

# **Translating English Metaphors into Indonesian: A Mission Impossible?**

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## **Introduction**

Linguists define translation differently. Some are focusing on the form, while others are focusing on the meaning. Basically, however, there is a similar conception connecting them; the transfer of "message" from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL). A translator is a person who formulates or reconstructs the message to be understood by the target readers whose language and culture are different from those of the SL. It implies that a translator must be someone who knows or is familiar with both languages and cultures. In other words, a translator must go beyond the words (text).

A translator does not merely transform language, but he or she must be able to re-present all aspects of the SL in the TL as close as possible. Toer (2004) says that a translator is responsible for re-creating a relevant context-situation in TL. Since language and culture are *sui generis*, translation becomes interesting, complex, and of course difficult because in most cases, a translator must deal with untranslatable expressions.

## **Concept of Metaphors**

Metaphoric expressions are mostly connected to euphemism. They are enabling a single utterance to communicate many ideas, sometimes to avoid irritating others. Sperber and Willson as cited by Fabb (2001) claim that metaphors are kind of "loose talk". Metaphor is defined as "the use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea or object in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two" (Microsoft Encarta, 2008).

Larson (1984) divides metaphors into live and dead metaphors. Live metaphor is a statement using metaphorical language as a comparison. Meaning is obtained by seeing the comparison directly. For example, “Everybody likes Jane’s smile, her teeth are pearls.” Jane’s teeth are compared to pearls; white, very white. Dead metaphor, on the other hand, is called idiom. Dead metaphor is understood directly without giving attention to the primary sense of each of the words constructing the idiom.

Metaphor is shaped by the members of the culture. It means that metaphor as well as language is a cultural product. Culture refers to “the patterns of behavior and thinking of people living in social groups learn, create, and share” (Microsoft Encarta, 2008). Different social groups create different cultural products, sometimes unique. This condition causes problems in translation. In one hand a translator is demanded to be able to transfer the message. On the other hand, he or she is demanded to create the same situation of the source text (ST) in the target text (TT).

Problems that may arise in translating metaphors are due to different cultures in seeing the world. For example, people of European culture and those of Asian may have different perspective in seeing a thing. A translator must be able to transfer the meaning of figurative language written in the ST. Since ST and TT are different in language system and culture, translating figurative speech needs deep consideration. If there is no equivalence to a figurative speech of ST, what a translator must do?

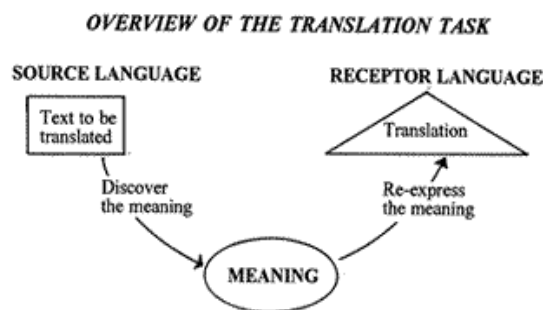
Newmark (1988) and Baker (1992) offer a solution. A translator can use translation by paraphrase procedure to translate the figurative speech so that the meaning can be transferred. However, there is a consideration of risk upon that procedure. The procedure seems to simplify or make meaning transparent. It makes the text not beautiful anymore. In contrast, aesthetics and word play are important in a literary work and become the feature of it. Here are two examples.

Source Text	Target Text
The thought of spending a night in the woods alone made <b><u>Toby's heart dance a fearful frenzied jig</u></b> in his chest.	Ide bermalam sendirian di hutan membuat <b><u>jantung Toby berdebar tak karuan saking takutnya.</u></b>
Flemming Brun Muus was <b><u>the black sheep</u></b> of the family and had therefore been sent off to Africa to make something of himself.	Flemming Brun Muus adalah <b><u>anak yang tidak diinginkan dan tak dapat diandalkan</u></b> sehingga di buang ke Afrika agar berhasil.

The translator cannot find a metaphorical expression in the TT so that translation by paraphrase procedure is used to express the meaning of the ST. As mentioned above, the procedure results in declining aesthetic values and visual imagery. In Indonesian (TL), “the black sheep”, if translated literally or word for word, means *kambing hitam* which the meaning is totally different from “the black sheep” of the SL.

### Disadvantages of Paraphrasing Metaphors

Before discussing about the disadvantages of paraphrasing metaphors, it is necessary to understand the translation process. One of the most comprehensive translation processes is proposed by Larson (1984). Please look at the diagram below.



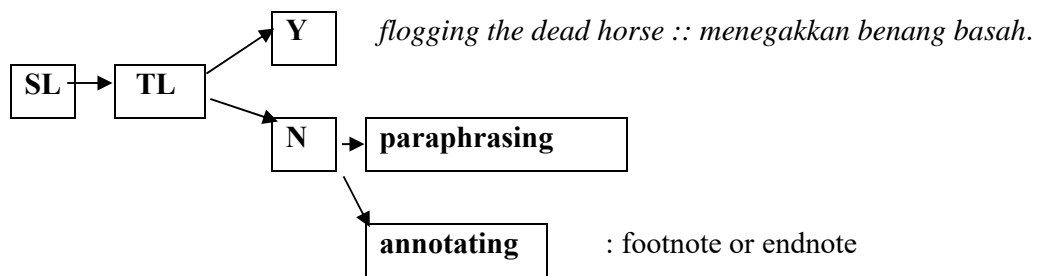
Translation process is started by discovering the meaning of the ST. Understanding, however, is not enough; a translator must be able to find out the aim of the writer of the ST and the target reader. He or she must prepare him or herself

whether he or she will be faithful to the ST or otherwise and consider the equivalence he or she will choose (Minis and Quark, 1991). To understand the ST completely, translation process begins with a very early step that is called analysis. The meaning that obtained then re-express in the TL by considering the target reader's social background, education, experience, culture, ideology, and belief. As a result, TT is not exactly similar to the ST. There must a downgrading or upgrading value or meaning. This also happened to metaphoric expression translation.

Paraphrasing metaphor is the last choice when there are not metaphorical expressions in the TL. This may result in the following outcomes.

- Aesthetic values in the TT decrease.
- The writer's purpose cannot be maintained in the TT.
- Meaning becomes literally expressed. *It spills the beans!*
- Translation tends to be longer. Publisher seems to be out of favor with this version.

Here is the flowchart of translating metaphor from English (SL) into Indonesia (TL).



### Conclusion

Since metaphors are shaped and related to the members of culture, they become unique. The uniqueness, in the end, becomes problem in translation. A translator who is demanded to be able to transfer the meaning of ST into TT is often facing with untranslatable metaphorical expressions of TL which does not have metaphorical expressions representing the one in the SL. The task of the translator becomes more difficult when translating metaphorical expression of different cultures. The difficulty does not merely lay in the language restriction but there is

no equivalent expression for the same metaphorical expression in the TL. To ensure the transfer goes well, a translator can paraphrase the metaphor but it brings on consequences. The different form of TT has been predicted by Larson (1984) through his diagram of the translation task.

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