

Risking the Plot and Twisting the Character: Unfaithful Translation in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"

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Abstract: *The significance of literary translation is emphasized, underscoring the vital role of translators in preserving the true essence and intended meaning of literary works. It stresses the importance of maintaining the original work's core, style, and cultural nuances during the translation process. The article focuses on specific instances of mistranslation in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" and examines the impact of inaccurate translation on the inherent value of the work. Furthermore, it suggests a qualitative and quantitative approach to assess the equivalence between the original and translated versions, aiming to identify differences and their implications for the translated work. The analysis reveals that the unfaithful translation of the analyzed text led to discrepancies in meaning, point of view, plot, and atmosphere within the translated version. It is noteworthy that the methods used in altering the meaning and in incorrect translation are not interconnected. Additionally, the method employed in the translation process must align with the result, specifically whether it is faithful to the original. The risk of translating literary works without closely observing the details can compromise the outcome of the translation, impacting how readers comprehend and interpret the work. When translating literary works, the translator should uphold the responsibility and integrity of their role, ensuring a faithful translation that does not disregard or violate the original.*

Keywords: *unfaithful translation, "the Tell-Tale Heart", inaccurate, meaning alteration*

Abstrak: Penerjemahan sastra menekankan pada pentingnya peran penerjemah dalam melestarikan esensi sejati dan makna yang dimaksudkan dari karya sastra. Sangatlah penting untuk menjaga inti, gaya, dan nuansa asli karya dalam proses penerjemahan. Artikel ini berfokus pada contoh-contoh kesalahan penerjemahan dalam "The Tell-Tale Heart" karya Edgar Allan Poe dan mengkaji dampak terjemahan yang tidak akurat tersebut terhadap nilai inherent karya tersebut. Selain itu, pendekatan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif untuk menilai kesetaraan antara versi asli dan versi terjemahan, yang bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi perbedaan dan implikasinya terhadap karya terjemahan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa terjemahan yang tidak tepat dari teks yang dianalisis menyebabkan perbedaan makna, sudut pandang, alur, dan suasana dalam versi terjemahan. Patut dicatat bahwa metode yang digunakan dalam mengubah makna dan penerjemahan yang salah tidak saling berhubungan. Selain itu, metode yang digunakan dalam proses penerjemahan harus selaras dengan hasil, khususnya apakah sesuai dengan aslinya. Risiko menerjemahkan karya sastra tanpa memperhatikan detailnya dengan cermat dapat membahayakan hasil terjemahan, sehingga berdampak pada cara pembaca memahami dan menafsirkan karya tersebut. Penerjemah karya sastra harus mempertimbangkan dengan cermat unsur intrinsik karya untuk memastikan bahwa proses penerjemahan

tidak mengabaikan atau melanggar nilai serta makna aslinya.

Kata Kunci: terjemahan tidak setia, "The Tell-Tale Heart", ketidakakuratan, perubahan makna

1. INTRODUCTION

Translating literature is another branch of translation meant to allow a broader audience to enjoy the beauty and arts of literary works. In the long run, translating literature influences communication between authors and readers, spreading the joy of reading literature and cascading the value of the works. This helps promote cultural exchange and understanding and preserve the literary heritage of different societies. Moreover, translating literature helps to bridge the gap between different cultures, allowing readers to gain insight into other perspectives and ways of thinking. The significance of translating literature cannot be overstated, as it plays a vital role in promoting cross-cultural communication and enriching the literary landscape.

It is crucial to ensure the translation process is done properly and that the transfer of meaning and context is done without violating the essence of the translated literary works. Neglecting the meaning within the core of the work will fail the author's effort in shaping the piece itself. A translator should not only be able to transfer the language from one to another but also make sure the intrinsic details and value are transferred precisely as the intention of the author of the work. Hughes, in "The Art of Translation," mentions that.

"Much like a crossword, a translation isn't finished until all the answers are present and correct, with each conditioning the others. But when it comes to literature, there is rarely ever just one solution, and my job is to test as many as possible. A word can be a perfect fit until something I try in the next clause introduces a clumsy repetition or infelicitous echo. Meaning, connotation and subtext all matter, but so does style."

Making sure the translation "is finished" refers to the translator's duty to ensure the transfer of meaning and style in the work is transmitted without a doubt. None should be left out regardless of the transcreation in the form of the work. "The role of the literary translator has been traditionally unrecognized and condemned to a "shadowy existence" (Venuti, 1995, p. 8 as cited in Leonardi, 2024). Even so, a literary work's translator must maintain intrinsic and extrinsic elements to be transmitted correctly. Intrinsic elements in literary works include theme, character, characterization, plot, meaning, setting, and point of view. Extrinsic elements cover history, biography, society, and psychology, influencing the work's creation process.

Braño Hochel, in "Translation Studies: The State of the Art," mentions that literary translation is a particular type of translation that is different from other kinds of translation (1991, p.41). Literary work needs to be translated "from one natural language into another, from one time ... [the creation of the original] to another ... [creation of the translation], and from one space (cultural milieu) into another" (1991, p.41). Hochel also mentions that translating literary work pays more attention to the aspects of "poetics, ..., literary as well as non-literary allusions, to intertextual linking and metatextual segments of the text, to cultural and material specifications ... and the natural language is ... ignored. It has to be ignored simply because there is no natural language but literary language in the literary work." A

translator of literary works has the privilege to play around with the language, yet the form and *dolce* of the work need to be preserved. The inability to transfer the correct content in literature translation will damage the work and the author's intention.

This article analyzes the mistranslation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tale-Tell Heart" Which results in an unfaithful translation of the work. The work is chosen explicitly since this short story is unique, with most of the narration being a monologue inside the character's head. Also, this work is rich with terms that can be challenging in translation. There are some Bahasa Indonesia translations available in this work. The one by Harum L. Wibowo was chosen because the translator has quite a portfolio of translating literary works. This article aims to observe and identify the translation procedure done by the translator and the unfaithfulness in the translated work.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The article observes and evaluates the work's and translated versions' equivalence. The observation and analysis are conducted qualitatively and quantitatively during data collection. This stage starts with breaking down the specific details to observe in data tabulation. The short story is read first and then broken down into sentences as primary data for the analysis. Newmark's translation procedure is used to define the translation procedure used by the translator, and the result is categorized and measured in percentage to see the variety of translation procedures used and their percentages in the translated piece. Afterward, data reduction is conducted to classify the data into those with issues in translation results and those with acceptable and faithful translation. The ones identified to have disparity in meaning and intrinsic characteristics with the original work will be used as designated data to be analyzed. The analysis is done qualitatively to observe the unfaithfulness in translation and how it affects the intrinsic value of the translated work.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tale-Tell Heart" consists of 131 sentences. Using Newmark's translation procedure, 42 points of data are identified. The data is classified using translation procedures such as adaptation (5%), compensation (9%), cultural equivalent (17%), descriptive equivalence (2%), expansion (10%), functional equivalent (2%), reduction (21%), synonymy (10%), and transposition (24%). Transposition is the dominant procedure used in the translated work, and descriptive equivalence and functional equivalent are the least used in the work's translation process.

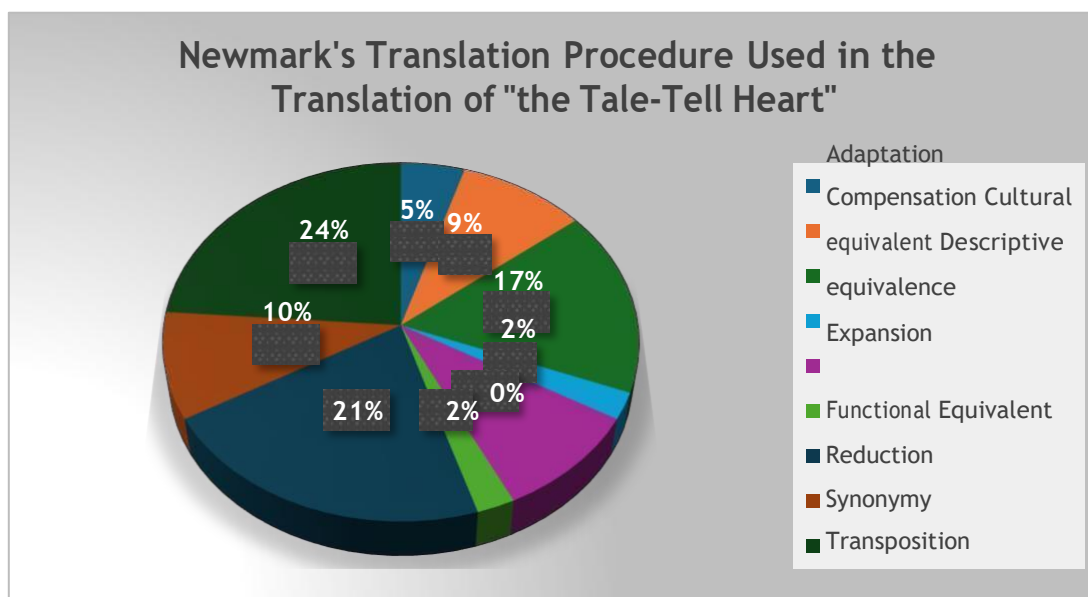


Figure 1. Newmark's Translation Procedure Used in the Translation of "the Tale-Tell Heart"

Among these 42 data, further analysis is done to see how the translated work corresponds to the original one. In the process, some unfaithful results in the translated text are found. 16 data are identified to carry different meanings from the original. This is crucial since the irrelevant translation results in different perceptions of the plot, characterization of the character, the ambiance/atmosphere of the work, and logic within the work itself.

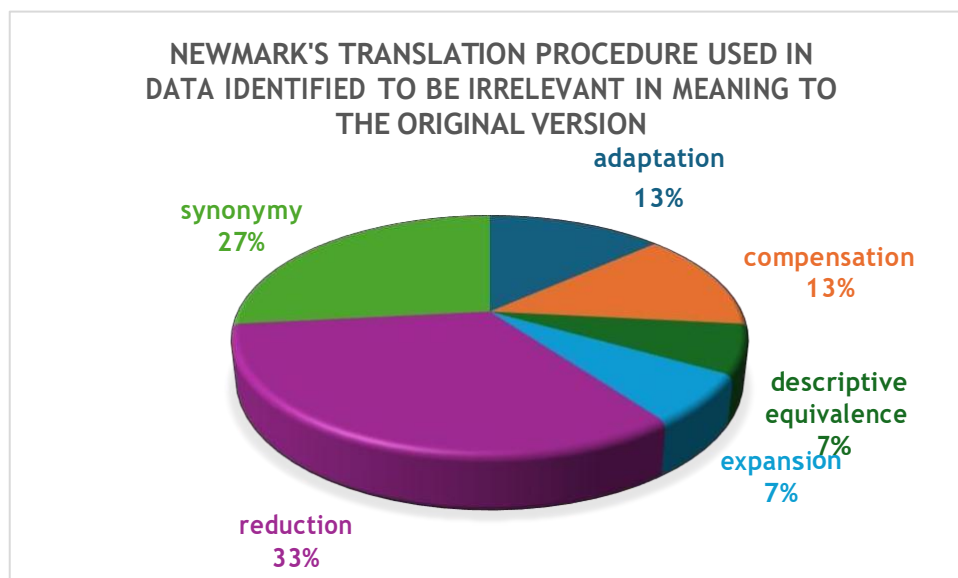


Figure 2. Newmark's Translation Procedure Used in Data Identified to be Irrelevant in Meaning to the Original Version

Within the 16 data with irrelevant meaning to the original, 13 show a change in meaning between the original and the translated one, while 3 data show incorrect translation.

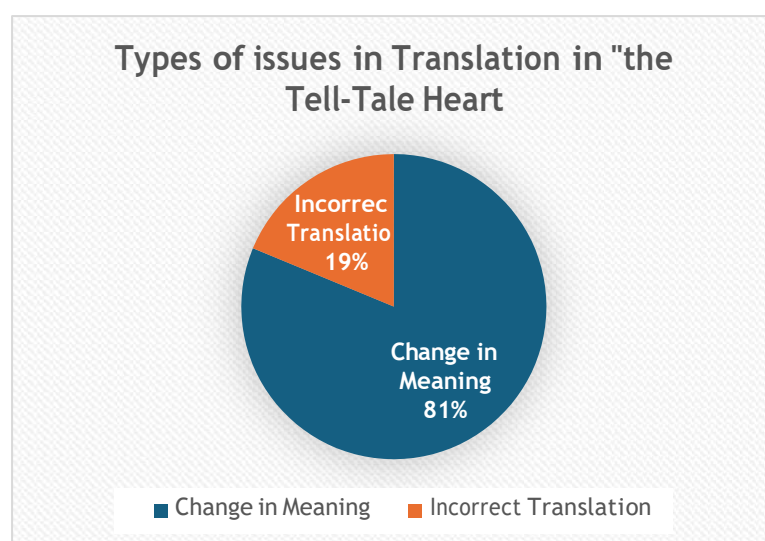


Figure 3. Types of issues in Translation in "the Tell-Tale Heart"

In the following table, the breakdown of the data is presented to show the procedure, amount of data, the irrelevance of the translated version, and identification of where the data are taken from.

Table 1. Data of Irrelevant Translation found in the Translated Version of "the Tell-Tale Heart"

Details	Procedure	Amount	of Irrelevance in	Sentence
Data				
Change in Meaning	Adaptation	2	Meaning	5 (1)
			Meaning	6 (1)
	Compensation	2	Meaning	22 (1)
			Meaning	52 (1)
	Descriptive	1	Meaning	123 (1)
	Equivalence			
	Expansion	1	Point of View	7 (1)
	Reduction	5	Meaning	4 (2)
			Meaning	11 (1)
			Plot	17 (1)
Atmosphere			Plot and	17 (2)

			Meaning	94 (1)
			Meaning	109 (1)
			Meaning	117 (1)
Incorrect	Transposition	1	Meaning	88 (1)
Translation	Synonymy	2	Plot	24 (1)
			Meaning	24 (2)
Tota		16		
l				

Irrelevance in Meaning

Irrelevance in meaning is very tricky since it directly affects the understanding of the work. It means that the specific intention of the work cannot be fully and adequately transmitted from the author to the audience. There are 12 data points out irrelevance in meaning in the translation of this short story. The first data is taken from sentence 4 in the second section:

SL: I heard all things in the **heaven and in the earth** (1). **I heard many things in hell** (2).

TL: Aku dapat mendengar apapun yang ada di **langit dan bumi** (1), **terutama di neraka** (2).

The procedure used in the second section is a reduction, with the number of words in TL being much less than in SL. The deletion is meant to adjust the preference for translation, resulting in the translator's acceptable perspective. Unfortunately, the reduction imposes a change in meaning in the translation result. "I heard many things in hell" in SL focuses more on the word "heard," which implies the ability to hear things relevant to the former section of the sentence. The colloquial expression of heaven and earth refers to the distance between near (earth) and far (heaven). This refers to the ability to listen/know about many things from different sources. The second part of the sentence, "I heard many things in hell," refers to the closest relevance of "heaven." However, when "I heard many things" in the second section of SL is translated into "terutama", the sentence loses its connection to the prior section. TL uses "terutama," which implies that the focus of the translated sentence is no longer on the ability but more on the emphasis on the specific source of what to listen to. It makes the message be transferred differently in the TL. The focus on the ability to listen or grasp information from "heaven, earth, and hell" is changed to focusing specifically on listening to hell. This is a dangerous move to make in translation because the translator misses the author's intention, and the reader's acceptance will be different from the one intended in the original work.

The second data is taken from S5 in the first section, which uses adaptation in the translation procedure.

SL: How, then, **am I mad** (1)?

TL: Jadi, **bagaimana mungkin aku gila** (1)?

Adaptation is used to find an equivalence analogy to TL. The choice of word to translate SL

to TL in such away change the meaning of SL. SL intends to show how the main character questions his/her sanity. This rhetorical question is meant to self- sanity check to ensure that he/she is not insane. However, TL, which also uses rhetorical questions, implies a different intention to show that the main character's disbelief anyone will judge him/her to be mad/insane with the thought lingering in his head. This leads to a whole level of understanding in TL that the main character disbelieves others' judgment on his/her sanity, while the fact that all of his insanity lies within his/her head, and no one knows about it. The translation changes the whole meaning and also the point of view on how the insanity of the main character is identified. This is crucial point to focus on because it affects the reader's understanding on the act that main character will do later on the story. The logic of the work is harmed by this shift in meaning during the translation process.

Similar execution can also be found in S6 in which translation procedure used is also adaptation. The analysis is done on data section 1.

SL: Hearken! (1) and (2) observe how healthy-how calmly I can tell you the whole story (3).

TL: **Kalau kalian masih juga tidak percaya (1), maka (2) perhatikanlah betapa warasnya dan tenangnya aku mengisahkan seluruh cerita ini (3).**

SL uses archaic term "hearken" for "hear". The impression given by using this word is that the word is spoken loudly almost screaming to grab others attention. Interestingly, the word is said silently inside the head of the main character, reflecting how nervous he/she is, but he/she still wants the story's attention on the actual happening that is about to let out. The thing is the main character speak to nobody but him/herself. The translation of this very word is "kalau kalian tidak percaya". Clearly the translator is using free translation method in this case, which is acceptable. However, TL is lacking the vibes of anger and disbelief shown in SL. The decision to translate it into as seen in TL might be a safe option for the translator; however, it affects the lack of emphasis of lunacy of the main character.

The next irrelevance in meaning can be found in S11 in which reduction procedure is used in the translation process.

SL: He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, **with a film over it** (1). TL: Dia memiliki mata bak burung *vulture* dengan warna biru pucat (1).

The reduction seen in this part is the omission of the sentence's last section, which carries important significance to detail of the plot. "Film over it" in SL is skipped in TL. The significance of the film over one of the eyes show how that particular eye is different from the other and it is one of the causes of uneasiness on the main character toward the owner of the eye who later becomes the victim of the main character wrongdoing. The film over the blue pale eyes brings out the image of silverish eye and it makes the eye to look dull yet intimidating for it show cold image from the color. This section actually important to show the logic the main character has which latter trigger the murder. Skipping this part will let the audience to be left out of important detail on motive of the murder. This directly affect the understanding of the reader over the whole work.

S22 and S52 carry the same identification on irrelevance in meaning since both uses the same word "vulture" which is translated into "mata sipit" and compensation procedure. Compensation is used as an effort to find equivalence in TL by finding domestic equivalence to it. Unfortunately, the effort does not succeed in both of the sentence. Yet, it changes the whole meaning carried by the word and sentences.

S22

SL: And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)— I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon **the vulture eye** (1).

TL: Kemudian, ketika seluruh kepalaku sudah masuk ke dalam kamarnya, kuputar tuas lenteraku dengan hati-hati—oh, aku melakukannya dengan amat sangat hati-hati karena tuasnya dapat mengeluarkan bunyi decitan. Kuputar lenteraku sampai dapat menerangi **mata sipitnya** (1) dengan seberkas cahaya redup.

S52

SL: you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length a simple dim ray, like the spider's thread, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon **the vulture eye**. (1)

TL: Kalian tidak dapat membayangkan betapa diam-diamnya kulakukan itu—sampai seberkas cahaya redup menerangi **mata sipitnya**. (1)

A vulture is kind of birds connotatively related to death and grimm. Using this word to describe the eyes of the victims implies to the author's effort to show that in the perception of the main character, the victim is indeed evil. The analogy works so well in to bring out the sense of horror and terror that is felt by the main character toward the eyes of the victim. Translating "vulture eye" to "mata sipit" which is closed to "slaint eyes" do not make the translation version to carry the same fear as it is shown in the original version. It is hard to read the insanity of the main character when this specific term is not translated correctly. This quick fix affects the whole atmosphere of the particular act and fail to support the reason of the character fear and coming act toward the victim.

S24 carries to section and has the same translation procedure; yet carries different irrelevance. Section 1 is on plot and section 2 in on meaning.

SL: And every morning, **when the day broke** (1), I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a **hearty tone** (2), and inquiring how he has passed the night.

TL: Dan setiap pagi, ketika **hari mulai petang** (1), secara terang-terangan aku pergi ke kamarnya dengan gagah berani lalu memanggil namanya dengan **nada menyentuh hati** (2), dan menanyakan bagaimana tidurnya malam tadi.

The explanation on section 1 can be found in irrelevance of plot in the later section. "Hearty tone" in SL relates to kind, passionate, and loveable characteristics. Translating it into "menyentuh hati" in TL fails to capture the intention of the character to talk to his victim overly friendly which is done to cover the fear and hatred inside. Further details can be seen in the following sentences after this section. Translating it into "menyentuh hati" makes this part into an incorrect translation since the meaning is entirely different and the translation does not accommodate the following details after this section.

Another irrelevance in meaning can be found in S88. This part of the text uses transposition in the translation procedure specifically on the switch of verb form.

SL: First of all I **dismembered** (1) the corpse.

TL: Pertama, **kupisah-pisahkan** (1) anggota tubuhnya.

Unlike the other data, this is about something other than change in meaning. An incorrect translation is done in this sentence. The word "dismembered" in SL has acceptable translation in Bahasa Indonesia

as “memotong-motong” when it comes to body/corpse dismemberment. Translating it into “kupasah-pisah” brings out different perception. The act of “memotong” focuses more on cutting/breaking an object into smaller pieces or more in numbers.

On the other hand, “Messiah” is closer to separating one thing from another in a sense that the item is already cut or broken into smaller pieces first. This irrelevancy might be seen as minor, but it affects the story's sense and logic. Changing it this way will bring a different understanding to the reader/audience.

Interesting finding is seen in S94 that the irrelevance in meaning and important notion of the work on how the main character to lessen the victim is omitted in the sentence.

SL: When I had made an end of these **labors** (1), it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. TL: Saat aku telah selesai (1), jam menunjukkan pukul empat pagi— suasana masih diliputi kegelapan seperti tengah malam.

This sentence uses reduction as the translation procedure since there is one specific word which is deleted in the translated text. The word “labor” in SL cannot be found in TL. This word is skipped in the translation “telah selesai,” which implies that the deed is done. This deletion is unfortunate since the word “labor” signifies on how the main character to value his/her victim to be less. So, cleaning up after the murder is analogous to other labor work. This specific point of view of the main character toward to victim is another essential detail to explain the characteristic of the character and also the cynicism seen in this very scene. Deleting the section resulting to the audience to, again, miss this important detail.

S109 is very short and seems very simple, yet the translation conveys a different understanding of the original text.

SL: My manner (1) had convinced them. TL: Kelakuanku (1) meyakinkan mereka.

Synonymy is used in this section in the word “manner” which is translated into “kelakuan”. At a glance, there is no particular issue in this translation. However, manner is closer to how one's behave and its meaning is closed to one's attitude. “Kelakuan” on the other hand brings out different vibes and understanding. “Kelakuan” is closer to habit and not just attitude. Also, “kelakuan” has more of a negative meaning compared to “manner,” which does not carry the same understanding. Even though this may be seen as minor, this significance of meaning matters to be kept in translation process.

S117 also shows another example of a minor difference in translation that actually refers to irrelevance in translation.

SL: I **gaspd for breath** (1)—and yet the officers heard it not.

TL: **Napasku menjadi sesak** (1), namun para petugas itu masih belum mendengarnya.

Like the previous section, this data also uses synonymy as translation procedure. In SL, gasped for breath shows how the main character find it is hard to catch a breath and it focuses on the act/effort to breathe due to lacking oxygen. On the other hand, TL shows different understanding. “Nafasku menjadi sesak” says more about suffocation and not on the effort of trying to find some air to breathe in. TL focuses more on the result of the action and not the action. Again, this might be seen minor and irrelevant by readers; however, the sense brought in the sentence is different and this minor detail can bring different picture in the ind of the readers.

The last irrelevance of meaning can be found S123 in which the translator uses descriptive

equivalence as translation procedure.

SL: **I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards** (1), but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—louder!

TL: **Aku menggaruk-garukkan kursiku di atas lantai** (1), namun suara itu naik dan semakin nyaring. Suaranya semakin nyaring!

Descriptive equivalence is used in translation procedure to find closest equivalence to TL. However, the choice of diction in TL brings different meaning from SL. "Swung the chair upon which I had been sitting and grated it upon the boards" in SL shows how the main character is sitting on the chair anxiously and make the chair to bump over the floorboard and make sounds. The creaking sound results from the anxious movement of the main character while sitting on the chair. However, observing TL, it is seen that the translation becomes "Aku menggaruk-garukkan kursiku di atas lantai" which gives different impression from the one to be found in SL. TL implies that the main character is unclear to be seated on the chair or moving the chair while making the sound since there is no specific reference to whether he/she is sitting on the chair or not. This brings out a completely different depiction of the scene and changes the logic and meaning of the section of the work.

Irrelevance in Point of View

Only one part of the translation shows irrelevance from a point of view, which can be found in S7 section 1.

SL: It is **impossible** (1) to say how first the idea entered **my brain** (2); but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. **Object there was none. Passion there was none.** (3)

TL: **Aku juga masih tidak tahu pasti sejak kapan** (1) ide itu muncul dalam **benakku** (2), tapi segera setelah ide itu tertanam dalam otakku, aku selalu merasa ada yang menghantuiku sepanjang siang dan malam **sehingga aku tidak dapat menolak untuk melakukannya.** (3)

The procedure used in this section is expansion which can be easily seen how TL is way longer than SL. "It is impossible" in SL is translated into "Aku juga masih tidak tahu kapan" in TL. The character's Point of view about the condition is very different in SL and TL. SL shows that uncertainty is seen in "impossible". However, translating it into "masih tidak tahu" is closer to cluelessness, which is not close at all to what it is carried in SL. This completely change the point of view of both the character and the audience toward the situation explained in this section.

Irrelevance in Plot and Atmosphere

Plot is the story timeline that shows how the story develops. Translation should keep this since it is related to details in how the story goes in the work. S17 sections 1 and 2 show how the translation uses reduction in the translation procedure and also reduces important parts of the story that affect how the story goes.

SL: And then, when I had **made an opening sufficient for my head** (1), **I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out** (2), and then I thrust in my head.

TL: Kemudian **kubuka pintunya sedikit** (1) (2) lalu kumasukkan kepalaku.

What is seen is that the word "my head" in SL section 1 cannot be found in TL when it is translated as "sedikit". The Change in meaning results from deleting the word "my head" in SL. It's not only about opening the door but to make sure the size of the opening only fit with the head of the character to thrust in. This is important since the intention of the act is to see the victim better and this also related to the coming action done by the main character.

Deleting this section makes the logic of the plot to be cut off. The use of “sedikit” in TL does not correspond to the fact that the intention to open the door in such an opening is related to how the character tries to prove to himself that he will do his deed. He has no fear to be found out by the victim who is sleeping. When “my head” is translated to “sedikit”, it also down grade the emotional turmoil the character feels at the moment of act.

Section 2 in SL is wholly deleted in TL, and it entirely change the plot as well as the atmosphere of the act. “The dark lantern” in section 2 shows how the character put a lantern covered by cloth through the door's opening before the character shoved his/her head in. This is important details since later the character will let a slight of light out of the lantern. Again, the logic of the plot is disturbed because this section is omitted in TL, and it destroys the thickening plot built by the author. This part is the rising climax part of the plot. Omitting this section means a lot to the plot's progress and the character's frantic emotion.

The irrelevance of plot can also be found in S24 in sections 1 and 2. Both sections happened to use synonymy as a translation procedure. This part will focus on the irrelevance of translation in section 1.

SL: And every morning, **when the day broke** (1), I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a **hearty tone** (2), and inquiring how he has passed the night.

TL: Dan setiap pagi, ketika **hari mulai petang** (1), secara terang-terangan aku pergi ke kamarnya dengan gagah berani lalu memanggil namanya dengan **nada menyentuh hati** (2), dan menanyakan bagaimana tidurnya malam tadi.

Just like section 2 of the same sentence, the translation turns it into an incorrect one since “when the day broke” in SL means early in the morning. However, TL shows that the translation is “hari mulai petang” which is entirely different part of the day, and this way of translation ruin the plot set on the story. This is a hazardous way in translating since it entirely changes the significance of the plot.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that the unfaithful translation of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tale-Tell Heart” resulted in irrelevance in meaning, point of view, plot, and atmosphere within the translated version. It is interesting that the procedures used in the change in meaning and incorrect translation category are not intertwined. Also, the procedure used in the translation process does not correspond to the result of the translation, in this case, whether it is relevant or not to the original. The risk of translating literary works without closely observing the details can harm the result of the translation, which also affects how the work is understood and perceived by the readers. In translating literary works, a translator should pay more attention to the intrinsic elements of the work so that the translation process will not neglect or violate the original.

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