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# ATTEMPTS TO RETAIN THE IDENTITIES IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF AHMAD TOHARI'S "SENYUM KARYAMIN"

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## Abstract

In its function as a bridge to help people of different languages understand each other, translation seems to encounter more and more challenges. Although it looks like an innocent job, translation is an overly complex undertaking, and sometimes dangerous. It is fully charged with interest in any step of its process. Identity, especially nowadays, has come at center stage in the discussion about culture. People with different identities will get annoyed when they receive treatment, or sometimes harassment, from the majority. A translation that should have a noble objective, i.e. bridging the gap between people, now has its obstacle. Identity loss in translation, however, inevitably happens. Some identity items of source text can be expressed aptly into the target text, and some others may lose during the process of translation. Such a phenomenon is rather common in translation, particularly when the translators are unable to apply the right strategy to minimize such loss. This paper tries to look at cultural loss in the English translation of Tohari's short story "Senyum Karyamin" which was translated into "Karyamin's Smile". It is found that the translator's inability to render cultural contents into English indicates the tendency to take readily available terms, which eventually oversimplifies the translation and loses the cultural identity inherent in the source text.

**Keywords:** *culture, identity, the translation process*

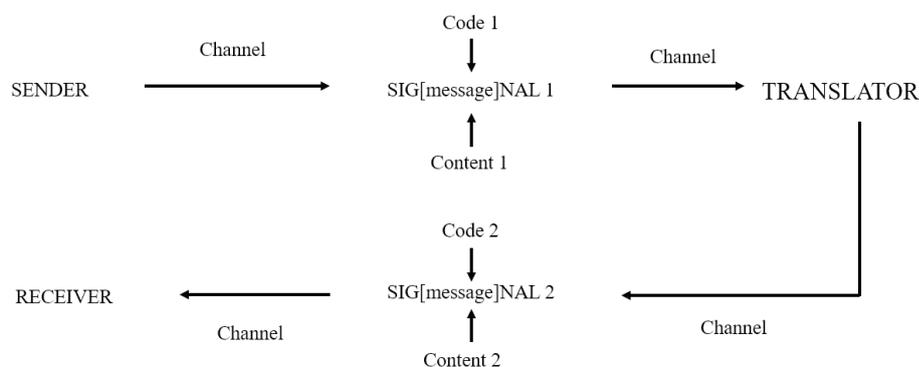
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## INTRODUCTION

Translation is done to bridge the differences not only in language but also in culture. This activity, although it looks simple, is actually complex and requires competencies, including declarative competence and procedural competence (PACTE, 2003). Declarative competence is competence related to knowledge of the translation itself (*know what*), while procedural competence

is knowledge of how to execute translation activities (*know-how*). With the mastery of at least these two competencies, it is hoped that the results of the translation carried out by the translator do not deviate too much from the source text (ST) (2003, pp. 43-44). The position of a translator is described by Bell (1991, p. 19) as very vital in bilingual communication activities as follows:

**Chart 1**  
**The role of translators in bilingual communication**



From the diagram, it can be seen that the translator is the receiver of signal 1 containing message/content 1 in code 1 which is conveyed through certain channels from the sender of the message. The translator must be able to interpret the signal and then convert it into signal 2 which contains message/content 2 through a certain channel so that the recipient can understand the message.

Crucially the role of the translator will affect the translation it produces. The translator's failure to capture the message content correctly in the source language (SL) of the sender will result in an error in translating it into the target language (SL) for the recipient of the message. One of these errors can cause "loss of identity" in the SL.

According to Cronin (2006), identity is "one of the most critical policies and cultural concerns of our day". Translation and identity explore how translation has played a critical role in influencing past and current discussions regarding identity, language, and cultural sustainability." in influencing past and present discussions of identity, language, and cultural continuity (translated).

This identity issue is emerging today, just as Naisbitt has long predicted (1982) in his book *Megatrends which mentions the existence of a global paradox* phenomenon, namely that the more globalized the world

is, the more people will hold on to their identity more firmly because that identity marks their existence.

Translation as a tool that unites two different languages (and cultures) has a role in eroding the identity of a less dominant language. The hegemony of the dominant language, although it may not be realized by the translator, will play in the translation process. As Niranjana said (Niranjana, 1992), "Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism." (Translation as a level of practice forms, and takes the form, asymmetrical power relations under colonialism -translated). According to Niranjana, these asymmetric power relations will result in 'one-sided' translations, meaning that the dominant language eliminates or eliminates (or replaces) cultural-related terms that they 'consider' have no effect on the overall content of the text.

Moreover, this practice in the world of translation is considered normal because the target audience is the main focus. *Skopos* theory which puts the client above everything only makes the translator 'subject' to the will of the master (in this case the language and the dominant target reader). In his book *Translation as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist*

*Approaches Explained*, Nord explains (1997) *the master-servant* relation to describe the translator's position towards his client. According to him, the translation must follow the client's orders if he wants the translation to be successful. Therefore, the omission of identity in a translation, at the request of the client, is justified as long as it does not change the entire content of a text.

This paper discusses the loss of identity of cultural-related terms in Ahmad Tohari's short story "Senyum Karyamin" (1989) which was translated by Rosemary Kesaulu and published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama (2015). By identifying the loss of identity in translation work, it is hoped that theoretically, it will be useful for the translator to 'negotiate' with the client to find the best way to maintain the spirit of the translation without breaking the agreed contract. In addition, theoretically, this paper is expected to enrich the treasures of translation research, especially in the field of translating literary works.

## METHOD OF THE STUDY

This research is qualitative which, according to George (2008), describes a form of research whose results are expressed in words, pictures, or non-numeric symbols (p.

7). The research method used is the listen and note method which compares the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) to be further described in an explicatory way, which is to analyze carefully and focus on the object of research to understand one or more aspects being studied (p. 6).

The data was collected by identifying the terms related to culture in the Indonesian short story "Senyum Karyamin" and then looking for the translation in the English short story "Karyamin's Smile". It was found that there were 9 (nine) data on culturally related terms based on the Newmark category (1988). The eleven source text (ST) and target text (TT) data were then compared and analyzed for their semantic meanings using the Big Indonesian Dictionary 5th Edition and the (2021) online (2021) *Merriam - Webster* dictionary.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By using the Newmark category (1988) which divides terms related to culture into five categories, namely ecology, material culture, behavior and habits, social organization, and social culture, the research data is obtained as listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
**Terms related to culture in the short story 'Senyum Karyamin'**

No.	Terms	Translation	Category
1.	gerumbul	cluster	Ecology
2.	bangsat	goddamit	Behaviour and Custom
3.	petugas bank harian	bank officers	Social organization
4.	kupon buntut	the lottery	Social culture
5.	uang iuran	donation	Social culture
6.	sepeda jengki	large bike	Material culture
7.	nasi pecel	rice and peanut salad	Material culture
8.	kampret	bat	Material culture
9.	kopiah	rimless cap	Material culture

Table 1 above shows that the most common categories are material culture (44%), followed by social culture (23%), followed by ecology, behavior and habits, as well as a social organization with 11% each.

The discussion is carried out based on the categorization of terms, in order based on the number of data as listed in Table 1.

### **Ecology category**

The term "gerumbul" which is translated into English *clusters* raises the phenomenon of the loss of identity of the term locus. In the source text it is written, "In this group you are the only one who has not participated", which indicates the location of the main character of the story. The entry "gerumbul" is not found in KBBI V, but from other sources, it is defined as "a collection, grouped in one place". However, from the short story "Senyum Karyamin", by looking at the context of the story, the word "gerumbul" itself means the location where the main character (Karyamin) lives, which is in the midst of trees and plants that are not taken care of, which connotes Karyamin's social status as a person who not be.

The translation of "gerumbul" into *clusters* eliminates the identity of the location where Karyamin lives that is neglected and filled with wild plants, as shown in the Target text as follows, "In this cluster, you're the only one who hasn't participated.". The word *cluster* in Webster's dictionary means 'a group of buildings that are built side by side to save public space that can be used for recreation.' The identity of the location of a group of buildings located between trees and wild plants is lost in the Target text "Senyum Karyamin."

### **Categories of behavior and habits**

Swearing expressions such as "bastard" have a strong meaning and also show identity. The swear word "bastard" means "a

person who is evil, greedy, poor" and the other meaning is the name of the animal that is "kepinding, rotten lice" (*Cimex lectularius*). In Indonesian culture, swearing usually refers to animals such as "dogs, buffaloes, pigs" to express resentment or anger. Meanwhile, *goddamit* is an informal swear word that has not yet entered Webster's dictionary but can be found in the *Urban Dictionary* (2021) which means an expression of annoyance because something happened beyond the will of the speaker.

If we look at the context of the use of the phrase "bitch" in the short story "Senyum Karyamin" the main character throws up when he slips because of a bird flying near his eyes so that he loses his balance. In Target text the expression "asshole" is translated as *goddamit* which expresses annoyance at slipping. Here, the identity of the troublemaker is seen, namely the bird that almost hit Karyamin whom he cursed with the phrase "asshole", while in translation the cursed *goddamit* do not curse something but is an expression of irritation because something is not going according to plan.

### **Category of social organization**

In the translation of terms related to culture in the category of social organization, there is one interesting term, namely "daily bank" or in Javanese it is called *bank plecit*, a bank that provides loans to small traders or day laborers in installments on a daily basis. This practice of *plecit banking* is often found in rural or urban communities that do not have access to formal banks. Such banks apply higher bank interest than formal banks and will usually ensnare their borrowers with coercive measures if they fail to repay them regularly.

When translated into English *bank officers*, disappear all the identities attached to the "daily bank" or *bank plecit*: rural, poverty,

loss of access to formal banks, rent, daily installments, and so on.

### Social culture category

Two data were found in this category, namely "tail coupons" and "contribution fees". These two terms have very strong nuances with the life of the lower class in Indonesia. In the early days of the New Order, 'coupon tail' was the term used by these community groups to support the national lottery called SDSB or Porkas. "Coupon tail" dealers were scattered at that time by providing the last numbers that were issued in the national lottery that was issued at that time.

This "tail coupon" is the last hope for the community to get good luck so they can escape their poverty. The meaning attached to the term "coupon tail" is lost when it is translated into *the lottery*, a subordinate term that generalizes this practice.

### Material culture category

This category is most commonly found in the short story "Senyum Karyamin", namely "Jengki bicycle", "dues", "kampret", and "kopian". The meaning attached to these

terms when translated into *a large bicycle, rice and peanut salad, bat, and rimless cap*, as we might expect, is lost. The meaning that becomes the identity or marker of these terms cannot be found in the English translation.

"Sepeda jengki" which is translated as a *large bicycle* loses its hybrid meaning as a bicycle that is manufactured to moderate between "sepeda lanang" (men's bicycle) and "sepeda wedok" (women's bicycle). At that time, the "jengki bike" was created to overcome the problem of gender differences in these vehicles. "Sepeda lanang", for example, is large and difficult to ride because there is an iron rod that runs between the steering wheel and the saddle (see Figure 1), while the "sepeda wedok", with their large size (see Figure 1), is also difficult for most people to ride. Therefore, the product development team at that time invented the "jengki bike" which bridged the difficulties of using the two bicycles on the market at that time. With its slim shape, and lightweight (and of course also being cheaper because it is made of more efficient materials), *jengki bikes* are popular with people with low incomes (see Figure 1).

Image 1 Male's bike, female's bike, jengki bike



The translation of *large bicycle* for "jengki bike" destroys all imaginable images in the Source Text

Likewise with "nasi pecel" which is translated as *rice and peanut salad*, and two other terms. The loss of the inherent identity and marks for the context inherent in these terms is not fully conveyed in the target text.

### CONCLUSION

The results show that the translation of cultural-related terms contained in the short story "Senyum Karyamin" by Ahmad Tohari shows the phenomenon of the loss of identity inherent in these terms. The English target text cannot maintain the identity that animates the source text so that the translation loses its 'spirit'.

This phenomenon can be prevented by a translation which emphasizes more on the

source text and tries to avoid the pressure of the domination of the target language. The way to be able to maintain the identity inherent in the source text is to use an annotation or glossary approach or strategy.

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