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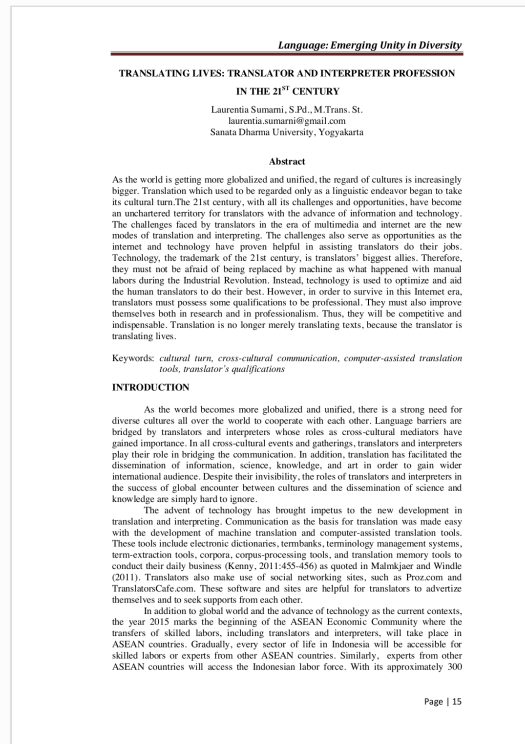
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Language: Emerging Unity in Diversity

TRANSLATING LIVES: TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETER PROFESSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

As the world is getting more globalized and unified, the regard of cultures is increasingly bigger. Translation which used to be regarded only as a linguistic endeavor began to take its cultural turn. The 21st century, with all its challenges and opportunities, have become an unchartered territory for translators with the advance of information and technology. The challenges faced by translators in the era of multimedia and internet are the new modes of translation and interpreting. The challenges also serve as opportunities as the internet and technology have proven helpful in assisting translators do their jobs. Technology, the trademark of the 21st century, is translators' biggest allies. Therefore, they must not be afraid of being replaced by machine as what happened with manual labors during the Industrial Revolution. Instead, technology is used to optimize and aid the human translators to do their best. However, in order to survive in this Internet era, translators must possess some qualifications to be professional. They must also improve themselves both in research and in professionalism. Thus, they will be competitive and indispensable. Translation is no longer merely translating texts, because the translator is translating lives.

Keywords: *cultural turn, cross-cultural communication, computer-assisted translation tools, translator's qualifications*

INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes more globalized and unified, there is a strong need for diverse cultures all over the world to cooperate with each other. Language barriers are bridged by translators and interpreters whose roles as cross-cultural mediators have gained importance. In all cross-cultural events and gatherings, translators and interpreters play their role in bridging the communication. In addition, translation has facilitated the dissemination of information, science, knowledge, and art in order to gain wider international audience. Despite their invisibility, the roles of translators and interpreters in the success of global encounter between cultures and the dissemination of science and knowledge are simply hard to ignore.

The advent of technology has brought impetus to the new development in translation and interpreting. Communication as the basis for translation was made easy with the development of machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools. These tools include electronic dictionaries, termbanks, terminology management systems, term-extraction tools, corpora, corpus-processing tools, and translation memory tools to conduct their daily business (Kenny, 2011:455-456) as quoted in Malmkjaer and Windle (2011). Translators also make use of social networking sites, such as Proz.com and TranslatorsCafe.com. These software and sites are helpful for translators to advertize themselves and to seek supports from each other.

In addition to global world and the advance of technology as the current contexts, the year 2015 marks the beginning of the ASEAN Economic Community where the transfers of skilled labors, including translators and interpreters, will take place in ASEAN countries. Gradually, every sector of life in Indonesia will be accessible for skilled labors or experts from other ASEAN countries. Similarly, experts from other ASEAN countries will access the Indonesian labor force. With its approximately 300

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by Sumarni Laurentia

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million population, Indonesia has become a lucrative market. By then, skilled labors compete not only with other skilled labors from Indonesia, but also those from other ASEAN countries. This poses both opportunities and challenges to translators and interpreters. These opportunities and challenges will be discussed in this short paper.

CULTURAL TURN IN TRANSLATION

Translation as a profession and discipline has been taken for granted for a long time. It was always considered as a part of language teaching and learning. While the practice of translation has been established for centuries, the development of the field into an academic discipline only took place towards the end of the twentieth century. Before that, translation had often been relegated to an element of language learning (Munday, 2008). In the late eighteenth century to the 1960s and beyond, language learning in secondary schools in many countries had come to be dominated by what was known as grammar-translation method (Cook 2010: 9-15) as cited in Munday (2008). Translation was regarded as secondary to language learning and teaching. Translation method was used to teach reading in a second or foreign language classes and would soon abandoned as soon as the learners could read the original texts. With the rise of direct method and communicative approach, the grammar-translation method lost its influence and the use of mother tongue was discouraged. From then on, translation was abandoned from language learning and it was restricted only to higher level and university language courses and professional translator training (Munday, 2008).

The emerging of a new area of translation research called contrastive analysis, which studied two languages in contrast in an attempt to identify general and specific differences between them brought translation in a new spotlight. Some theorists put forward their ideas to assist translation research despite their ignorance for the sociocultural and pragmatic factors and the important role of translation as a communicative act. The more systematic, and mostly linguistic-oriented, approach to the study of translation began to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s, such as Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet with their stylistic comparison between English and French; Alfred Malblanc with his comparison between English and German; George Mounin's examination of linguistic issues of translation; and Eugene Nida's use of elements of Chomsky's generative grammar as a theoretical basis for his books serving as the manuals for Bible translators (Munday, 2008: 8-9). Still, translation was still regarded inasmuch as a linguistic phenomenon.

However, translation is more than a linguistic study. The later development after the 1970s showed that "the linguistic-oriented science of translation and the concept of equivalence associated with it was questioned and reconceived" (Munday, 2008: 13). Translation theories emerged in Europe, Australia, and the United States of America, such as Katharina Reiss' text types and text purpose (Reiss and Hans Vermeer), Michael Halliday's influence of discourse analysis and systematic functional grammar, which views language as a communicative act in a sociocutural context, and Itamar Even-Zohar's and Gideon Toury's idea of literary polysystem in which different literatures and genres, including translated and non-translated works compete for dominance. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990: 4) as cited in Munday (2008) go beyond language and focus on the interaction between translation and culture, on the way in which culture impacts and constrains translation and on "the larger context, history and convention' (p.11). The move from translation as text to translation as culture and politics is what Snell-Hornby (1990) terms the cultural turn'. Translation operates beyond linguistics, as Pym (2003) argues that "translation is thus operating not just on words, but on the ways cultures perceive their relations."

At the end of 1980s, the massive global changes in the political, social and economic systems caused people to move between countries for various reasons, such as seeking refuge from persecution in one's own country or seeking a better life in the new

country. This was the time when the term "cultural interpreter" emerged. This is the term that highlights the importance of a translation process that involves more than spoken or written language, and encompasses a recognition of cultural difference (Bassnett, 2011:101). Thus, translators and interpreters no longer merely play roles as language experts, but also as cultural mediator. The expectation increases from producing equivalent rendition of the original text to the promoter of world peace and cross-cultural understanding. Translation has got out of its linguistic shell and embraced the expanding role of cultural mediation.

Perhaps the concept of "dynamic equivalence" proposed by Nida may best fit the role of culture in translation. Instead of merely replacing the string of words in source text with another string of words in target text, "dynamic equivalence" seeks to accommodate cultural adaptation. Dynamic, or functional, equivalence is based on what Nida calls "the principle of equivalent effect", where "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and message' (Nida 1964a: 159) as cited in Munday (2008: 42). Thus, the message should be tailored to the receptor's linguistic needs and cultural expectation and aims at complete naturalness of expression. The text is adapted the culture of the target text. In his Bible Translation projects, some words are adapted to the target culture. The famous example is the translation of The Lamb of God into the Seal of God in Eskimo language.

In a nutshell, translation process involves not only finding the equivalents of the words in the source text, but also to consider the cultural influence and cultural contexts that underlie the source texts and how they will be transferred in terms of the culture of the target text. This dynamic, culturally oriented approach gained influence for decades. Translation research continued to evolve in a rapid pace and involved more disciplines. Even, a notable characteristic has been the interdisciplinary of recent research in translation, involving various disciplines such as linguistics, comparative literature, cultural studies, philosophy, sociology and history.

THE ROLE OF "IT" AND "CAT" IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Technology has brought a tremendous impact on translation profession. Not only have the modes expanded, but the resources have also been enriched. The development of media also changes the way traditional translation operates. Multi media and information technology has evolved and the translation modes evolve with it. Translation is no longer limited to written mode. Interpreting, or oral translation, is widely known and practiced alongside with written translation. The increasingly global distribution of audiovisual products led to the need for dubbing, subtitling, and voice-over. Despite their technical issues, translation of dubbing, subtitles and voice-over remain the enduring methods of translation. All over the world, translators are involved in spreading information, news, films, documentaries, etc through various media.

Information technology and Internet have widened the scope and modes of cross-cultural communication. Manufacturers of products market their products worldwide and they want to make sure that their products can be accepted across cultures. Anthony Pym states that "cross-cultural communication via websites, and of the elements that constitute the individual screen for each site, is one of the fastest growing areas opened up by the era of electronic communications (in Malmkjaer and Windle, 2011: 210). The translation and localization of websites has thus become a lucrative, dynamic, and inter-professional field, often involving marketing, design, software engineering, as well as linguistic processes (Pym, 2009: 410). Although it involves a complex process, website localization is quite inevitable in this Internet era.

To conduct their daily business, translators are assisted by various tools and softwares. Machine translation, which was developed after the Second World War during which the earliest computers had been used for code-breaking (Somers, 2011: 428). Translation is actually hard for computers due to lexical ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity,

and subtleties of translation. Machine translation works based on two main approaches: rule-based and statistics-based. Rule-based MT programs work on a sentence-by-sentence basis, while statistics-based MT programs depend on massive amounts of data in the form of 'aligned' parallel text, usually referred to as 'bilingual corpora' or 'bitexts' (Harris 1988); alignment is mainly sentence-by-sentence, though word and phrase alignments are also extracted semi-automatically (in Malmkjaer and Windle, 2011: 434). Some examples of machine translation are Alta Vista's Babelfish, FreeTranslation, Gist-in-Time, ProMT, PARS, and many others. The development of technology keeps improving every day.

In addition, electronic dictionaries, termbanks, terminology management systems, term-extraction tools, corpora, corpus-processing tools, and translation memory tools are translator's best helpers to conduct their daily business which mostly operate off-line, Internet has made translators' job easier as it works online. Machine translation and online search engines have improved in such unimaginable way that they provide quick and easy assistance to translators. There are also various translation tools that translators use as resources. Kenny (2011: 456) argues that since most of the time translators work with written text, the electronic form of texts may come in some proprietary format (e.g. Microsoft Word, FrameMaker) and may be created using a standardized mark-up language (e.g. HTML or XML). Further, she explains that the normal mode of input of a translation is through keyboarding. In addition, translators can also use dictation device or voice recognition software to create more or less polished drafts of their translations.

The common lexical resources that provide supports for translators are electronic dictionaries which are available as hand-held portable devices, on CD-ROM, or as on-line dictionaries, accessibe via the Internet. The other lexical resources are termbanks which provide data either over the Internet or, less frequenty, on CD-ROM. They differ from electronic dictionaries in that they focus almost exclusively on the vocabulary of specialized areas (e.g. science, technology, law, etc) and they are usually created by national and international (non-commercial) bodies, often in response to their own documentation and/or translation needs. Some examples mentioned by Kenny (2011:458) as stated in Malmkjaer and Windle (2011) are IATE (Interactive Terminology for Europe), the multilingual termbanks of the European Union; Termium, the trilingual termbank of the Canadian Federal Government; and the International Electrotechnical Vocabulary (IEV), maintained by the International Electrotechnical Commission. Termium may be accessible through *www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca* and the International Electrotechnical Vocabulary is accessible through dom2.iec.ch/iev.

In addition to software and translation tools, the social networking sites are also helpful in assisting translators doing their work. Websites such as googletranslate, Project Lingua, ProZ.com, Pootle, TranslatorCafe.com, etc help translators in doing their tasks, communicate and share ideas with other translators across the globe.

TRANSLATOR QUALIFICATIONS

With the contexts already outlined above, what are the roles of translators in this global world? Does the world still need human translators? What qualifications do they require from the 21st century translators? As discussed earlier that translation has taken its cultural turn, translators must not only bilingual, but also bicultural (Katan, 2006: 71). Their roles are more as cultural mediators in addition to being language consultants / experts. As far as face-to-face communication still prevails in this world, human translators will always be needed. Translators must always keep abreast with the latest development and technology to survive the 21st century.

Here are some of the requirements to be translators (summarized from various sources).

1. Native fluency in a target language and a source language
2. Professional experience in their field of expertise

3. First-hand experience with the same culture as the target audience
4. A higher education degree
5. Native fluency in the target language
6. Fluency in both verbal and written English
7. Excellent computer skills
8. High level of communication and interpersonal skills (especially for interpreters)
9. Understanding of cross-cultural communications
10. And many other specific requirements.

With the implementation of ASEAN Economic Community, the competition is getting tighter. Indonesian translators must work hard and always improve their quality, because these challenges that translators face may at the same time serve as opportunities. It depends on the translators how to prepare for it.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSLATION

Research and professional development in translation are based on Holmes' map of translation studies (Figures 1 and 2). Translation studies have two branches, pure and applied. The pure branch consists of theoretical and descriptive. The descriptive branch has three possible foci: examination of (1) the product, (2) the function, and (3) the process (Munday, 2008:10-11). The applied branch of Holmes' framework concerns:

a. Translator's training, which incudes teaching methods, testing techniques, curriculum design;
b. Translator's aids: dictionaries, grammars and information technology;
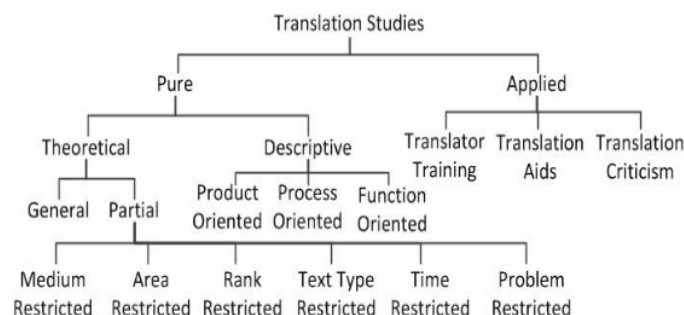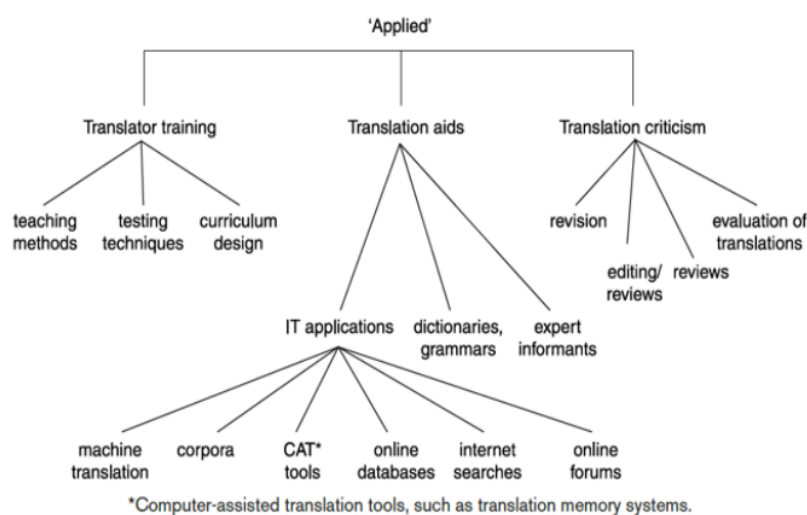c. Translator's criticism: the evaluations of translations, the revision and reviews.

Figure 1: Holmes' map (based on Holmes 1988)

Figure 2. The applied branch of translation studies

There are still plenty of rooms for improvement in terms of research and professional development. Students can conduct research in translation by following the map. The map can be employed as the point of departure which students and translators can begin their research and professional journeys.

CONCLUSION

As the world is getting more globalized and unified, the regard of cultures is increasingly bigger. Translation which used to be regarded only as a linguistic endeavor began to take its cultural turn.The 21st century, with all its challenges and opportunities, have become an unchartered territory for translators with the advance of information and technology. The challenges faced by translators in the era of multimedia and internet are the new modes of translation and interpreting. The challenges also serve as opportunities as the internet and technology have proven helpful in assisting translators do their jobs. Technology, the trademark of the 21st century, is translators' biggest allies. Therefore, they must not be afraid of being replaced by machine as what happened with manual labors during the Industrial Revolution. Instead, technology is used to optimize and aid the human translators to do their best. However, in order to survive in this Internet era, translators must possess some qualifications to be professional. They must also improve themselves both in research and in professionalism. Thus, they will be competitive and indispensable. Translation is no longer merely translating texts, because the translator is translating lives.

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