

Revoicing Attitude of Virginity Test: An Appraisal-based Translation Study on News Discourse

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jli.2024.15.1.11855>

Article History:

First Received: **ABSTRACT**

28/04/2024

Final Revision:

26/06/2024

Available online:

30/06/2024

The virginity test is a long-standing tradition that has been documented in at least 20 countries around the globe (WHO, 2018). Women and girls are frequently subjected to or forced to undergo this test for various reasons. In the Indonesian context, this gynecological examination conducted under the belief to determine if a woman has had vaginal intercourse has to be experienced by female military candidates. In response, the Indonesian army has set to remove this somewhat controversial policy. Through media, this issue was packed in such a way that reflects the media's stance. Accordingly, this research aims to investigate how media take a stance toward this issue and how the translated version delivers it from the perspective of translation studies and appraisal theory using the qualitative method. Appraisal resources identified the data and compared the original text to the Indonesian versions retrieved from the ABC online news portal (Australian and Indonesia-based). This method is conducted to gather and interpret any attitudinal resources in both original and translated texts. It reveals that the translated version, compared to the more neutral-sounded original one, exploits a more clear-cut attitude towards the issue. Various attitudinal lexis including invasive, gender-based, victim and abusive, are chosen to revoice her stance that this practice is groundless. Through its translation, the author articulates her attitude louder. It proves that different target readers influence how the information is packed and constructed. As a re-situated text, translation barely occurs in an empty space.

Keywords: virginity test; appraisal system; translation studies; news discourse

INTRODUCTION

The virginity test has become part of traditions in several countries. Olson (2018) mentioned that it has been documented in at least 20 countries over the globe. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Palestine, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Turkey, and Uganda (Olson & García-Moreno, 2017) keep this practice. Women or girls are frequently forced to undergo this test for various reasons. These include a prerequisite for marriage eligibility, institutional requirements, employment eligibility, or women's moral assurance. The virginity test is usually carried out by inspecting the hymen for tears or its size of opening and/or

inserting fingers into the vagina (also known as a 'two-finger' test). A "two-finger" test to measure the vaginal opening's size may be part of the examination in certain circumstances. The goal is to "determine if a woman is a virgin." However, this is predicated on the inaccurate and misleading notion that penile penetration causes discernible, predictable changes in the vaginal introitus, particularly in the hymen's form and appearance (Crosby, Oleng, Volpellier, Mishori, 2020). The techniques are practiced under the belief that the appearance of the female genitalia can indicate a girl's or woman's history of sexual activity. WHO claims that it is baseless to prove whether a woman or girl has had vaginal intercourse or not.

Several researchers have paid attention to the issues of virginity test for women around the globe (Olson & García-Moreno, 2017); (Olson, 2018); (Crosby et al., 2020); (Tampubolon, 2021); (Zayed et al., 2022); (Mayo & Taboada, 2017). The first study revealed that Health practitioners in a variety of settings continue to use virginity testing, even while evaluating patients for sexual assault, despite the lack of evidence of medical utility and significant risks. Updates to medical and other textbooks to reflect current medical knowledge are necessary for health workers to be better informed. Governments must reevaluate their guidelines and work towards outlawing virginity testing. The third study strongly suggested that this invasive test should not be performed because of its danger.

Similarly, Zayed et al. (2022) who highlighted the practice in Egypt, recommended utterly banning the practice of virginity testing in different countries. They claimed it is part of a human rights violation, as prior studies proved. Likewise, (Tampubolon, 2021) criticized that police virginity testing in Indonesia is not essential and makes up discrimination against women's opportunity to become a police officer since there is no correlation between virginity and police duty. To put this in brief, all those researchers agree that virginity testing is disadvantageous, harmful for women, and groundless.

In terms of translation studies, appraisal theory has been recently employed to capture the interpersonal meaning of the text, both the original and the translated versions mainly dealing with language evaluation. For instance, (Chalimah et al., 2018) employed the appraisal theory to describe the negative attitude toward the issue while Asad et al. (2021) revealed that the chosen texts invoked attitude by laying evaluative ground highlighting the current issue. More explicitly, (Jusry & Cahyono, 2021), (Zain & Nababan, 2023) demonstrated how the appraisal contribution illustrates and evaluates the author's attitude and stance by comparing the original text and the translation. Likewise, (Qian, 2012, 2017) exclusively investigated the unfaithful translation as well

as translator's positioning by using appraisal approach caused by the different norms and political contexts.

In Indonesian context, this gynecological examination conducted under the belief to determine if a woman has had vaginal intercourse has to be experienced by female military candidates. Virginity tests are obligatory for female military and national police recruits, typically high school graduates aged between 18 and 20 (McDermott, 2015). As stated by Cochrane (2014), women under policies force subjected to virginity signifies that a girl can protect herself thus, she can protect others which reflects unscientific logic. The test is a compulsory measure for women who are to enlist in the military and is also required for the personnel fiancées (BBC News, 2015). Any military officers about to marry are asked to get a letter of recommendation from their commanders, which is only issued after the fiancées have undergone the test (Human Rights Watch, 2018). This test is executed by inserting a doctor's two fingers (male or female) into a woman's vagina to determine if the hymen is still intact. If it were to be torn with consistent patterns, then it is to be judged that the candidate is accustomed to sexual intercourse (The Guardian, 2015). Regardless of its unscientific and no medical basis, this test remains a prerequisite for moral indicators in the military.

The Indonesian army has set to remove this controversial policy. Taking quite a long time to decide, the Indonesian force finally considered withdrawing this requirement to enroll military forces. General Andika Perkasa, chief of staff of the Indonesian Army (TNI AD), announced that the health test requirements for female cadets would no longer be different to those of their male counterparts (Wibawa, 2021). Thanks to the media, this news rapidly spread out, raising diverse reactions. Accordingly, the research aims to investigate how media take a stance toward this issue and how the translated version delivers it under the perspective of translation studies and appraisal theory. This relatively new framework would provide fresher insight from different views. Two selected texts, both original and translated versions, are compared to seek how stance is manifested through the appraisal system, particularly attitude through its attitudinal resources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative method, presenting detailed information about a phenomenon or event (Flick, 2022). Similarly, this research is designed to observe, prove, and explain how the author's stance on the issue of the virginity test is articulated in the original text. Then, it is compared to the translated text to identify the difference or shift in delivering the issue along with the potential reasons. The data were taken from the ABC online news portal <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-05/indonesia-tni-army-armed-forces-end-virginity->

testing/10034 for English text, while the translated version was accessed at <https://www.abc.net.au/indonesian/2021-08-05/tni-tidak-lagi-lakukan-tes-keperawatan/100353014>. The two news texts, in both English and Indonesian versions, discuss the issue of the virginity test in Indonesian military recruitment.

Meanwhile, the data were treated by content analysis as proposed by (Spradley, 2011) which involves domain, taxonomy, component, and culture analysis. This model identified whether texts were included in data or not on the level domain. The data of this research are in the form of attitudinal expression, whether in word, phrasal, and clause level. Then taxonomy analysis was done by classifying based on the subsystem of appraisal including *effect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation*, along with the scaling of the evaluation through *graduation*. Those are linked and interrelated to build a more significant meaning to which social and cultural contexts contribute. The same treatment is also applied to the target text. Both texts were then compared and observed thoroughly to demonstrate the different stances of the author's attitude towards the issue by exploiting two languages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the results and provides a discussion of the study. The domain and taxonomy analysis shows that appraisal components are found through effect, appreciation, and graduation. Graduation in terms of modality is also identified, which shows the need to intensify the issue. Below is the distribution of the data.

Table 1. Distribution of appraisal components of both text

In the source text (ST), most expressions are neutral, as the seven data points prove.

Appraisal components	Source Text		Target Text	
	Attitudinal lexis	Stance	Attitudinal Lexis	Stance
Aff; trust	sec; (1) Andy Yentriyani Kepala Komnas Perempuan mengatakan kepada ABC bahwa mereka menghargai perubahan yang diusulkan, hal yang sudah diberitakan luas di media lokal.	positive	Andy Yentriyani, head of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), told ABC that they "appreciate" the proposed changes, which have been widely reported in local media.	negative
App; react	(2) TNI sudah melakukan tes keperawanan terhadap calon prajurit perempuan selama berpuluh-puluh tahun.	neutral	The Indonesian military has been doing invasive tests on female recruits for decades.	negative
Aff; unhapp	(3) "Kami juga mewawancarai mereka yang pernah mengalami hal yang sama di tahun 1970-an, 1980-an, sampai tahun 2012, dan 2013."	neutral	"We also interviewed victims who suffered the practice in the 1970s, 1980s up to 2012 and 2013."	negative
Grad; force App; val	(4) TNI tidak pernah melakukan praktik tes keperawanan sebagai bagian dari tes kesehatan.	Up scaling neutral	The armed forces did not perform virginity tests as medical tests.	- neutral
Grad; force;	(5) "Pemeriksaan kesehatan terhadap calon prajurit untuk KOWAD akan sama dengan tes kesehatan untuk prajurit TNI AD,"	Down scaling	"Health checks on prospective soldiers of the Women's Army Corps must be the same as medical examination requirements for male TNI AD soldiers,"	Up scaling
Aff: 2 App: 8 Grad: 2	Positive:1 Neutral: 7 Negative: 2 upscale: 1 Downscale: 1		Positive: 1 Neutral:2 Negative:8 upscale: 1	

Meanwhile, negative expressions are found in two data sets, and positive ones are found in one datum. Regarding graduation, it is identified in two data to either upscale (*tidak pernah*) or downscale the expression (*akan*). In contrast, the target text (TT) demonstrates the different findings. Only one datum consists of a positive expression. Then, the negative expressions take the most findings from eight data sets compared to the ST. Finally, the neutral-sounded one is found in two data sets, and the graduation is identified in one datum to upscale the intention. A more detailed explanation is provided below.

Affect

Regarding appraisal components, affect is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings or emotional reactions, whether happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored (Martin & White, 2005). This research shows the effect in two data sets, which are explained as follows.

Sample 1

ST: *Andy Yentriyani Kepala Komnas Perempuan mengatakan kepada ABC bahwa mereka **menghargai** perubahan yang diusulkan, hal yang sudah diberitakan luas di media lokal.*

TT: Andy Yentriyani, head of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), told the ABC they "**appreciate**" the proposed changes, which have been widely reported in local media.

This clause informs that Yentriyani, as the head of the National Commission on Violence Against Women, appreciated the government's proposal to remove the virginity test in military enrollment. In the source text, this attitude is positively delivered by the lexis *menghargai*. Here, the author puts trust in the government at least to have a proposal to end this practice. However, the same feeling changes by placing the quotation mark in the lexis "appreciate" to translate *menghargai*. The presence of this mark shows a sort of pessimism or skepticism to what the government stated. Considering the quite long practice in military procedure, the author is not sure that the change would be soon and effectively executed. This causes the positive evaluation in the ST to switch to a negative expression in the TT. Another finding is shown below.

Sample 2

ST: *"Kami juga mewawancarai mereka yang pernah **mengalami hal yang sama** di tahun 1970-an, 1980-an, sampai tahun 2012, dan 2013."*

TT: "We also interviewed victims who **suffered the practice** in the 1970s, 1980s up to 2012 and 2013."

Indonesian HRW researcher Andreas Harsono interviewed several women who were experiencing this test in this context. Among them is a retired Indonesian policewoman who confessed that she had first undertaken the test in 1965. He added that HRW interviewed those with similar experiences in the subsequent years. In the ST, the author uses the lexis *mengalami hal yang sama*, referring to the virginity test taken by the women. However, in the TT, the expression is replaced by the practice of showing the different evaluations the author wants to show. She tried to show that the women felt unpleasant with the procedure. The lexis *suffer, practice, and victims in the TT show negative evaluations of this test*. She puts them as victims since they indeed suffer to undertake it and leave traumatic experiences throughout their lifetime.

Appreciation

According to (Martin & White, 2005), appreciation involves evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena according to how they are valued or not in a given field. In general terms, appreciation can be divided into our 'reactions' to things, their 'compositions, and their 'value'. Samples of appreciation are presented below in this research.

Sample 3

ST: *TNI sudah melakukan tes keperawanan terhadap calon prajurit perempuan selama berpuluh-puluh tahun.*

TT: The Indonesian military has been doing **invasive tests** on female recruits for decades.

The term *tes keperawanan* is frequently and consistently mentioned in the ST, referring to the gynecological examination conducted under the belief that it determines a woman or girl has had vaginal intercourse. Regarding the translated version, this term alters *invasive tests, bringing up different effects*. The word *invasive* denotes the meaning of threat or aggressive attack that causes negative and unpleasant feelings. This is used to show that the test violates human rights and is categorized as gender-based violence. The authors tried to speak louder through this diction, calling for immediate action to abolish it. The various yet similar tone is manifested through other terms such as *virginity testing, gender-based health checks, the so-called 'medical test', unscientific, abusive and discriminatory practice and gynecology test*. Various naming is deliberately attached to tell and convince readers that this test should not have been practiced among women candidates. This negative tone articulates the author's stance toward the issue.

Furthermore, the various naming of TT in translating the term *tes keperawanan* into *gender-based health checks*, *so-called 'virginity testing'*, *the so-called 'medical test'* and *gynecology test* proves how the author gives valuation about the test. She thought this test was groundless since there was no scientific basis for the two-finger test to determine women's morality. Even this test for women recruits is painful, embarrassing and traumatic (HRW, 2015). The term 'virginity' itself is not a medical or scientific term (WHO, 2018). Instead it is a more social, cultural and religious construct which reflects gender discrimination among women and girls. The social expectation that girls and women should remain virgins (without having sexual intercourse) is based on the notion that female sexuality has to be kept and preserved until they get married. Through this attitudinal lexis, the author articulates her voice louder to convince the public that this discriminatory test should end.

Graduation

Graduation operates across two axes of scalability: grading according to intensity or amount, prototypicality, and the preciseness by which category boundaries are drawn (Martin & White, 2005; Martin, J.R., & Rose, 2003). In this research, graduation is employed to intensify the issue being brought up, which is the virginity test. To make it clearer, samples are provided as follows.

Sample 4

ST: *TNI **tidak pernah melakukan praktik tes keperawanan sebagai bagian dari tes kesehatan.***

TT: The armed forces **did not perform** virginity tests as medical tests.

In this context, the Indonesian army claimed that they had never conducted the virginity test as a medical test. Instead, they claimed it was for record-keeping purposes, not moral ones. The lexis *tidak pernah* shows an upscaling tone to emphasize that this practice is not intended as a part of a medical requirement to join the army. Interestingly, the TT does not show the same scale. Instead, despite the similar meaning, the word *did not perform* here and does not contain the same intensification as that of the ST. As a result, a more neutral tone is delivered in the translated version. Different findings are provided in the sample below.

Sample 5

ST: *"Pemeriksaan kesehatan terhadap calon prajurit untuk KOWAD **akan sama** dengan tes kesehatan untuk prajurit TNI AD,"*

TT: "Health checks on prospective soldiers of the Women's Army Corps **must be the same** as medical examination requirements for male TNI AD soldiers,"

The use of graduation (force) is identified in the datum above. The lexis *akan sama* reveals a low degree of intensity. In contrast, the TT translates it to *must be the same*, employing modality to convey a high degree of intensity. In this way, the author raised the force to emphasize the message. In this context, the speaker is General Andika Perkasa, chief of staff of the TNI AD, announcing that the health test requirements for female cadets will no longer be different from those of their male counterparts. In the ST, the speaker informed the possibility that the test would be equally implemented for both female and male cadets.

Meanwhile, this message is modified in the TT regarding the modal *akan* (will) being escalated to the modal *must*, which possesses higher intensity. By doing so, the author tried to pinpoint that the test must be removed so that female cadets take an equal health check and be free from discriminatory procedures. The higher intensity builds up a stronger urge from the author to call for this ending.

Basically, both texts convey the same intention that the virginity test must be ended and removed from the medical requirement for female cadets. However, this is differently manifested. On the one hand, in ST, the attitude is more neutral when selecting a particular lexis. The realization of the most neutral and positive affect and appreciation proves that the author expresses her concern indirectly to accommodate the readers as part of Eastern society. On the other hand, the realization of the attitudinal lexis of TT shows that the author articulates her attitude louder and more clear-cut than the ST's. The appraisal approach in this research contributes to unravelling the author's stance on the issue of the virginity test. This finding enforces the previous studies (Chalimah et al., 2018); (Asad et al., 2021); (Jusry & Cahyono, 2021); (Jusry & Cahyono, 2021); (Cahyono et al., 2021); (Risdianto et al., 2024); (Liu, Q.Y., Ang, L.H., Waheed, M., & Kasim, 2022) that demonstrated how attitudes were evaluated in news discourse. This current study also strengthens the study of (Zain & Nababan, 2023), who stated that translation products should take accounts of the target readers' circumstances. It proves that different target readers and cultures influence how information and opinions are packed and constructed. The English version, assuming the readers are Australian and other international netizens encourages the author to express her attitude more freely and directly rather than subtly and to address the invasive test for women.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the findings that In conclusion, the two texts present the problem of the virginity test differently for female recruits in the Indonesian military. To convey the author's stance on the matter, the source text is mainly neutral in tone. The chosen attitudinal lexis makes this apparent. This shows the author's attempt to conform with the source culture. The author's preference for using particular dictions over others proves that cultural and ideological aspects intervene in text production. In the Indonesian context, Indonesians frequently communicate indirectly to avoid outright conflicts and maintain harmony in their relationships. The cultural preference for upholding a sense of unity and avoiding embarrassing or upsetting other people is the fundamental cause of this indirectness.

In contrast, the translated version presents the matter boldly and clearly and directly supports the author's position. The assessment component's three attitudinal expressions—graduation, affect, and appreciation—help to express the attitude more clearly. To sum up, the diverse target readers and cultural contexts impact how information and opinions are presented and put together. The English translation empowers the author to convey her viewpoint more openly and directly because it assumes that readers are Australian and other foreign internet users. It confirms that different target readers influence how the information is presented and constructed. As a re-situated text, translation barely occurs in a space.

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