main character of this novel, *si Mbok* , has got used to sleeping on the floor by spreading a mat. The back house is relatively bigger than the other rooms or other parts of the house. Because of the possible differences might exist between the Javanese traditional house and the one found in other countries, the translator has a reasonable decision to let the Javanese expressions *omah ngarep* 'front house' and *omah mburi* 'back house' untranslatable. See (24) and (25) below:

24) *Our house consists of four Javanese buildings. One of the buildings is four guests, and we call it omah ngarep.*
25) *At the back, there is the omah mburi, where we usually sleep together on a*

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mat on the floor, even though there are two rooms there.

Political Party

Every political party possibly undergoes different experiences in the country in which it develops their ideology. For instance, Indonesian political parties that are commonly known as *Partai Komunis Indonesia* and its abbreviation PKI because of its involvement in the 1965 coup that led to the death of 7 generals, is not allowed to develop and its ideologies are prohibited to be spread in Indonesia. This condition is markedly different from Communist parties found in other countries, such as China, Russia, Vietnam, etc. Accordingly, people of each country have different values toward its existence. Up till now, Indonesian people give bad connotation to this party, and consequently, the translators cannot freely change its abbreviation into Indonesia communist Party or ICP every time they want to refer to, and it is left untranslated. Notice (26) to (27) below:

26) *You'll spend the rest of your lives in jail with PKI. You've all become PKI.*
27) *I'm sure you won't become PKI too. It would be a shame for your forbears who help to wipe out the PKI.*

Problematic

To identify the reasons that underlie why or not the translators translate Indonesian words in their works are often difficult to carry out. This phenomenon is also found in *The Years of the Voiceless*. The Indonesian abbreviation KTP which stands for *Kartu Tanda Penduduk* 'ID card' sometimes is translated into ID card. In (28) and (29) below the translator use KTP, meanwhile in (30) and (31) he uses ID for referring it:

28) *Mother, look at this mother. My new KTP.*
29) *"You are back Rahayu. You haven't been back in so long, "she says as she flips the KTP back and forth. She doesn't look at me.*
30) *Your new ID card will be ready in three days. Don't forget to report to the military command every Monday.*
31) *Three days later, she received her new ID card.*

Conclusion

Since no society has exactly the same cultural entities as others, their language reflects different cultural phenomena that often cause great difficulties for the translators to express them properly in other languages. As far as the translation of The Years of the Voiceless is concerned, the cultural differences between English in one hand and Indonesian or Javanese in the other at least cover various linguistic expressions relating with: address terms, words refer to belief, food and drink, performing and architectural arts, and political party. Occasionally, the identification is still problematic because the translator sometimes also uses its English equivalent. It is important to note that the use of domestication strategy in translation activities plays a very central role in order to introduce the cultural specificity of a society reflected in language usage and to enhance the pride and loyalty of the speakers for continuously using it and maintaining its existence.

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List of The Untranslatable words in Alphabetical Order

Allah 'god'
Abangan 'a form of Islam incorporating Javanese culture and animist belief'
Ampyang 'palm sugar cookies'
Bulik 'aunt'
Dangdut 'an Indian and Arabic inspired musical genre'
Dawet 'rice flour jelly in palm sugar and coconut milk syrup'
Dewandaru 'a tree with leaf similar to banyan tree'
Gusti 'god'
KTP 'ID Card'
Tape 'snack made of fermented sticky rice or cassava'
Tumpeng 'a cone shaped rice dish'
(Si)mbok 'mother'
Kang 'honorific for a young man'
Ketoprak 'a Javanese theatrical genre'
Kyai 'title for a prominent Islamic cleric'
KTP 'ID card'
Legi 'one of days of five-day cycle in Javanese calendar'
Lodeh 'jack fruit stew'
Omah Mburi 'back house'
Omah ngarep 'front house'
Nduk ' child'
Paklik 'uncle'
Pecel 'peanut and chili sauce'
Pesugihan 'ritual to seek wealth'
Pincuk 'rice snack wrapped in banana leaf'
PKI 'Indonesian Communist Party'
Tape 'snack mede of fermented cassava or rice'
Tempeh 'soya bean cake'
Tuyul 'bald-headed demon'
Rawon 'beef stew'
Rujak 'mixed fruit with a chili paste'
Wayang kulit 'shadow puppet theatre'
Yu 'older sister'