

# Equivalence in the Translation of Joko Pinurbo's "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" into "God Came Tonight"

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## ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analysis of Joko Pinurbo's "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" translated into "God Came Tonight". In this paper, the translation of the original version is seen closely to see its equivalence strategies, referring to Nida's framework, applied to the production of the translation. The equivalence explained in the discussion covers both formal and dynamic. The discussion in the paper leads to three major conclusions, namely: (1) figurativeness in a poem can be preserved by the help of formal equivalence, (2) the type of equivalence depends on how far translators bring it to the translation, and (3) translators need to have broad knowledge to supply their work in translation, especially in that of poetry.

**Keywords:** *Joko Pinurbo, Nida's framework, formal, and dynamic equivalence.*

## INTRODUCTION

Translation of poetry has been discussed as an issue for debates as it is said to be the most difficult to do in the domain of translation. Poetry places the highest rank in the expressions of humankind (Matiu 129). According to Frost, it is due to the fact that poetry contains poetic languages seen to be linguistically bound (qtd. in Dastjerdi, et al 11). Further, it is also tricky to translate poetry, as expressive texts, because "there is often a conflict between the expressive and the aesthetic function ['truth' and 'beauty'] - "the poles of ugly literal translation and beautiful free translation" *ibid.* (Newmark 42). Although there are debates questioning the translatability of poetry, a great number of poems have been successfully translated. The form of the translation remains the same, namely, in the form of poem. This proves that "only a poem can translate a poem" (Dharwadker 139). By this viewpoint, we can sum up that poetry translation, as well as analyses of translation

of poetry, is possible to conduct, for poetry can enter the domain of translation as translatable object.

Based on the facts above, it is prominent to do analyses of poetry translation. This paper tries to present an analysis of Joko Pinurbo's poem "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini". Pinurbo is one of notable productive modern Indonesian poets whose works are subject to study in the domain of equivalence of translation. His writing style is simple because he leans to use more literal language than figurative one (Zaimar 1). Despite this fact, however, the number of his works translated can be counted easily. The translations of his works can be found in "Trouser Doll", a compilation of Pinurbo's poems translated in English by Harry Aveling and Linda Owens. In translation studies, however, Pinurbo's works are scarcely studied compared to those works by Chairil Anwar. Despite this fact, the English translation of Pinurbo's works are interesting to take into account,

and it is to this point the discussion is addressed.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

### Data Source

The data source is Joko Pinurbo's poem "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" in the source language, Indonesian, and its English version "God Came Tonight". Its original Indonesian version appears in Pinurbo's compiled poems entitled "Celana". The translated English version, "God Came Tonight" is found in "Trouser Doll", translated by Harry Aveling, an academic Australian translator whose focus is on Indonesian and Malay literature (Rampan 184). The poem talks about a person who tries to criticize God, a metaphor of the outruling New Order regime holding infinity authority and control over Indonesian mass media (Mahendra). In the New Order era, freedom of expression was strictly controlled. In the poem, Pinurbo figuratively says that the regime created a repressive situation; on the surface, it appeared to be a tool to create peace among society, yet what happened was the opposite. The repressive situation actually promoted confusion in the society. In the poem, he also tries to express that those who are "repressed" still believe and hope that God, the metaphor of the regime, was aware that what they did was wrong.

The following table shows the poem "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" in Indonesian and its translation "God Came Tonight".

#### The translation of "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" into "God Came Tonight".

	Source Language	Target Language
	<i>"Tuhan Datang Malam Ini"</i>	<i>God Came Tonight</i>
1	"Tuhan Datang Malam Ini"	God came tonight,
2	di gudang gulita yang cuma dihuni cericit tikus	to a dark warehouse, inhabited by squeaking mice
3	dan celoteh sepi.	and lonely chatter.

4	Ia datang dengan sebuah <i>headline</i> yang megah:	He came with the grand headline:
5	"Telah kubredel ketakutan dan kegemeteranmu.	"I have banned fear and uncertainty.
6	Kini bisa kaurayakan kesepian dan kesendirianmu	Now you can truly celebrate your loneliness and your
7	dengan lebih meriah."	aloneness."
8	Dengar, Tuhan melangkah lewat dengan sangat gemulai	Listen, as God passes triumphantly
9	di atas halaman-halaman hilang, rubrik-rubrik terbungkelai.	across the lost pages and unread editorials.
10	Malam menebar debar.	Night scatters restless heartbeats.
11	Di sebuah kolom yang rindang, kolom yang teduh,	In a leafy column, a calm column,
12	ia kumpulkan huruf-huruf yang cerai-berai	he gathers scattered letters
13	dan merangkainya jadi sebuah komposisi kedamaian.	and joins them into an essay on peace.
14	Namun masih juga ia cabar:	The night struggles:
15	"Kenapa ya aku masih kesepian. Seakan tak bisa tenteram	"Why am I so lonely? Why can I only find peace
16	tanpa suara-suara riuh dan kata-kata gaduh."	in noisy voices and loud quarrels?"
17	"Mungkin karena kau terlampau terikat pada makna	"Perhaps you are too attached to definitions
18	yang berkelebat sesaat," demikian	whose meanings never last."
19	seperti telah ia temukan jawaban.	This was the answer he sought.
20	Begitulah, ia hikmati malam yang cerau	Truly, he was blessed that night in the pouring rain,
21	Dan mencoba menghalau galau dan risau.	as he struggled to be free of uncertainty and doubt.
22	Dibetulkannya rambut ranggas yang menjuntai	He pushed the straggling hair
23	di atas dahi nan	back from his broad

	pasai. Dibelainya kumis kusut	forehead. He brushed his curling moustache
24	dan cabang capai yang menjalar di selingkar sangsai.	and the sideburns growing around his misery.
25	Sementara di luar hujan dan angin berkejaran	Outside, the wind and the rain chased each other,
26	menggelar konvoi kemurungan.	forming a long convoy of gloom.
27	Lalu diambilnya pena, dicelupkannya pada luka	Then he took his pen, sharpened it on his wound,
28	dan ditulisnya:	and wrote:
29	<i>Saya ini apalah Tuhan.</i>	<i>What am I, God?</i>
30	<i>Saya ini cuma jejak-jejak kaki musafir</i>	<i>I am the footprints of a wanderer</i>
31	<i>pada serial catatan pinggir;</i>	<i>across a series of commentaries in a newspaper;</i>
32	<i>sisa aroma pada seongkok beha;</i>	<i>the lingering aroma of old brassieres</i>
33	<i>dan bau kecut pada sisa cinta.</i>	<i>the smell of semen after making love.</i>
34	<i>Saya ini cuma cuwilan cemas kok Tuhan.</i>	<i>I am only a heap of worries, God.</i>
35	<i>Saya ini cuma seratus hektar halaman surat kabar</i>	<i>I am only a hundred hectares of newsprint</i>
36	<i>yang habis terbakar;</i>	<i>after a bushfire;</i>
37	<i>sekeping puisi yang terpentil</i>	<i>a discarded poem</i>
38	<i>dilabrak batalion iklan.</i>	<i>besieged by five battalions of advertising.</i>
39	Dan "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini"	And God came tonight
40	di gudang gelap, di bawah tanah, yang cuma dihuni	to a dark warehouse, underground, inhabited by
41	cericit tikus dan celoteh sepi.	squeaking mice and lonely chatter.
42	Ia datang bersama empat ribu pasukan,	He came with four thousand troops
43	Lengkap dengan borgol dan senapan.	armed with handcuffs and rifles.
44	Dengar, mereka menggedor-gedor pintu dan berseru:	Can you hear them, banging on the door and shouting:
45	"Jangan halangi kami. Jangan lari dan sembunyi.	"Don't try to stop us. Don't try to run away and hide.
46	Kami cuma orang-orang kesepian.	We are lonely too.
47	Kami ingin bergabung bersama	We just want to be with you

	Anda	
48	di sebuah kolom yang teduh, kolom yang rindang.	in a leafy column, a calm column.
49	Kami akan kumpulkan senjata	Let us gather our weapons
50	dan menyusunnya jadi sebuah komposisi keseimbangan.	and shape them into an article on fear.
51	Sesudah itu perkenankan kami sita dan kami bawa	Then, if we may, we'll confiscate all that you own,
52	semua yang Anda punya, sungguhpun	and take it away, even if it is no more
53	cuma berkas-berkas tua	than worthless trash
54	dan halaman-halaman kosong semata."	and empty pages."
55	<i>Tuhan, mereka sangat ketakutan.</i>	<i>Take their fear, Oh God,</i>
56	<i>Antarkan mereka ke sebuah rubrik yang tenang.</i>	<i>And lead them into the land of good news.</i>

### Data Collection

The data were collected by note taking. Firstly, to understand its meanings and messages, the poem in the source language "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" was read several times. Secondly, the translated version, "God Came Tonight", was read in order to (1) examine the equivalence strategies (pragmatic, dynamic and formal); (2) see the semantics and syntax as cultural and conceptual phenomena; and (3) to examine how the transfer of meanings from ST to TL is like by means of translation. While reading the poem several times, note-taking of those three major focuses is required so as to supply the analysis with the evidence.

### Data Analysis

In order to (1) see the semantics and syntactical domain playing roles in cultural and conceptual phenomena, (2) examine dynamic, and formal equivalences, and (3) examine the transfer of meanings from ST to TT through translation, Nida's views on

formal and dynamic equivalence (1964) become the basis of data analysis, supported by the analysis in terms of the semantic and syntactical parts of the expressions and the conveyance of meanings in the work.

### Nida's Views on Equivalence

Nida (1964) proposes two different types of equivalence in translation namely "formal" and "dynamic" equivalence. Both are seen from different perspectives in processing the translation. In former, a translator is able to reflect both the contents and form as genuine as possible. Those can be achieved by means of grammatical devices, words use, and the sense of terms. In this type of equivalence, Nida argues that the translator can achieve what is called as "faithful translation" if he or she can preserve the word class, paragraph structures and punctuation, both in ST and TT. Therefore, formal equivalence focuses on preserving linguistic aspects of a work so that the target audience can experience the same linguistic experiences as what is in the original text. The latter, dynamic equivalence opposes the previous type. This type of equivalence is called as the most natural translation of a work from the SL. The "naturalness" can be appraised through the receptor's language and culture, context of the message, and the target audience, viz. the TL readers.

### ANALYSIS

In terms of the occurrence of each type of equivalence, it is found out that in the TL text, there are 29 lines of the poem applying formal equivalence and 27 lines of dynamic equivalence. Out of these 29 lines, the following excerpts show how formal equivalence is employed in the TL translation.

**Table 2.1. The First Example of the Formal Equivalence**

Line	Source Language	Target Language
1	"Tuhan Datang Malam Ini",	God came tonight,

The above excerpt is taken from the first line of the first stanza. The statement *Tuhan Datang Malam Ini* is translated into *God came tonight*. It is considered to be formal equivalent due to the fact that the grammatical units are preserved. The nouns, for example, *Tuhan*, and *malam ini* are translated literally. *Tuhan* is translated into *God*. However, if we try to connect it with the underlying meaning of the word *God*, it does not mean what it literally means. The verb *datang* in the SL is translated into the past form of come, *came*. Likewise, the phrase *malam ini* is translated literally into the adverb of time *tonight*. Finally, in terms of syntactical pattern, both the SL and TL texts exhibit the same structure of SVAdv. What we can infer from the process here is that formal equivalent strategy in translating this line is sufficient in the TL; the words in the SL have their own equivalence of terminologies along with their similar functions, meaning that both words in SL and TL are in the same parts of speech. Therefore, such a process is suitable to translate such an expression.

**Table 2.2. The Second Example of the Formal Equivalence**

Line	Source Language	Target Language
11	Di sebuah kolom yang rindang, kolom yang teduh,	In a leafy column, a calm column,

Table 2.2. shows another example of the implementation of formal equivalence in the translation of "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini". In the excerpt, the expression *Di sebuah kolom yang rindang, kolom yang teduh* is translated into *In a leafy column, a calm column*. The target language expression shows that the translator preserves the structure, words, and even the punctuation from the SL to TL. In terms of structure, the construction of the phrase is kept the same in the TL because, without changes, the target audience of the translation easily understand it in the same way as what is meant in the SL. The choice of words is also

kept the same in the TL, meaning that the translator chose the words literally without converting it to other word types. It is due to the fact that, semantically, the words appearing in the expression, as seen in Table 2.2., are already equivalent with the words in the TL.

**Table 2.3. The Third Example of the Formal Equivalence**

Line	Source Language	Target Language
35	Saya ini cuma seratus hektar halaman surat kabar	I am only a hundred hectares of newsprint

The previous table shows more examples of the use of formal equivalence in the work. It is taken from line thirty-five in the third stanza. This excerpt displays another process in which every single word in the SL is translated. Semantically speaking, the word-by-word translation we can find in the above example is acceptable. The meaning in the SL and in TL does not decrease to any degree. Furthermore, the way it is translated also does not affect how the target readers perceive the expression even though it is already translated. In this excerpt, both versions, in the SL and the TL, convey the same type of figurative language, a metaphor. It indicates that the translator still maintains the sense of figurativeness in the TL by keeping the metaphorical expression in the SL and in TL intact. The maintenance of the syntactical structure, both in the SL and TL, is also noticeably evident. The syntactical structure in the SL, namely, Subject + Predicate + Object, is transferred into the same structure in the TL. This indicates that the translator tries to maintain the sense shared by the use of such syntactical pattern. To make it clearer, if it is changed into a passive voice, for example, the emphasis of the subject *I* both in the SL and TL will be affected. By putting the subject *I* in the initial position, it indicates that the subject *I* matters both in the SL and TL meanings.

After discussing about the applications of formal equivalence, the discussion on the

dynamic equivalence is presented in the following tables. The excerpts shown in the following are taken from 29 lines containing dynamic equivalence.

**Table 2.4. The First Example of the Dynamic Equivalence**

Line	Source Language	Target Language
8	Dengar, Tuhan melangkah lewat dengan sangat gemulai	Listen, as God passes triumphantly

This excerpt is taken from the eighth line of the first stanza. In this excerpt, the expression *Dengar, Tuhan melangkah lewat dengan sangat gemulai* is translated into *Listen, as God passes triumphantly*. Both the expressions in the SL and the TL contain imperatives realized by the expression *dengar* in the SL, and *listen* in the TL. As they are imperatives in both SL and TL, the idea of promoting that command is preserved. It is typical with the idea of formal equivalence. However, if we pay attention closely to the expression *melangkah lewat dengan sangat gemulai* in the SL which is translated into *passes triumphantly*, it is noticeable that there exists the phrase *sangat gemulai*. The translator chooses the adverb *triumphantly* rather than choosing the literal translation of *gemulai*, which is *supple* in the TL.

If the phenomenon is related to the culture of the target readers of the English translation, the concept of *gemulai* differs from that in the SL, Indonesian. In KBBI, the word *gemulai* means to move our body parts gently. To describe the character *God*, the notion of moving the body gently is not appropriate with the concept of *God* shared commonly as *God* is always related to greatness and power. Therefore, what the translator did to make it more natural to the target readers is that he changed the word *gemulai* to the adverb *triumphantly* which actually contradicts the concept shared in the SL. It is done to make the target readers get notion on how powerful metaphorical *God* is, thus, in an extent, it reinforces the

mood in the overall poem. This phenomenon reflects the fundamental of translation that finding appropriate unit of translation requires higher level, not just in word-to-word level (Dharwadker 137).

**Table 2.5. The Second Example of the Dynamic Equivalence**

Line	Source Language	Target Language
24	dan cabang capai yang menjalar di selingkar sangsai.	and the sideburns growing around his misery.

Here is another example of dynamic equivalence employed in the work. The equivalence marker can be noticed in the presence of the word *menjalar* in the SL which is translated into *growing* in the TL. The Indonesian word *menjalar* refers to a process portraying growth affecting the neighboring things of the thing undergoing the process. The context shared by the word *menjalar* is specific; however, in the TL, the word *menjalar* is translated into *growing*. The word *growing* is too general in the source language. However, in English, there is no other choice being equivalent to the word *menjalar*. Thus, in the TL, the word *menjalar* is semantically “reduced”, in the extent that *menjalar* has specific meaning while *growing* is rather general. Due to this phenomenon, it is clear that when dealing with dynamic equivalent translation, the translators need to deal with the context of both SL and TL. In other words, dynamic equivalence is more “context-bound” (Hatim and Munday 44).

**Table 2.6. The Third Example of the Dynamic Equivalence**

Line	Source Language	Target Language
32	sisa aroma pada seonggok beha;	the lingering aroma of old brassieres

The above table shows the last example presented in the discussion. In the excerpt, the whole expression *in the lingering aroma of old brassieres* contains markers of the dynamic equivalence. It starts with the

phrase *sisa aroma* in the SL. The phrase is not translated literally, but by way of finding an equal term that describes the phrase *sisa aroma*. If the phrase is translated literally, the phrase will be *the remaining aroma*. The word *remaining* is replaced by the word *lingering* which emphasizes more on the time when the aroma will last. The lexical choice shown in the phenomena creates clearer mental representation of the referred idea in the target readers’ minds. It affects how the target readers convey meaning of the line for they have clearer depiction of the idea. In the expression, there is found the phrase *seonggok beha*. The phrase *seonggok beha*, literally, merely refers to a pile of bras. However, in the translation, *seonggok beha* is translated into *old brassiers*. It is done on purpose due to the fact that the added word *old* preceding *brassiers* exaggerates the sense of the aroma mentioned earlier in the phrase. It is also used to help English target readers who happen not to be familiar with the concept of the aroma. By such adjustment, adding the word *old*, the emphasis on the negative smell increases. To sum up, the excerpt contains dynamic equivalence due to the fact that, semantically, the translation shifts the meaning and exaggerates the meaning shared by the idea in the SL.

## CONCLUSION

The discussion shows how translating poetry is not a simple thing to do. A translator must be able to determine which strategy, in this case determining the equivalence strategy based on Nida’s framework on formal and dynamic equivalence. This paper has discussed the issue of equivalence in Joko Pinurbo’s “Tuhan Datang Malam Ini” which is translated into “God Came Tonight”. From the analyses, it is found out that there are 56 lines in the poem in which 29 lines employ formal equivalence, while the other 27 apply dynamic equivalence. In each type of equivalence, semantic and syntactical points are included to explain the process of the equivalence.

Further, in the discussion on Joko Pinurbo's "Tuhan Datang Malam Ini" translation, we can point out or infer three prominent things, namely (1) a translator can keep the expressions of the text translated by the help of formal equivalence as formal equivalence can help him or her preserve the figurativeness; (because the ST uses metaphorical expressions elaborating terminologies that are shared by both the SL and TL); (2) equivalence in the target text mainly depends on how far the translation should be brought, meaning to what degree the shifts are sufficient to produce a readable translation; and (3) the translators' knowledge must cover the subjects of the texts translated. Otherwise, he or she will find difficulties in determining which type of strategy, in this case equivalence, to apply in the product of his or her translation.

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