Exploring Variation and Dispositional Choice in Translation

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ABSTRACT

Thing that has always been a primary concern in translation studies is the accurate ‘analyticity’ of the ST and its translational ‘equivalence’ in the TT by ‘exploration of contextual ‘translation’ variables [EC(T)V]’ and ‘creativity’ to make the translation accurate, clear, readable, and ‘equivalently’ experiential. This underscores the creativity and comprehensive knowledge of the translators in exploring their right and duty to provide holistic (form-function-meaning-experience integrated) translation products of various types for a wider audience that are also valid and reliable with high quality. In the case of literary translation, particularly poet, translators may be met with artifacts of the author’s creativity in the form of interesting or unusual phrases, examples, expressions, linguistic or stylistic devices (in addition to thematic development) that make the text highly unique. Here translators have the opportunity to be truly creative to capture that uniqueness of the ST; but at the same time, their translation is constrained and qualified by their dispositional knowledge of the ST and TT languages and various facets of translation theory and practice. Empirical research to test how such dispositional knowledge constrains, qualifies, and chooses different translation processes has not been undertaken so far – as far as I know. Hence, in this study, such an attempt has been made to test how dispositional knowledge affects translation of an English passage into Indonesian. Five Indonesian bachelor degree students from the Osmania University have been chosen for this pilot study to find out how their dispositional translation choices bring about variation and affect the translation process as well as the product and its experience. The findings of this study show that the translator’s preferences, knowledge and skills decide not only 1. the choice of words, sentence patterns, and overall meaning in the TT but also 2. the process as well as the product of translation; and 3. routine translation of the source texts is not always desirable and that creative choices are needed by translators to maximize ‘Optimum Translation Features’ and make the translation effective. Karmik Linguistic (Translation) Theory is used as the model for conducting this experiment.

KEYWORDS: Translation variation, dispositional choice, KLT, Optimum Translation Features
Translation is a very difficult task that can be very challenging for every translator, since languages may differ with variations in lexical terms, rules and patterns of syntax as well as semantic-pragmatic-ka:rma:tic meanings (Bhuvaneswar, 2015). It is neither a new discipline nor a new activity in linguistics field. It has a very long story to come up into some debated researches. Some of researchers tried to dig the hole of translation studies in the subject of translation quality assessment (Nababan, 2004), translation competence (Angelelli, 2009), translation techniques (Molina and Albir, 2002), machine translation (Arnold, 2001), translation strategies (Schjoldager, 2008), measuring translation in many types of texts like medical text, law, scientific, religious, to the very highly technology-used like audio visual translation and still many others. All these researches have proved their deep analysis in the implication of the translation studies.

Another significant and controversial issue that cannot be ignored in translation studies is equivalence, and many different theories of the concept of equivalence have been elaborated within this field in the past sixty years. The comparison of texts in different languages also inevitably involves a theory of equivalence. Nida and Taber (2003) introduced two terms of equivalence: 1) formal equivalence that focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content, adherence to the SL text as closely as possible in terms of language and structure and also that the TL text would be constantly compared to the SL for accuracy 2) dynamic equivalence. Then in later years, Nida distanced himself from the term "dynamic equivalence" and preferred the term "functional equivalence" that is based upon “the principle of equivalent effect” and it was emphasized on the “dynamic relationship” between message and receptor, and care is taken that “the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the
message. Later on Bhuvaneswar (2015) introduced the term ‘\textit{ka:rmik equivalence}’ to capture the experientially pragmatic (ka:rmatic) effect in translation that is heavily underscored by the translator’s [traits-knowledge-habits] base called disposition by him.

Bhuvaneswar’s stress on the need for ka:rmik equivalence is supported by the empirical data that even though translators translate the same source text from L1 to L2, the produced documents vary, primarily due to individual differences, including genders, translators’ L1 and L2 aptitudes, L1 and L2 proficiencies, cultural backgrounds or learning styles. The same text can have several different translations due to the fact that translators like any other authors use creativity while translating. There is always a certain degree of variation depending on the way somebody uses language, the way of looking at the world and many other such variables that affect the so called originality of the text. Therefore the resultant translated text is somewhat different from the original text. With these differences, how do second language translators negotiate the given texts? How do they choose words appropriate for the texts? Ultimately, what factors determine their translation? In order to answer this question, the present project would examine the differences in variation and choice among Indonesian students when translating English into Indonesia based on ka:rmik linguistics perspective.

\textbf{LITERATURE REVIEW}

Translation studies have been outlined since Holmes’ (1972) paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” introduced and presented. It has been emerged since then as a discipline study in linguistics and translation scholars have sought to go beyond the translation studies in order to establish a more systematic and methodical approach to study translation problem and phenomena. While this has
certainly been pivotal in making translation studies the rich and complex field it is
today. Since it was born, translation is defined as a mental activity in which a meaning
of a given linguistic discourse is rendered from one language to another. It is the act
of transferring the linguistic entities from one language into their equivalents into
another language. Translation is an act through which the content of a text is
transferred from the source language into the target language.

Due to its prominence, translation has been viewed and defined differently by
some scholars. According to Nida and Taber (1969) it typically has been used to
transfer written or spoken source language texts to equivalent written or spoken target
language texts. Generally, the purpose of translation is to produce various kinds of
texts from a language into another language. The translator needs to have good
knowledge of both the source and the target language, in addition to a high linguistic
sensitivity as he should transmit the writers’ intentions, original thoughts and opinions
in the translated version as precisely and as faithfully as possible. In their definition
Nida and Taber focused on the meaning that should be rendered from source language o
the target language and they do not differentiate between written and spoken,
meanwhile in today era these two skills are differentiate as translation and
interpretation.

Next, Larson (1984:3) defines larger about translation, that translation is the
process studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and
cultural context of the source language, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning,
then reconstructing the same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure
which appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context. Here, the translator
seeks lexical equivalents between source language and the target language. This
definition shows that translation is a process in the sense that is an activity performed
by people through time, when expressions are translated into simpler ones in the same language (rewording and paraphrasing). It can be done also from one language into another different language. Larson definition tends to stress on the how translation conducting and what aspect should be considered in translating source text to the target text.

Another expert, Bell (1991:3) explains that translation is the replacement of representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language. Additionally three key issues in translation the problem of equivalent between source and target language in semantic or stylistic characteristic, the nation of the rule, and the need to recognize of the differences translation as process, product and concept. Here he says that different language text can be equivalent in different levels either fully or partially equivalent, in respect of different level of representation context, semantic, grammar, lexis, etc and at different rank word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, sentence-for-sentence. When consider about communicative value, a translator has the option on finding formal equivalents or functional equivalents (Bell, 1991:7) formal equivalent preserve the context-free semantic sense of the finding text at the expense of its context-sensitive communicative value. Functional equivalents preserve the context-sensitive communicative value of the text at the expense of its context-free sense.

Arabic expert, Ghazala (1995),"translation is generally used to refer to all the processes and methods used to convey the meaning of the source language into the target language" (P.1). Ghazala's definition focuses on the notion of meaning as an essential element in translation. That is, when translating, understanding the meaning of the source text is vital to have the appropriate equivalent in the target text. Thus, it is meaning that is translated in relation to grammar, style and sounds (Ghazala, 1995).
Thus, Catford in Hatim (2001) explained that translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). (P.20). Catford’s definition was still blurring because he could not explain what kind of equivalence in that textual material. For example if we translate 50 pages of text means that it must be equivalence the translation product must be 50 pages too, whereas the content of translated text does not represent the same occurrences of the target text, neither in linguistics aspect nor in the extralinguistics aspect.

Furthermore, Hatim and Munday (2004:3) define translation from two different perspectives. First as a process, translation is an act of taking a text from one language and transforming it into another. In this sense, Hatim and Munday focus on the part of the translator. Second as a product, translation focuses on the results achieved by the translator, the concrete product of translation.

Then, Bassnett (2005:13) examined that translation involves 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 structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted.

Finally, Bhuvaneswar (2015) emphasized that translation is a dispositional, causal transformation of one medium by the technique of superimposition of its ka:rmik equivalence (which is semantic, pragmatic, and contextually experiential equivalence) into another medium as the product by an I-I-I (interconnected-interrelated-interdependent) process. Here, he noted three important keys of translation: 1. that translation is dispositional transformation which implies changes by translator’s choice; 2. superimposition which underlies the seeing of one as another
by conscious and/or erroneous cognition through knowledge; and 3. the art (skill) of transformation of ST into TT.

Thus, “the focus is in the experience of translation via I-I-led form-function-meaning to create the same ST experience by an equivalent experience in the TT which is (w)holistic. Therefore, translation is not the mere transfer of words or syntactic patterns or literal meaning from one language to another language in a formal assembly where total equivalence is a mirage; it is also not the mere expression of functional equivalence by giving primacy to functional appeal over formal and even semantic appeal where the distortion of the form (and meaning) will lead to the distortion of the text as a whole and its further reception; but it is a holistic experience of the integrated network of (form-function-meaning-style-context and its choice) as a cooked dish (product) with its distinct flavor, taste and look that is beyond the sum of the ingredients (parts) and the process of cooking. Here the whole is beyond the sum of the parts with or without being equal or more or less than the sum of the parts” (Bhuvaneswar 2009). Since disposition as the cause decides the process and the product, translation theory and practice should be dispositionalized in toto. This is because languages are not just different words, but also different grammar, different word orders, sometimes even words for which other languages do not have any equivalent in other languages and because their choice decides the output.

Moreover it also involves the substitution of message from the source language to the target language without changing the original meaning. There is substitution of TL meanings for SL meanings: not transference of TL meanings into the SL by concerning some points. The substitution can be categorized as: literary, linguistic, and the cultural. Then, every substituted message must be expressed in the Target Language so the reader can get not only the meaning but also the style of the language
and its equivalent experience. The translator should have deep understanding of the ideas expressed by the author in the text. It is an attempt of finding the good ways to express ideas in source language with appropriate language in target text.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

Participants of this study were five Indonesian students whose majors B.A and B.com in Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. All participants had similar educational backgrounds in English language learning when they were in senior high school in Indonesia. They did not have any working experiences relevant to translation, but they were assumed to have ability to translate English passage into Indonesian since they have learnt English more than 10 years and there was literature paper in their course which included poet analysis in the subject.

Data Collection

Data were collected from all participants after they were given a source text which they were asked to translate from L1 (English) into L2 (Indonesia). The source text was chosen from one of the best known poems by the internationally acclaimed Indian English poet ‘Hunger’ written by Jayanta Mahapatra which the participants have learnt and analyzed in the course. The poet explores the informal child sex trade lurking in the social fabric, and is unique in its bold treatment of sexuality which emphasized in feminism. In doing their translation, the participants were allowed to use everything they needed, such as electronic and online dictionaries, laptop, etc. In addition, time spent on a series of translation procedures was measured. After that the translation product of the participant was analyzed in relation to its variation and dispositional choices of the translator based on KLT.
Next, in order to assess participants’ translation process, a questionnaire was administered soon after the participants finished translating the source text to the target text. The questionnaire has been made as the reflection on their process, strategy, word choice, and approach to the translation. Finally, based on both the translated texts and the questionnaire, an interview was conducted to understand more about the problems they encountered and the difficulties they had to translate poet from English into Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the data were gathered from the participants, the analysis was started by focusing on the individual difference of the translation product by raising two critical questions why and how it was translated reflecting from kaːrmic linguistics theory. Data were analyzed quantitatively to explore the difference in translation processes, strategy used and the relationship between their word choices and their translation to see what variations exposed in their translation. These variations were seen based on the variation of lexical choice level, meaning level as a (w)holistic bonded and in the level of figure of speech.

Let us come to the some analysis of one stanza of the poem:

Original poem

**Hunger**

It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back.

The fisherman said: Will you have her, carelessly,

trailing his nets and his nerves, as though his words

sanctified the purpose with which he faced himself.

I saw his white bone thrash his eyes.
Translation Product

Student A

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Sangat sulit dipercaya terasa berat di punggung saya

Nelayan itu berkata “Maukah kamu memiliki dia, dengan hati hati”

Menyusuri jala dan rasa tegangnya, sambil berpikir kata katanya

Menyucikan tujuannya dengan yang dia alami sendiri


Student B

Kelaparan

Sangat sulit dipercaya daging ini terasa berat di bagian belakang ku

Seorang nelayan berkata: maukah kamu mengambilnya, dengan ceroboh,

Menyeret jala dan urat syaraf nya, meskipun kata kata ia

Menyucikan tujuan yang ia hadapi sendiri.

Aku melihat tulang putihnya memukul mata.


Student C

Kelaparan

Itu sulit untuk percaya daging berat di punggung saya.

Nelayan mengatakan: Apakah Anda memiliki dia, dengan gelisahnya,

Menyeret jaring dan terburu-buru, ucapnya

Dikuduskan tujuan yang ia hadapi sendiri.

Saya melihat tulang putih menebah matanya.
Student D

**Rasa Lapar**

Tak dapat dipercaya, tubuh kasar ini sangat berat ku pikul

Nelayan berkata: Akankah kamu memilikinya, dengan hati-hati

Menyeret jalanya dan kegelisahannya ucapnya yang

Mengisyaratkan tujuan yang ia hadapi sendiri

Aku melihat tulang putih menggasak matanya

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Student E

**Kelaparan**

Tidak dapat dipercaya, daging berasa berat di pundakku

Nelayanpun berkata: Maukah kau memilikinya, dengan cerobohnya

Menyeret jaring dengan kegelisahnya, ucapnya yang

Mengisyaratkan tujuan yang suci yang mana ia sedang hadapi sendiri

Dapat ku lihat tulang putihnya menebah matanya

Translating poetry, perhaps, can be considered as one of difficult tasks to do compared to other type of texts because of its richness of style of language linguistically and extra-linguistically. In a poem, the beauty is not only achieved with the choice of words and figurative language used by the writer like in novels and short stories, but also with the creation of rhythm, rhyme, meter, and specific expressions and structures that may not conform to the ones of the daily language. Frankly speaking, the translation of poetry needs more effort than translating other genres of literature in two distinctive criteria; linguistics problem and aesthetic problem. The linguistic problems include the collocation and obscured syntactic structure which can be focused on lexical choice by the translator, while the aesthetic and literary problems
are related with poetic structure, metaphorical expressions, and sounds that can be shaped in analyzing its meaning and figure of speech according to Newmark (1981).

In this study, each Indonesian student seemed not only facing these two problems linguistically and aesthetically but also missed the poetic meaning which tried to be exposed by the poet. For example, they translated the title of the poem literally into “kelaparan” or “rasa lapar” unfortunately if they dig the meaning of the title deeply, there was another meaning which tried to be informed by the poet. The word “hunger” has different meaning as hunger by food or hunger by another else. In the case of this poet hunger meant by the poet was about hunger for sexual gratification. Even, in the case student A for instance, he did not give any translation for the title of the poem. The title of the poem itself gives the image of something that is valuable and dear to the poet. This action obviously makes the translation not effective and not faithful.

In the term of poem content, there were still some variations in the choice of words that put by the students as the matter of the different of some reference, knowledge, and skill of the translator. For example in the first line of the poem the word “flesh” was translated into two terms among these five students as “tubuh kasar” and “daging”. The students who choose “daging” translate it directly as what dictionary gave to them as they said in the interview and the students who choose “tubuh kasar” tried to exposure the real meaning of the word. In fact, flesh in this poem might refer to the fact that the man seems like he is holding a huge burden of something inexplicable and it is better to drop off the load.

In the second line, the word “carelessly” was also translated differently. Student A and D translated it into “hati-hati” and for sure it was totally wrong choice of word. The truth meaning of the word is “ceroboh, sembrono, sembarangan, tanpa
tanggung jawab” like what was choose by student B and E. The word ‘carelessly’ might point to ‘callously’, and to the fact that he did not put the question across with a sense of propriety. “Will you have her?” was the question as though the girl in question was an item or commodity. Her individuality was relegated, and what she wanted was not of significance. Further the same error also occurred in the third, fourth, and fifth line as can be seen in the translation product by all students compared to the original one. A few participants mentioned that intuition determined word choices, the student C tried to translate the source text using the literal meaning of each word. On the other hand, the student B, D, and E attempted to do so within their knowledge which they had already gained through their experience of studying poetry in their class, and arrange the source text to be most appropriate for Indonesian expressions. Even when English word they chose did not have exactly the same meaning as Indonesia word, they regarded their translation as being fine because the translated sentence made sense in the given context. In other words, participants were doing dispositional choice of words appropriate for the text which needs to be translated.

So, there are variation in the style and choice of words in each translated sentence. This changes the emphasis, but the core message is the same. Consequently, their word choices varied depending on how difficult were the words used in the source text. For easier and more familiar words, all the participants could choose intuitively, so that they didn't need much time to think about their word choices, nor did they encounter any problems. In contrast, once they encountered difficult or unfamiliar expressions in the source text, they first guessed what word could be the most appropriate for the context and then checked whether the word fit into the sentence.

Further, in the case of translation process each of them inclined to use fundamentally the same process like the following: reading through the source text
carefully; identifying the difficult word; interpreting the content of the source text; thinking about what each sentence means; translating each sentence; and finally, checking and revising the translated sentences. However, the translation approach and the strategy used, including the use of dictionaries, vary depending on students. In addition, each student tended to choose different L2 words in several stanzas that lead it to different translation product.

These results are related to the research questions, how they negotiate with the given text, how they choose appropriate words, and what factor determines their translation. The act of translation is affected by various factors, but one of the most important ones is 'experience'. Experience here by meant of ka:rmic linguistics theory in translation studies is the experiential equivalent. It affects both process and product in translating. The less experience translators have the more directional and word-associated translation they produce, it indicated them to translate it literally without paying attention to the poetic meaning. While the more experience they have, the more natural meaning they can generate. Overall, individual differences in translation come from experience and it leads to choice made by translator in translating poetry that gives many variations due to different preferences, knowledge and skills.

Other crucial finding in this study is that, all 5 participants are inclined to use their own approaches in translating. Each participant's translation process was a distinct process, different from that of the others. Furthermore, each translator’s product was also slightly different in the term of their choice of word or lexis, syntactical, and sometimes gave different meaning with the original text. Each translator has his or her own individual traits that uniquely affect his or her behavior in the act of translating. When translators translate the same source text from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), their produced translations differ from one
another. These differences occur due to the dispositional choice made by the translators as the implication of variation of process and product of the translation.

The result of this study cannot be generalized or claimed as the final result of exploring variation and choice in translation especially poetry translation because there are some limitations in this study. First of all, the number of poem stanza was limited into first stanza only, due to the limited time in analyzing it. In fact, the more stanzas being analyzed, the more variation of choices could be defined and explored. Secondly, participants was small that there were only 5 students participated. For that reason, it is difficult to generalize these findings to other contexts. Thirdly, this study focused only on the translation from L2 (English) to L1 (Indonesia), but the opposite process which refers to the translation from L1 (Indonesia) to L2 (English) was not researched. From this viewpoint, the study just reported on one side of the act of translating. Hence, further research in the two viewpoints as a comparison would provide valid outcome.

CONCLUSION

Translation is more like a process of transcreation where recreating the original text occurs. It involves creativity, but it is highly restricted by what is in the source. The focus of translation studies should be the process of translation, analyzing the choice from myriad of possibilities that a translator makes. Once initial choices are made, the translation begins to generate rules of its own determining further choice which can be subjective decisions and accidents and those choices are made with certain cost. A good translator has to find creative ways of getting the original authors intentions across. In general, it is an art and we can never talk about “perfect translation”, as there is no such thing. When it comes to poetry, it is even more so
because of its genre. Hence, the translation of poetry is possible only though the process of transcreation.

In poetry, the translator cannot do justice to the text if she/he goes for literal translation. The factor of translatability poses many problems at different level. Here, then the translator has to make choices at linguistics and extralinguistics levels. At linguistics level, he/she has to be careful about the phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactical, and semantic aspect of both languages and has to pay attention to denotative and connotative meaning as well. At the extralinguistics level, there is a demand for matching the cultural, geographical and historical concept of two languages. This creates major hindrance as languages deeply rooted in their respective culture. These choices made by the translator will lead to the variation when the source text is translated by many translators. Furthermore, the poetry translation is not mechanical, but creative and dynamic act because it consists of ambiguity, so we have to set very deeply in meaning. Finally, it is suggested that the translator of the poem should not only best in translation but also in literary criticism. However, this study is meaningful in the area of translating poetry that experience affecting the act of translating. Not only that but also different range of preference, knowledge, and skill bring about the choice made and the variation occurred in translation process and product.

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