Translation for The Readers: an Analysis on The Translation of Sean Covey's *The 7Th Habits of Highly Effective TeenS*

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Abstract

A good translation should be parallel with the source text both in form and in meaning. Yet, because of the uniqueness of each language, parallel in form is often difficult to achieve. This paper attempts to analyze the translation of Sean Covey's The 7th Habits of Highly Effective Teens in terms of a sociolinguistic point of view and different types of equivalence. The analysis and discussion are based on some cases that I found. Based on the examples, two conclusions can be drawn. First, from the sociolinguistic point of view, the use of SAYA instead of AKU to refer to the author creates more distance with the readers. Second, the translator seems to have worked hard to produce a dynamic equivalence of the source text, but in some cases the idiomatic expressions are not well translated. Thus, the results of the translation do not sound as idiomatic as the source text.

Keywords: *good translation, dynamic equivalence, idiomatic expressions.*

A. INTRODUCTION

An author writes to his or her readers: a translator, therefore, is also expected to translate for the readers. The kind of relationship that the author builds with the readers should be maintained in the translation. This paper tries to analyze the translation of Sean Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* into Indonesian by Drs. Arvin Saputra. Although the translation can be considered as good in general, it seems to fail to maintain the sense of intimacy and equality that the author builds with his readers. In other words, to some extent, the Target Test (TT) fails to achieve the dynamic equivalence.

1. Social Dimension of Language Choice

Before attempting to analyze the TT further, let me first present a brief overview of sociolinguistic theory. Every time we speak, we have to make choices of what variety of language we are supposed to use. Holmes (1992) refers to four dimensions for analysis which are helpful in explaining one's choice of language or language variety.

The four social dimensions of language use are:

1. The social distance and solidarity scale: Intimate to distance; high to low solidarity
2. The status scale: superior or high status to subordinate or low status
3. The formality scale: formal or high formality to informal or low formality
4. The two functional scales :
   a. referential : High information content to low information content
   b. affective : Low affective content to high affective content.

These four dimensions are also applicable in analyzing written language. A writer's choice of language may affect the degree of intimacy with the readers. If a writer shows intimacy with the readers, it means that he or she has high solidarity

with them. In such a situation the writer will use an informal language. In this situation, the writer will lower his or her information content in order to show more affection. A writer may take the position which is superior, inferior or equal to the readers. If he or she posits himself or herself as superior to readers, automatically readers will be his or her subordinates.

In the Indonesian culture, when one uses SAYA to refer to himself, and ANDA to the second person, he creates distance with the person and he shows low solidarity with him. In this situation, the speaker will not show affective mood because it is a formal situation and he puts himself as equal to the second person. When one uses AKU to refer to himself, and KAMU to refer to the second person, the opposite happens. He shows intimacy and creates high solidarity with his partner and the situation is informal because they are in equal position. Therefore the communication carries more affective content than information content. It will be different if the speaker refers to himself as SAYA and to the second person as KAMU. In this context, the speaker's position is superior, thus, he treats the second person as a subordinate.

2. Types of equivalence

Within the issue of how TT and ST are considered equivalent, translators are familiar with the definition of translation that says translation requires equivalence both in meaning and in style. As translators, we may question further how equivalence both in meaning and in style can be achieved. We are familiar with several types of equivalence, such as grammatical, textual and pragmatic equivalence.

Basically, equivalence can be viewed at word level or above word level. While equivalence above word level focuses on textuality, equivalence at word level emphasizes the form or grammaticality. A translator should also attempt to produce a grammatical equivalence. In translation, according to Baker (1992), grammar often has the effect on forcing the translator to follow the source text as closely as possible. Thus TT would contain as close grammatical structure as possible to the ST. Baker also discusses problems concerning equivalence at word level and offers some solutions. It includes grammatical differences between ST and TT and how to overcome the gaps.

Besides knowing grammatical differences the language of the source text and that of the target text, a translator also needs to anticipate the problems that arise from socio-cultural difference between them. The problems that are related to socio-cultural aspect include the politeness formula. Translation involves the ability to express the idea of ST in a common and idiomatic expression in TT. A good translation should not only attempt to reproduce the message, but also retain the effect that ST brings to the readers.

Unlike in formal equivalence, in which TT holds it adherence to the form of ST, a dynamic equivalence attempts to preserve the values and effects of ST and present them in TT (Hatim and Munday, 2004). According to Nida (as cited in Hatim and Munday, 2004: 165), "translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expressions and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture." Thus, adherence to form is secondary to adherence to meaning. Translation equivalence, however, may fall in between the two poles of formal and dynamic equivalence.

B. DISCUSSION

In this section, focusing on the presented examples or quotations, we shall see whether the translation of Sean

Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* can be considered equivalent or not in terms of the sociolinguistic aspects and the types of equivalence. The discussion will be subdivided into two parts. The first is the translation in relation to the social dimensions of language use, and the second focuses on the translation of idiomatic expressions.

1. The Sociolinguistic Aspects of Translation

Below is the quotation from the source text. Let's observe the sociolinguistic aspects of the text.

> Welcome! My name is Sean and I wrote this book. I don't know how you got it. Maybe your mom gave it to you to shape you up. Or maybe you bought it with your own money because the title caught your eyes. Regardless of how it landed in your hands, I'm really glad it did. Now, you just need to read it.

Reading the quotation above, we can feel that we have a direct contact with the author. He seems to be very close to the readers and he treats the readers as equal to him. According to the social dimensions of language use, the author wants to be intimate with the readers and show high solidarity to them. In terms of status, the author seems to be almost equal to the readers. He is neither higher now lower in status. Using the first name only to refer to himself is an indicator that the author wants to show equality and high solidarity. Although he is older (he calls himself a retired teenager) than the assumed audience that he addresses as *you* in his book, he does not want to show his superiority. We can feel that the author tries to be egalitarian.

Reading the book, we would feel like having a close friend who is willing to share his experiences to us so that we can learn from them. The book does not sound parental and teaching. Rather, it is a kind of guide which is full of real examples from daily life of the author. As explicitly stated by the author, "This book is like a compass to help you…. In addition, unlike my dad's book, which was written for old people (and can get really boring at times), this book is written especially for teens and is always interesting (p. 4)." I myself can really enjoy reading the book.

The close relationship is also reflected through the informal language that the author uses. We can observe that the author uses contracted form, such as *don't* and *I'm* instead of *do not* and *I am,* rather than full form which is more formal.

Now, let's compare with the translation:

> Selamat datang! Nama saya Sean dan sayalah yang menulis buku ini. Saya tidak tahu bagaimana kamu mendapatkan buku ini. Mungkin ibumu yang memberikannya kepadamu, untuk membuatmu lebih baik. Atau mungkin kamu membelinya dengan uangmu sendiri karena judulnya menarik perhatianmu. Terlepas dari bagaimana buku ini jatuh ke tanganmu, saya senang demikian terjadinya. Sekarang kamu tinggal membacanya saja.

Comparing the translation with the original, we can sense a different atmosphere. The translation sounds more formal than the original it can be felt from the use of *saya* instead of *aku* to refer to the author himself. Another effect of using *saya* is that it creates distance with the readers, thus, it sounds less intimate. Besides, addressing the author as *saya* and the readers as *kamu* also presents power gap between them. The author becomes superior to the readers. They are not in equal position anymore. The more serious result is that it sounds parental and teaching, rather than sharing and helping. Through out the book, the translator translates *I* into *saya*. All these prove that the

translator seems to be unaware of the social dimensions of language use. For this reason, I attempt to translate the subject *I* into *aku* instead of *saya*, as seen in the table below.

Source Text: *Welcome! My name is Sean and I wrote this book. I don't know how you got it.*	
Saputra's Translation:	**Suggested Translation:**
Selamat datang! Nama saya Sean dan sayalah yang menulis buku ini. Saya tidak tahu bagaimana kamu mendapatkan buku ini.	*Selamat datang! Nama**ku** Sean dan **aku**lah yang menulis buku ini. **Aku** tidak tahu bagaimana kamu mendapatkan buku ini.*

In my opinion, my translation sounds more reader-friendly and intimate. More importantly, it sounds less parental and teaching.

Here is another case. In another cartoon, on page 22, there is a picture of a father who speaks to his daughter *"Ummm…. I need to go to work now, Honey."* The translation is "*Ummm... aku perlu berangkat kerja, sayang*." The translator inaccurately translates *I* as *AKU*. In our cultural point of view, it would be appropriate if it was translated into "*Hmmm… Ayah harus segera berangkat, Sayang*." Using *Aku* instead of *Ayah* pragmatically fails to show the power relation between father and daughter. According to the status scale in the Indonesian context, the relation between a father and his daughter should be described as superior to subordinate. When the translator uses *Aku*, he unintentionally lowers the status scale of the father so that their relation becomes almost equal.

2. Translation of Idiomatic Expressions

The author provides cartoons, great quotes and a lot of stories about real teens' life. Some cartoons are with speech balloons, and some others are just illustrations for the relevant page. In most cartoons with stories, the translator also translates them into Indonesian. However, there is one illustration (as seen in my 2-page translation) containing the expression *I suck at school* (p.13) which is not translated.

The subtitle on page 11 which says *What You See is What You Get* is translated into *Yang Kamu Dapatkan adalah Apa Yang Kamu Lihat*. The translation is grammatically different, even semantically they are the other way around. It is better translated into *Kamu akan Dapatkan Seperti apa yang Kamu Lihat*. The translation may not sound as idiomatic as the original, but it still conveys the same meaning.

The idiomatic expression *Starting with the Man in the Mirror* (p. 55) is an example of good translation. It is translated to *Mulailah dengan Mawas Diri*, which sounds idiomatic. However, the idiomatic phrase *Personal Bank Account* (p. 55) which is translated into *Rekening Bank Pribadi* shows literal translation which is not relevant in Indonesian cultural context. The suggested translation would be *Harta Kekayaan Pribadi* which may have literal as well as idiomatic meaning.

In the translation, it also happens that a word is not precisely translated. For example the word *setback* in the sentence "*Every time we have a setback, it's an opportunity for us to turn into a thriumph (p 56)*." The word *setback* is translated into *kemunduran*. It should be translated into *kegagalan.*

Certain idioms and proverbs may not have the equivalence in another language. Thus, it is sometimes impossible to translate an idiom or a proverb in SL into another idiom or proverb with the same meaning in TL. An example of the failure is translating idiomatic expressions can be seen in the table below.

Source Text:	
If you haven't paid the price, you may be able to get by for a while, but eventually it'll catch up to you. (p.24)	
Saputra's Translation:	**Suggested Translation:**
Kalau kamu belum membayar harganya, mungkin kamu bisa lolos untuk sementara waktu, tetapi akhirnya kamu akan terkejar.(p.47)	*Kalau pekerjaanmu dipuji padahal itu bukan hasil dari kerja kerasmu, jangan bangga dulu, karena pada akhirnya orang akan tahu bahwa itu bukan kemampuanmu yang sebenarnya.*

The idiomatic expression in English has no equivalence in Indonesian. The translator attempts to translate word for word and the result does not sound natural in Indonesian. Thus the translator fails to achive the dynamic equivalence.

In the next case is taken from page 172: *To become a genuine listener, you need to take off your shoes and stand in another's,* which is translated into *Untuk menjadi pendengar yang tulus, kamu perlu mengenyampingkan perasaanmu dan menyelami perasaan lawan bicaramu.* This case shows that the idiomatic expression is not translated to another idiomatic expression in the TT, yet it succeeds in expressing the same meaning.

C. CONCLUSIONS

There are still many other cases which show good and bad examples of translation which have not been discussed here. But in general, two conclusions can be drawn here. First, I can conclude that using SAYA instead of AKU to refer to the author is one weakness of the translation of The 7th Habits of Highly Effective Teens. It affects the whole atmosphere of the book. The readers may not realize it if they only read the Indonesian version. When they read the original, however, they will feel the difference. In my experience, reading the original is more enjoyable because I do not feel that I am being taught or preached.

Second, the idiomatic expressions are generally well translated although not all idiomatic expressions can be translated as idiomatic as the ST. This is due to the limitation of the TL itself and, partly, due to the translator's ability. Some inappropriate translations do appear but they seem not very serious. Thus, hopefully, it will not mislead the readers. In brief, although the translation can be considered as good in general, in some parts, it seems to fail to maintain the sense of intimacy and equality that the author builds with his readers. In other words, to some extent, the Target Test (TT) fails to achieve the dynamic equivalence.

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