

RENDERING CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN BANYUMASAN BEGALAN: A TRANSLATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Begalan is one of Banyumas traditions generally held in wedding ceremony in which involves several processions. As an oral tradition, this is undoubtedly rich of moral values to guide the local people in life over generation. Moreover, it contains symbolic meanings of Javanese philosophy. Begalan, thus, in the perspective of Banyumas people becomes tatanan (norm), tuntunan (guidance), and tontonan (performance) simultaneously. In regard to this, cultural-bound elements become inevitable issue particularly if it is viewed through translation studies. Accordingly, this paper is aimed at describing several cultural elements which are used in this tradition. Then some strategies dealing with transposing local cultures embodied in those elements are proposed. This paper belongs to descriptive qualitative research which is fundamentally interpretive. It means that the researcher makes an interpretation toward the data found. First, the data were identified in terms of cultural-bound elements throughout Begalan texts. Then several strategies of translation were proposed to achieve an accurate and acceptable product of translation. Among them are transference, paraphrase, and translation by icon. In the process of translating, a process of rewriting message, an appropriate strategy should be taken into account for the sake of retaining embodied moral values in each element. Moreover, the translator's creativity becomes precious skill in coping with those elements. A creative translator would be able to produce a closest equivalence to reach the same effect as the original one. In particular, this brings about the concept of begalan not only comprehended through its exhibition but also through written materials. In general, those strategies are possibly applied to transfer some similar texts for students in their learning, for teachers to teach translation and for translator in practice.

Keywords: Begalan, cultural-bound elements, translation strategies, Banyumas, translator's competence

Abstrak

Begalan adalah salah satu tradisi Banyumas yang biasanya diadakan pada upacara pernikahan yang merupakan bagian dari beberapa prosesi. Sebagai tradisi lisan, begalan kaya akan nilai-nilai moral yang digunakan sebagai petunjuk dalam menjalankan kehidupan bermasyarakat, khususnya masyarakat Banyumas dan ajarannya diwariskan dari generasi ke generasi. Selain itu, begalan mengandung makna simbolik filsafat Jawa. Dalam perspektif orang Banyumas, begalan merupakan tatanan (norma), tuntunan (bimbingan), dan tontonan (kinerja) secara bersamaan. Berkenaan dengan hal ini, unsur-unsur yang terikat budaya menjadi masalah yang tak terelakkan terutama jika dilihat melalui studi terjemahan. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan beberapa unsur budaya yang digunakan dalam tradisi begalan. Kemudian beberapa strategi yang berhubungan dengan pengalihan budaya lokal yang diwujudkan dalam elemen-elemen tersebut diusulkan. Artikel ini merupakan

penelitian deskriptif kualitatif yang secara fundamental bersifat interpretatif. Ini berarti bahwa peneliti membuat interpretasi terhadap data yang ditemukan. Pertama, data diidentifikasi dalam hal unsur-unsur budaya yang terikat di seluruh teks-teks Begalan. Kemudian beberapa strategi penerjemahan diusulkan untuk mendapatkan hasil terjemahan yang akurat dan dapat diterima. Diantaranya adalah transferensi, parafrase, dan terjemahan oleh ikon. Dalam proses penerjemahan, proses menulis ulang pesan adalah strategi yang tepat yang harus digunakan demi mempertahankan nilai-nilai moral yang terkandung dalam setiap elemen. Selain itu, kreativitas penerjemah menjadi keterampilan yang sangat berharga dalam mempertahankan pesan elemen-elemen tersebut. Penerjemah kreatif akan mampu menghasilkan kesetaraan terdekat untuk mencapai makna yang sama seperti yang terdapat pada bahasa sumber. Secara khusus, artikel ini membawa konsep bahwa begalan tidak hanya dipahami melalui pameran tetapi juga melalui tulisan. Secara umum, strategi tersebut mungkin diterapkan untuk mentransfer beberapa teks serupa untuk siswa dalam pembelajaran mereka dan bagi para guru untuk mengajarkan terjemahan dan untuk penerjemah dalam praktek.

Kata Kunci : Begalan, cultural-bound elements, strategi penerjemahan, Banyumas, kompetensi penerjemah

INTRODUCTION

Java Island which constitutes several provinces is famous for its cultural diversities. It includes customs, local wisdom, traditions which can be found in people daily life. Central Java in particular is recognized as the centre of Javanese culture. It cannot separated from historical background in which several kingdoms in colonial era were established in this province. As time went by, some traditions have been still performed over generation.

Banyumas, as one of regions in Central Java has many local cultures to explore. Located in western part of the province, its people have their traditions to preserve over time. One of them is *Begalan*. *Begalan* is one of Banyumas folklores which is usually held in traditional wedding ceremony which aims to bless the bride and the groom to be free from bad luck. It involves several stages either before or while performing the procession. Like other Javanese folklores, *begalan* is loaded by symbolic meaning which represents Javanese philosophy, especially when it deals with the properties they use.

Begalan performing art is a traditional folklore which functions as a compulsory procession in a traditional wedding ceremony. Supriyadi&Slamet (1986: 22-23) explained that the word of *begalan* is meant to *kebegalan sambekalanipun* (avoided by misfortune). Literally, *begalan* means robbery. It is then described clearer in the performance that *begalan* is a robbery of properties carried by groom side. It is performed by two male dancers called as *Gunareksa* dan *Rekaguna* (Suhardi, 2013). *Gunareksa* serves as the porter of groom side who carries some properties given to the bride while *Rekaguna* performs as the robber. Among those properties are *ilir, cething, kukusan, centhong, siwur, irus, muthu, ciri, kendhil, pari, and tebu*. Those are household

properties which are easily found in the kitchen, kitchenware. All those properties are called as *brenong kepang*. The robber commonly brings a wooden sword called *wlira* with him.

Begalan is a combination of dancing and folklore involving humour accompanied by traditional musical instruments. It usually takes place in bride's front yard. In their performance, both dancers engage a dialogue containing important advices for the bride and the groom. The conversation between Gunareka and Rekaguna discuss the use of each property as well as their symbolic meaning. After the conversation ends, Rekaguna breaks the *kendhil* as a symbol that obstacles are vanished. At the end of *begalan* performing at, the properties becomes the things audiences want to have the most. They believed if they successfully grab the property, it brings them luck.

Accordingly, this paper is intended to describe the symbolic meaning of the properties as part of cultural elements of the folklore. Then, it tries to introduce several translation strategies which is perceived appropriate to translate those elements.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Translation studies

Speaking about translation is speaking about at least two different languages. Newmark (1988: 5) points out translation as the process of rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text. From this definition, two keywords are pinpointed; those are 'meaning' and 'the way the author intended the text'. The first keyword emphasizes meaning as the main priority of translation, and the second, one can assume that a product of translation must have the same effect towards the readers as similar as what the source language's writer intends the text.

Moreover, Larson (1984: 3) defines translation as a process of transferring the meaning of source language into the receptor language. This process is obtained by going from the form of the first language to the form of the second language by means of semantic structure. It means the meaning of the source language word is transmitted to target language word which contains equivalent meaning. From those definitions it can be concluded that translation activities involve transferring ideas, meaning and form from source language into target language by the nearest equivalent.

2. Translation and Culture

Essentially, translating language is translating culture. Language spoken by particular community reflects their belief and culture. Native speakers of source language are bound by language values they hold. Similarly, target language native speakers have their own language and culture. These two different cultures are always challenging for a translator to transfer and interpret.

In regard to this, Newmark (1988: 94) describes culture as a way of life and has peculiar manifestation which uses certain language as a means of expression, thus acknowledging that each language group has its own culturally specific features. One can realize that every culture is unique, and it can distinguish between one community to another. Regarding to the relation between culture and translation, it can be assumed that translation can be used as a means to transfer culture.

Meanwhile, Larson (1984: 431) defines culture as a complex of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people share. Each group of people hold different beliefs, attitudes, values or even rules which they preserve as their characteristics to differentiate it from others. Therefore, culture in translation is really important to be considered by translators. It is because culture has become an inseparable part of its people.

Moreover, Larson (1984:81) also divides the correspondences of forms and possibilities in translation as follows:

- a. A thing or event in one language and culture may have the same form and the same function in another language. For example, nose with the function of smelling is the same in all cultures and languages.
- b. The form may be the same but the function may be different. The example is fried rice for western people may only be served for breakfast, yet for eastern people it can be eaten both lunch and dinner.
- c. The same form does not occur, but another thing or event with the same function does occur, for instance, 'broken heart' in SL expression, does not have the same form in TL. However, there may be no correspondence of form and function at all. The example is sheep has the function of being sacrifice` for sin in a particular culture. In this case, there is no comparable animal for sacrifice for sin in TL culture. Thus there is no correspondence of either form or function, and translator can use a descriptive phrase for both form and function.

To sum up, considering culture as a part of understanding text in translating is crucial since culture will give implication toward the product of translation. This will be applied in terms of producing translation text which is equivalent and natural to its readers.

3. Newmark's Cultural Categories

In this paper, cultural categories are classified based on Newmark's categories (1988:94-103) into five as follows:

a. Ecology

According to Newmark geographical and ecological features are considered as culture-specific items when those objects are unique to the country of origin. Geographical features can be normally distinguished from other culture-specific items in that they are usually value-free, politically and commercially.

Nevertheless their diffusion depends on the importance of their country of origin as well as their degree of specificity. This classification includes flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills, etc. The examples are *tegal* or *tegalan* in

which Javanese term used for a flat and wide land which has specific function. It is usually for planting some kinds of plants which need not much water since the irrigation just depends on the rain water.

b. Material Culture

Food is the most sensitive and important expression of national culture for many countries since food has the widest variety of translation procedures. Moreover, clothes belong to this classification as well. Clothes as culture-specific item may be sufficiently explained for the target language general readers if the generic noun or classifier is added. Thus, material culture has to be translated appropriately because it is an expression of national culture.

Translators can recommend for words with recognized equivalent, and a neutral term for the readers in general. This classification involves artifacts, food, clothes, house and town, transportation. The examples are *clothes* into *kebaya*. *Kebaya* is a kind of Javanese clothes which is usually worn by women. Then, food is translated into *tumpeng*. *Tumpeng* is yellow cone-shaped rice dish which is usually served by Indonesian's people especially Javanese people in particular occasion.

c. Social Culture

In considering social culture, one has to distinguish denotative from connotative problems of translation (Newmark, 1988: 98). The translators should know both of them in order to produce an acceptable translation. Regarding to this notion, Larson (1984: 131) explains that connotative meaning is often culturally conditioned. A word which has a positive connotation in one culture may actually have negative connotation in another. Work and leisure belongs to this classification. For instance, the word *Kusir* is one of professions in Indonesia which is usually done by men. This profession is as a driver of horse cart.

d. Social organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts

Concerning the translation of social organization terms, the translator should decide that the term is recognized and understood by the readers. In addition, they should pay attention on the setting as well. The translation process of cultural organization is also divided into two forms; formal and informal informative (colloquial) texts.

At this point, Newmark(1988: 100) states in formal informative text, the name should be transferred, and a functional, culture-free equivalent given. Thus, in formal informative text, the translator should translate the cultural organization terms.

On the contrary, Newmark (1988: 100) also conveys if the informative text is informal or colloquial, it may not be necessary to transfer the organization's name. It means if the text is informal informative, it is no necessary for the translator to translate the cultural organization. The political and social life of a country is reflected in its institutional terms. For instance, *subak* is a term used for typical irrigation organization in Bali.

e. Gesture and Habits

Gesture and habits are symbolic action of a country which has meaning and function. If the action is simply translated without considering its cultural background, it will make wrong meaning. At this point, Larson (1984: 138) conveys that in every culture, there will be particular action which will be symbolic. Gesture and habit in the form of action are sometimes difficult to translate. Furthermore, regarding to this notion, Newmark (1988: 102) adds there are distinction between description and function which can be made where necessary in ambiguous cases. Some gesture and habits occur in some culture but not in other. The examples are:

1. Do slow hand-clap to express warm appreciation
2. Nod to assent and shake head to dissent
3. Giving thumb-up means OK

METHODS

This research belongs to descriptive qualitative which is fundamentally interpretive. It means that the researcher makes an interpretation toward the data she found. This includes developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for or categories and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusion about its meaning personally and theoretically (Creswell, 1998:182-183).

In regard to this, it tries to explain the cultural elements which are used in *begalan* folklore and introduce several translation strategies to transpose cultural-bound elements in the folklore. It would be described comprehensively to find out cultural terms in *begalan* as well as explaining the appropriate strategies to translate those terms. Documentations taken from several references on Banyumas *begalan* were used as the source of data. Classification was done and then followed by analysis and conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses Banyumas folklore, *begalan*, then it is followed by the explanation of cultural categories which are found in *begalan* performing art and finally introducing strategies of translating cultural bound categories to keep the cultural load from source language to target language.

1. Cultural Categories embodied in *Begalan*

As many other Javanese traditional art, *begalan* performing art is symbolically loaded tradition. In regard to this purpose of the paper, *begalan* contains several cultural categories. Out of 5 categories proposed by Newmark (1988), 3 categories are found namely material culture, social culture and gesture and habits. The more detailed explanation are elaborated as follows.

There several properties that are brought by the carrier of groom family which represents symbolism of Javanese culture particularly Banyumas people.

As a **material culture** (artifacts), among those properties are:

1. *Pikulan*, a bamboo yoke used to carry brenong kepang hanging from

each end. It represents responsibility of bride and groom once they are married through happiness and sadness.

2. *Pedang Wlira*, a palm sword as weapon as well as to point each property carried by Gunareka. It symbolizes a responsible man, as a protector and man of the family.
3. *Brenong kepeng*, properties carried by groom family mostly consisting of kitchenware such as:
 - a. *Ian*, a square rice container made from bamboo which represents earth in which human live.
 - b. *Illir*, a bamboo-plaited fan which symbolizes how a married man and woman in making decision. They should distinguish good things and bad things.
 - c. *Cething*, a bamboo rice basket or container which represents that human is a social being, they are put in “social container” bound by norms and guidance in the community.
 - d. *Kukusan*, a cone-shaped bamboo rice steamer. It implies that the bride and the groom have to be ready to support their life.
 - e. *Centhong*, a rice ladle, a piece of coconut shell dipper with wooden handle. This is meant that the married couple should prioritize discussion for solving their domestic problems.
 - f. *Irus*, a piece of coconut shell dipper with a wooden handle to dip soup. It means that the couple should be faithful to the spouse instead of having affair with somebody else.
 - g. *Siwur*, a coconut shell-made water dipper. *Siwur* stands for *kasihe aja diawur-awur* (do not flatter other man or woman); it means that the spouse has to be faithful.

Meanwhile, as **social culture**, *begalan* is performed which involve some musical instruments and players. Among them, the term *gunareka* and *rekaguna*. The first refers to the porter of the groom side who brings the *brenong kepeng* while the latter means the *begal/robber* of bride side to rob the *brenong kepeng*.

Begalan is categorized into social culture in terms of performance they serve. As part of social activities particularly in wedding ceremony, *begalan* is not only as a *tontonan* (performance), but also as *tuntunan* (guidance) as well as *tatanan* (norms). In this respect, organization within community and activities are also included.

At last, **gesture and habits** are also found in this tradition including body movement and facial expressions demonstrated by both players, *gunareka* and *rekaguna*. They do so to support their mission to deliver the message during the procession as well as to entertain the viewers and audiences.

2. Translation Strategies of Cultural-bound Categories in *Begalan* Folklore

Translation involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language by one social group into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding and en-coding

(Karamanian, 2002). As cultures are increasingly brought into greater contact with one another, multicultural considerations are brought to bear to an ever-increasing degree.

Similarly, Javanese culture expresses its eccentricities in a way that is 'culture-bound' such as cultural words, proverbs, and surely idiomatic expressions whose origin and use are intrinsically and uniquely bound to the culture concerned.

Begalan contains various culture-bound terms that challenge translators to find ideal way to transfer the culture from source language to the target language. Adopting Newmark's idea (1988), transference can be the most common thing to transfer culture-bound terms. This strategy transfers an SL word to TL word. It includes transliteration or borrowing. Here terms such as *ilir*, *iyon*, *siwur*, *centhong* and other properties in *Brenong kepang* is exclusively preserved in target language. It aims to introduce culture concepts of SL to the TL.

However, transference or borrowing strategy, regardless its accuracy, does not allow the target readers comprehend the meaning since no explicit information is provided. Therefore, paraphrase can be the other option to transpose culture terms. For instance *kukusan* is translated into a rice steamer which made from bamboo and has cone in shape. Here the meaning of *kukusan* is clearer to the readers who do not know the concept of *kukusan*. By providing additional information, cultural gap can be minimized.

The other strategy can be done by providing the icon of the culture word. The visual information in terms of picture would help the audiences understand the concept of culture words introduced in the source language. *Brenong kepang* which contains kitchenware and other properties used in household would be best explained by picture or icon.



Figure 1. Brenong kepang



Figure 2. Brenong kepeng and the carrier

Translation by icon or picture serves visual description to the target readers yet preserving cultural concept of the source language. Nevertheless, this strategy can be the option if the text of target language allows to provide such figures regarding the efficiency of the space provided.

CONCLUSION

Banyumas *Begalan* is one of Banyumas folklores generally held in wedding ceremony in which involves several processions. As an oral tradition, this is undoubtedly rich of moral values to guide the local people in life over generation. Moreover, it contains symbolic meanings of Javanese philosophy. *Begalan*, thus, in the perspective of Banyumas people becomes *tatanan* (norm), *tuntunan* (guidance), and *tontonan* (performance) simultaneously. In perspective of translation studies, culture-specific concepts become tricky task for a translator. Cultural categories is then identified to find out what categories of *begalan* contain such as material culture which is much represented in properties of *begalan* performance then introduces several translation strategies which are appropriate to transpose source culture concepts. Among those are transference, paraphrase and translation by icon. Certainly other strategies are also necessarily explored to reach a cultural equivalent between SL and TL. Through strategies, the culture-specific concepts of *begalan* folklore is not only comprehended by the native people but also to the readers of the target readers, put it say, into English. Banyumas *begalan* is not only local culture owned by Banyumas people but also global culture when the translated versions are provided.

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