

McGlynn versus Aveling: A Comparison of Translation Strategies Used in Sapardi Djoko Damono's Poems

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ABSTRACT

Translation has been widely recognized as a way to connect cultures among the world through literary works. However, translating literary works is not an easy task, especially poetry. This research entitled "McGlynn versus Aveling: A Comparison of Translation Strategies Used in Sapardi Djoko Damono's Poems" aims to analyse strategies of translating poetry proposed by Andre Lefevere, and how they can impact the translation results of five poems by two different translators: John McGlynn and Harry Aveling. The poems were collected from three books: *Black Magic Rain*, *Contemporary Indonesian Poetry*, and *Before Dawn*. A descriptive analysis method was employed in this study alongside a little approach of a case study. The findings showed that the most frequent strategy used by both translators was Literal Translation. Strategies used by both translators also affect the lexical thematic, visual, and rhythmic acoustic dimension of the poems indirectly.

Keywords: *Translation, Poetry, Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Translation studies deal with the transference of meanings from the source language into the target language. However, the process of translation is not an easy task. Paul (2009) mentions in his book that the translator's job is to reconstruct the texts originally, sensitively, and equally from the source to the target language. It means that in order to transfer the meaning correctly, the translator has to overcome certain factors and problems. These problems, however, occur in many different kinds of texts from technical texts to literary texts, and one of the texts that is considered to be problematic to translate by many scholars is poetry.

Poetry, as a way of saying, is indirect, and because of its indirectness, the use of figurative language becomes necessary. Lethbridge & Mildorf (2003) agree to the statement and they say that simply speaking, the definition of poetry is that it is perceived as fictional, it uses specialized language, and in many cases it lacks a pragmatic function and is also ambiguous. Poetry itself,

philosophically, is a language which expresses the experience of the writer (Brooks, 1960). Thus, the essential meaning of poetry itself is difficult to define since it contains very subjective meanings (Klarer, 1998). On the other hand, compared to other literary texts, poetry is unique one way or another. This uniqueness is, of course, different in every language, as can be found in English and Indonesian poetry. They are different in terms of poetic elements (Kadarisman, 2011).

However, in translating poetry, it is not only the words that have to be translated. The poetic elements from the poetry have to be considered and is inseparable from the poetry itself. Lethbridge and Mildorf (2003) mention that poetry uses elements such as sound patterns, verse and metre, rhetorical devices, style, stanza form or imagery more frequently than other types of text that makes it more difficult to translate.

Moreover, many scholars have debated whether translating poetry is acceptable or not, and whether poetry is translatable or not. Grossman (2010) for example,

believes that to translate poetry is a useless effort since poetry represents certain concepts, emotions and responses in a particular manner based on what language that it is written. This statement is also supported by Racz (2010) who believes that poetry is simply untranslatable due to five aspects:

First, the entire structural, sonic, and semantic complex; second, the particular historical state of that complex at the time the work was written; third, the individual poet's deployed version of that language, his or her idiolect; fourth, the poetic voice, or style, of the poet; and fifth, the particular development of that idiom in this individual poem (p.20).

On the other hand, some scholars believe that it is possible to translate poetry. Lefevere (1975) for example, proposes seven strategies in translating poetry. The strategies are phonemic translation, literal translation, metrical translation, poetry into prose, rhymed translation, blank verse translation, and interpretation.

However, the result is barely a perfect translation, as one knows that

every translation is not meant to be perfect. Bennet (2002) claims that in translating poetry, there are two possibilities that may occur: to translate as literally as possible and, perhaps, lose the beauty of the poetry, or to translate the elements of beauty of the poetry and lose the essence behind the poetry itself. It means that one has to consider whether to keep the meanings or the forms of the poetry. Thus, the meanings and the forms of poetry are related to the functions of poetry. Newmark (1988) states that to translate poetry, the translator has to decide whether to keep the expressive function, which deals with meaning or aesthetic function, which deals with form. It means that while the original forms of poetry have both expressive and aesthetic functions, the translation results cannot retain them both.

Looking at this dilemma, it can be perceived translation results are something that are intended at the first place. The goal of the translators toward the result itself will determine how the translation results will be. However, for a text to be translated from the goal into the translation

results, there are some decisions that the translators need to take, and one of them is the choice of strategies. Chesterman (1997) mentions that the choice of strategy is purpose driven, and used when the text from SL cannot be translated literally or by using dictionary to the TL. Therefore, the use of the strategies might affect the poem itself whether from the lexical thematic dimension, visual dimension, or rhythmic acoustic dimension (Klarer, 1998). The elements of the poetry might change from TL to SL in the translation process, and the changes can be used to identify what effect the strategies give to the poems. Different translators might have different perception of goal in translating, especially when translating literary works such as poems. Moreover, there are previous researches that investigate the issues that are being talk about regarding the different strategies used by different translators. Kolahi (2012), analyzed the poetry translation of Soehrab Sepehri, a Persian poet by using the seven strategies employed by Andre Lefevere as the main framework in

order to see what strategies that are used the most by three different translators.

Similar with the study conducted by Kolahi, this study also deals with how different translators approach the same poems in their translation process. There are two translators that are involved in this study. The first translator is John Paul McGlynn. He is an American translator who focuses on translating Indonesian literary works. The second translator is Harry Aveling. He is an Australian translator who focuses on translating Malay literature. He teaches Malay literature at Monash University, Australia. He also has translated several Indonesian literary works such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer's. The object of translation of both translators is poems written by Sapardi Djoko Damono, an Indonesian famous poet whose works are widely acknowledged and who is also one of the founders of Lontar Foundation.

Furthermore, based on a preliminary observation, there are different strategies used by the two translators since their approach

towards the poems seem to be different. The strategies are based on Lefevfe's (1975) seven strategies of translating poetry. The strategies are as follows:

1. Phonemic Translation

Phonemic translation attempts to reproduce the SL sound in the TL while at the same time producing an acceptable paraphrase of the sense. Lefevfe comes to the conclusion that although this works moderately well in the translation of onomatopoeia, the overall result is clumsy and often devoid of sense altogether.

2. Literal Translation

The translation strategies which focus on word-for-word translation. It distorts the sense and the structure of the original.

3. Metrical Translation

It focuses mainly on the reproduction of the SL meter. This strategy, similar to literal translation, concentrates on one aspect of the SL text at the expense of the text as a whole.

4. Poetry into Prose

This strategy causes the distortion of the sense, communicative value and syntax of

the SL text, although not to the same extent as with the literal or metrical types of translation.

5. Rhymed Translation

It transfers the original rhyme of the poems into the target language.

6. Blank Verse

Translation

This strategy tries to find the proper equivalents in the target language with a proper semantic result.

7. Interpretation

There are two forms created by this strategy: versions and imitations. Version is where the substance of the SL text is retained but the form is changed, and imitation is where the translator produces a poem of his own.

The assumption of this study is that if the source texts, poems, are the same, the two translators will translate the poems similarly. However, apparently, the translation results from the two translators are different. Therefore, this study aims to analyze what strategies that are used the most by the two translators and tries to fill the gap of several previous studies. The gap is how their

decisions of choosing particular strategies affect their translation results. Thus, this study aims to find what strategies used by both translators to translate the poems, to investigate the implications the strategies give to the translation results of the poems, and to find which translation results are nearer to the SL poems.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was guided by a qualitative method. It is a method that focuses on a critical reasoning behind the analysis and description of the data instead of statistical method or math logic (Mulyana, 2001). Qualitative method is appropriate for this study because the data were in the form of texts which required the researcher to investigate the data through logical reasoning. The method gave the researcher flexibility to explore the data using descriptive and interpretative analysis in which an understanding of particular individuals is necessary. This statement is supported by Creswell (2013) who stated that a qualitative research is appropriate to explore and

understand the meaning of individuals or groups attributed to a social or human issue.

In addition, since the data were taken from interpretations of two individuals, two different translators, who interpreted and translated poems from Sapardi Djoko Damono, the researcher required to dig more deeply into their background using biographical analysis. Thus, it makes this study has a slight similarity to a case study. According to Creswell (1998), a case study is an inquiry strategy which requires the researcher to explore a program, activity, event, process or individual more deeply. The use of a case study, however, depends on the needs of the researcher. In this case, the researcher feels obliged to employ a case study to explore the translators' background due to the function of a case study that allows the researcher to gain more validity regarding the interpretation if the data analysis. However, according to Stake (2005), a case study is merely a researcher's choice of what to be studied instead of a methodological choice. It means that in this study, the use of a case study is optional.

Subjects: The data were five poems were collected from three books. Two books by Aveling entitled *Black Magic Rain* (1994) and *Contemporary Indonesian Poetry* (1975), and one book by McGlynn entitled *Before Dawn* (2012). Sapardi's poems were chosen because he is one of the leading poets in Indonesia and his poems are considered as canons. There are five poems in total collected by the researcher. The poems were selected based on a certain theme and structure. The theme is that all poems have a sense of sad hope and loneliness. In addition, those five poems were selected because each of the poem is unique in terms of structure and the rhyming pattern.

The poems, "Moment before Leaving", "I See Darkness Gathering around Us" and "Sonnet X" were derived from a book entitled *Contemporary Indonesian Poetry* (1974) by Harry Aveling, while "Time is Meaningless", and "I Wait for You" were from a book entitled *Black Magic Rain* (1994) by the same translator. In addition, the poems, "The Moment before Departure", "I

Watch the Gloom", "Sonnet: X", "Time is Transient", and "As I Wait for You", were all taken from a book entitled *Before Dawn* (2012) by John McGlynn. Those poems are the translation of the original ones: "Saat Sebelum Berangkat", "Kupandang Kelam yang Merapat ke Sisi Kita", "Sonnet X", "Yang Fana Adalah Waktu", and "Aku Tengah Menantimu".

Procedures: After the data were collected, to answer the research questions regarding what strategies were used the most and the implications the strategies gave to the translation results, they were analyzed within five steps. The steps are as follows.

1. Reading the poems

The original poems were read one by one, then each line would be read carefully and closely to grasp and understand the meaning. Similar to the first procedure, the translated poems, beginning from McGlynn versions, then Aveling versions, were also read one by one and then would also be read each line.

2. Identifying the strategies and calculating the total number

After the poems were read, the researcher identified the strategies based on Lefevere's (1975) seven strategies of translating poetry line by line, starting from McGlynn's then Aveling's. The use of dictionaries, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)*; *Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary*; and *Kamus Inggris Indonesia* by John M Echols and Hassan Shadily (2000), were involved in this step. They were used to help the researcher find the meaning for each word in either in the original poems, or in the translations results. Then, the strategies used in each poem then were collected to see the tendency of strategies, and then the strategies from all the poems were calculated to see the overall tendency of the strategies.

3. Comparing and McGlynn's and Aveling's version

Once the strategies from translators were completely identified, both versions then were compared to see who used what strategies the most. Therefore, how the poems were delivered by both translators were analyzed by the researcher to

investigate the implication of the employed strategies.

The comparison between the SL and the TL poems resulted in the characteristics of each translator's versions which helped the researcher to identify the implications of the strategies employed. It is done by identifying the language style. A poet chose particular words reasonably with or without his consciousness. However, in the translated poems there might be some inequality, inappropriate translations, mistranslations, including metaphors and cultural words which might change the meaning and the forms of the poems due to the different use of strategies. During this process, componential analysis was employed. It was done by comparing the of both translations results which have similar meanings. Then, to examine whether or not the translations results were appropriate, a back translation test was applied. The categorization of which parts of the poems that should be compared was based on the lexical thematic dimension, visual dimension, and rhythmic acoustic dimension (Klarer 1998). In addition,

the researcher identified the language functions. Naturally, a poem deals with two language functions: expressive and aesthetic functions. However, when a poem is translated, it cannot retain them both. It has to keep whether the expressive or aesthetic function. It is useful to identify the language function to give the researcher a description of how the strategies might result a certain translation pattern. Finally, the researcher decided which translation results were closer to the original poems based on the analysis.

4. Biographical analysis

The biographical analysis is used as an intra-textual analysis. The use of it were presented in the discussion at chapter IV as an additional analysis in order to see if McGlynn and Aveling background of literature and translation studies affect their translation process. However, it is important to keep in mind that the biographical analysis does not deal with the translators personally. The biography about the translators were gathered from websites that interact with the translators such as websites from where the translators work.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the seven strategies in translating poetry by Lefevere (1975), McGlynn and Aveling had applied several strategies on their translation process. From all seven strategies there are only four strategies used by McGlynn: Rhymed Translation, Blank Verse, Literal Translation and Interpretation. Those strategies are distributed throughout the poems, which have 58 lines in total, with 76 strategies applied in total, randomly. Fourteen Rhymed Translation strategies, 19 Blank Verse strategies, 28 Literal Translation strategies and 16 Interpretation strategies.

Similar to McGlynn, Aveling also used only four strategies out of seven: Literal Translation, Rhymed Translation, Blank Verse, and Interpretation. They are used in the poems, which have 58 lines from five titles randomly, with 75 strategies applied in total. Fourteen Rhymed Translation strategies, five Blank Verse strategies, 37 Literal Translation strategies and 19 Interpretation strategies.

However, the use of certain strategies to translate the poem can give some implications towards some aspects of the poems. Those implications are categorized based on Klarer (1998) concept of basic elements of poetry: lexical thematic dimension, visual dimension, and rhythmic acoustic dimension.

After the findings are presented in the previous section, one can see that each strategy has its tendency when they are used in the translation process. One can see that the tendency of the use of the strategy occur in a particular pattern.

Literal Translation strategy is used more often by both translators. McGlynn used the strategy 28 times (33%) throughout the poems, and Aveling used it for 37 times (50%) from the total strategies that he employed. This findings support Kolahi (2012) research which states that in translating poetry, Literal Translation is used more frequently. Literal Translation strategy is usually employed when the text in the SL can be translated by using dictionary or is understandable. The use Literal Translation strategy is also used when

the translators are served with simple sentences. Both translators, in this case, try to deliver the poem in the translation result by retaining the meaning and structure of the SL in the TL. Certainly, the use of the strategy results in different perception of the dictions, since the focus of Literal Translation is to transfer the SL text word-by-word or as it is to the TL. Some scholars believed that the use Literal Translation will cause the distortion of sense and meaning, although, sometimes, it is simpler to use Literal translation in the process of translation. Therefore, the more frequent the strategy is used, the more frequent the sense becomes distorted. In this case, Aveling used the strategy more often than McGlynn. It means that there are more words in Aveling translations that is distorted from the original poems. It can be proven from the analysis above that from the first until fifth poem, Aveling tend to mistranslate some words that are significant to the poem itself due to the use of Literal Translation strategy. On the other hand, McGlynn also applied Literal Translation more frequently in his translation results

than other strategies. However, the percentage is different. McGlynn only used the strategy for 33% out of 100%. It means that other strategies dominate the use of strategies if they are combined together, and it results in lesser mistranslations due to the use of Literal Translation. Aveling, in contrary, used the strategy for the half of the total of the strategies. He used 50% Literal Translation out of 100% in total strategies. Thus, the occurrence of mistranslated words are higher in Aveling's version.

The second strategies used in the poems are Blank Verse. McGlynn, in this case, used Blank Verse strategy as the second most frequent strategy with 19 times (25%) applied in all poems, while Aveling used it for only five times (7%) in the third place. Blank Verse strategy is usually used to transfer the sense in the SL into the TL with the change of its structure. The purpose of this strategy is to create a more communicative way in delivering the poems from the SL to the TL. McGlynn applied this strategy successfully by changing several structure of the poems in order to make it more pleasant to read,

because some of the original poems are unique in terms of the structure. However, McGlynn used it not only to make it more communicative and loose the substance of the poems, but also used it to transfer the emphasis, that if in the original poems lay in different lines, into the same line. On the other hand, Aveling rarely changed the structure of the poems. He tends to retain the structure of the original poem in order to keep them "poetic". However, he fails to do that because he keeps the structure similar to the SL, but his choice of words are poor so that his supposedly intention in making them poetic, turn to disadvantage him. Therefore, in terms of structure, McGlynn translated the poems more accurately than Aveling.

The third strategy used in the poems is Interpretation. McGlynn used the strategy 16 times (21%), while Aveling used it 19 times (25%). The focus of Interpretation strategy is to create another version of the original poems based in the perception of the translators. The results can be either similar to the SL or totally different. Commonly, it is implemented when the SL text looks

untranslatable, whether because there is no equivalent word or because of cultural differences. In this case, the strategy is used because the translators have an understanding of their own towards the original poem. However, it can be beneficial or detrimental depending on the knowledge of the translators about the poems. Nevertheless, McGlynn used this strategy appropriately and without many shifting of words or metaphor. On the other hand, Aveling interpreted the poems a little bit far from for the original, and it makes his translation results—especially dictions and metaphors—derived too far from the original poems.

The fourth strategy used in the poems is Rhymed Translation. The use of it is to retain the rhyming pattern that exists in the SL into TL. In this case, Rhymed Translation only occurs in the third poem, Sonnet X where both McGlynn and Aveling managed to retain the internal rhymes of the poem, but not with the end rhymes.

Move along, it was stated in the findings section that strategies can affect the translation results in some

ways. That is the fact. However, the implication towards the translation results is not direct. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the flow of the impact from the strategies towards the poems is that first, the purpose of the translators. A translator has to decide what goal that he want to achieve in the translation results, especially in translating a poem. One have to choose whether to focus on the expressive function or aesthetic function of the poem. Second, what strategies to use. After the goal is decided, a translator has to decide what strategies that he has to apply. Then, the choice of the strategies will result in the choice of dictions, and the last, the impact will affect the entire poem. It can be seen from the change of the figurative language. The assumption is that poems are closely related to figurative language, specifically metaphor, since they are indirect. When a poem loose its indirectness, it is no longer a poem. In this case, Aveling almost always loos the indirectness of the poems he translated due to the use of, mostly, Literal Translation strategy. On the other hand, McGlynn,

somehow, is able to retain the indirectness more than Aveling, because his distribution of strategies are more even and in a way, appropriate.

However, in this case, it is not merely the choice of strategies that affect the change in dictions. There could be extra-textual factors that play an important role, and one of them is the how close the translators are with the source language. One can see that McGlynn's choice of dictions in the translation result is somehow closer to the source language. It could be because he has been living in Indonesia for a long time. Different with McGlynn, Aveling has never been living in Indonesia for a long time. His interaction with the language is limited only on academic field and his focus is on Malay language, not Bahasa Indonesia in particular. Moreover, the closeness towards Indonesian literature can be another factor. McGlynn established Lontar Foundation, an organization which aims to introduce Indonesian literature and culture through the translation of the works, alongside with four Indonesian authors:

Goenawan Mohamad, Sapardi Djoko Damono, Umar Kayam, and Subagio Sastrowardoyo. It shows that McGlynn has more access towards Indonesian language, literature, and culture because of his circle. On the other hand, Aveling does not have this environment because his focus is no Malay literature study. Therefore, it shows that McGlynn's sense of Indonesian language is a little bit on top Aveling's, and it also affects their decision in translating Indonesian literary works, especially poetry.

CONCLUSION

All in all, from all seven strategies, there are only four strategies applied in the poems by both translators. McGlynn applied 76 strategies in total: 14 Rhymed Translation strategies (18%), 19 Blank Verse strategies (25%), 28 Literal Translation strategies (33%) and 16 Interpretation strategies (21%). One can see that McGlynn has the tendency of using Literal Translation strategy more frequently than other strategies. However, the distribution of each strategy. Similar to McGlynn, Aveling also used only

four strategies out of seven: Literal Translation, Rhymed Translation, Blank Verse, and Interpretation. They are used in the poems with 75 strategies applied in total: Fourteen Rhymed Translation strategies (18%), five Blank Verse strategies (7%), 37 Literal Translation strategies (50%) and 19 Interpretation strategies (25%).

This study supports the statement by Kolahi (2012) that Literal Translation is the most frequent strategy used in translating poems. It is because in this case, Sapardi Djoko Damono did not use very difficult words in his poem, but the essence and the figurative language inside them are powerful. However, it makes the sense and the indirectness of the poems a little bit shifted due to the use of Literal Translation, like what Aveling did in his translation results. Yet, McGlynn managed to transfer the sense by using Blank Verse and Interpretation in order to make the poems more communicative. It shows that McGlynn translation results are closer than Aveling's. The finding is that the closeness of the translation could be

because of how much the translators are exposed toward Bahasa Indonesia, and how significant the interaction of the translators with Indonesian literature. Another finding from this study is that the impact of the strategies toward the poems is indirect. There are extra-textual factors that cause changes in the lexical thematic dimension, visual dimension, and rhythmic acoustic dimension before the strategies can affect the poems.

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