

## **THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL SPECIFIC ITEMS IN HARPER LEE'S *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD***

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### ***Abstract***

This study aims to find out the translation strategies used by the translator to translate cultural specific items in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The sources of the data are taken from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and its translation. The research procedure consists of reading the whole text, identifying cultural specific items, and analyzing the translation strategies used by the translator to translate cultural specific items. The study results show that the translator used four main strategies to translate cultural specific items, namely loan words, loan words plus explanation, additional information, and generic words. Keywords: *translation strategy, research procedure, cultural-specific item.*

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui strategi penerjemahan yang digunakan oleh penerjemah dalam menerjemahkan istilah budaya dalam novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* karya Harper Lee. Sumber data penelitian diambil dari novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* karya Harper Lee dan terjemahannya dalam bahasa Indonesia. Prosedur penelitian mencakup: membaca keseluruhan teks, mengidentifikasi istilah budaya, dan menganalisis strategi penerjemahan yang digunakan penerjemah dalam menerjemahkan istilah budaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ada empat strategi utama yang digunakan penerjemah dalam menerjemahkan istilah budaya yaitu menggunakan kata pinjaman, kata pinjaman yang ditambah penjelasan, informasi tambahan, dan kata generik.

Kata kunci: *strategi penerjemahan, prosedur penelitian, istilah budaya.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The way in which cultural specific items may be translated into another language depends on many factors. One of the factors is the purpose of translation. The purpose of translation may influence the translator's choice in applying translation strategies. Generally, the purpose of literary translation is to introduce the source language culture to target language readers. Thus in translating cultural-specific items, the translator may choose strategies that not only show faithfulness to the source text, but also gives information to the target text readers. In the quest to find out the appropriate translation strategies that can be used to translate cultural specific items, the writer analyzed the translation strategies used to translate cultural specific lexical items in a Pulitzer winning award novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

*To Kill A Mockingbird* is a novel written by Harper Lee, published in 1960, and awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Novel in 2004. This novel was translated into Indonesian by Femmy Syahrani and published by Qanita in 2009. The novel tells about growing up under extraordinary circumstances in the 1930s in the Southern United States. The story covers a span of three years, during which the main characters undergo significant changes. Scout Finch lives with her brother Jem and their Father Atticus in the fictitious town of Maycomb, Alabama. Maycomb is a small, close-knit town, and every family has its social station depending on where they live, who their parents are, and how long their ancestors have lived in Maycomb.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Cultural Categories**

Some translation experts state that there are two main problems in translation, which are the differences in language and in culture between the source and the target languages. The latter problem usually deals with the cultural specific concepts in the source language,

which is totally unknown to the target culture. Newmark (1988:95) divided cultural categories into:

1. Ecology: flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills.
2. Material culture: food, clothes, houses and towns, transport.
3. Social culture: work and leisure.
4. Organization: customs, activities, procedures, concepts.  
Political and administrative, religious, artistic
5. Gestures and habits.

## **2.2 Translation Strategies**

To overcome the problem in translation especially at the word level, the translator may apply several strategies as proposed by Baker (2011:23): 1) translation by more general word, 2) translation by a more neutral/less expressive word, 3) translation by cultural substitution, 4) translation using loan word or loan word plus explanation, 5) translation by paraphrase, 6) translation by omission, and 7) translation by illustration.

## **2.3 Literary translation**

There are two basic types of translation as proposed by Nord (1991) in Munday (2001:81), which are documentary and instrumental translation.

1. Documentary translation serves as a document of a source culture communication between the author and the source text recipient, such in the case, for example, in literary translation, where the reader is well aware that it is a translation.
2. Instrumental translation serves as an independent message transmitting instrument in a new communication in the target culture, and is intended to fulfill its communicative purpose without the recipient being conscious of reading or hearing a text which, in different form, was used before in a different communication situation.

Literary translation is one of the examples of documentary translation. One of the aims of this translation is to introduce source

language culture to target language readers. In this translation, certain cultural-specific lexical items in the source text are retained in the target text in order to maintain the local color of the source text.

To translate the cultural-specific items, the translator may choose several strategies that not only show faithfulness to the source text, but also give information to the target text readers. These strategies may include loan word, loan word plus explanation, or additional information. Additional information in the translation may have various forms: within the text, notes at the bottom of page, notes at the end of chapter, and notes or glossary at the end of book (Newmark, 1988:92). Besides choosing the appropriate strategies to overcome the problem in translation, the translator should also make sure the translation is accurate, clear, and natural (Larson, 1984:485).

### **3. DISCUSSION**

The way in which a cultural-specific item may be translated into another language depends on many factors. One of the factors is the purpose of translation. The purpose of translation may influence the translator choice in applying translation strategies. In general, the purpose of literally translation is to introduce source language culture to target language readers. Thus in translating cultural-specific items, the translator may choose strategies that not only show faithfulness to the source text, but also gives information to the target text readers. In the translation of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the writer found out that the translator applied several strategies to translate cultural-specific items as will be discussed in the examples below.

#### **3.1 Loan Word**

Loan word is the process of transferring a source language word to a target language text (Newmark, 1988:81). It is particularly common in dealing with culture specific items, modern concepts, and buzz words (Baker, 2011:33).

**Example:**

**Source Text**

When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem's fears of never being able to play **football** were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. His left arm was somewhat shorter than his right; when he stood or walked, the back of his hand was at right angles to his body, his thumb parallel to his thigh. He couldn't have cared less, so long as he could pass and punt.

**Target Text**

Tatkala hampir berusia tiga belas tahun, tangan abangku, Jem, patah di bagian siku. Setelah sembuh, dan ketakutan Jem bahwa dia tak akan pernah bisa bermain **football** menghilang, dia jarang menyadari cederanya. Lengan kirinya sedikit lebih pendek daripada yang kanan; saat berdiri atau berjalan, punggung tangannya tegak lurus dengan badan, jempolnya sejajar dengan paha. Dia sama sekali tak peduli, sepanjang bisa mengoper dan menendang. (p.15)

The example above illustrates the use of loan word strategy to translate "football". In the United States, football is an American game played by two teams of 11 players, using an OVAL shape ball which players kick, throw, or carry up and down the playing field. Teams try to put the ball over the other team's line. The decision of the translator to use source language word/loan word in the translation is appropriate, since most of the target language readers know about football, eventhough this game is rarely played in the target language culture.

**3.2 Loan Word plus Explanation**

Loan word with an explanation is very useful when the word in question is repeated several times in the text. Once explained, the loan word can then be used in its own; the reader can understand it and is not distracted by further lengthy explanations (Baker, 2011:33).

### Example 1

#### Source Text

Early one morning as we were beginning our day's play in the back yard, Jem and I heard something next door in Miss Rachel Haverford's collard patch. We went to the wire fence to see if there was a puppy— Miss Rachel's **rat terrier** was expecting— instead we found someone sitting looking at us.

#### Target Text

Pagi-pagi sekali, ketika aku dan Jem mulai bermain di pekarangan belakang, kami mendengar suara yang berasal dari petak sawi Miss Rachel Haverford, tetangga sebelah rumah kami. Kami mendekati pagar kawat untuk melihat kalau-kalau ada anak anjing –**anjing rat terrier** Miss Rachel sedang hamil tua--alih-alih kami menemukan seseorang duduk, memandangi kami. (p.22)

The example above illustrates the use of loan word plus explanation in translation. Rat Terrier is an American dog breed with a background as a farm dog and hunting companion. The translator preserved the source language words and added information about the meaning of these words '*anjing*' to explain that Rat Terrier is the name of dog breed.

### Example 2

#### Source Text

We watched. One morning Jem and I found a load of stovewood in the back yard. Later, a sack of hickory nuts appeared on the back steps. With Christmas came a crate of **smilax and holly**. That spring when we found a crokersack full of turnip greens, Atticus said Mr. Cunningham had more than paid him.

#### Target Text

Kami melihatnya. Pada suatu pagi, aku dan Jem menemukan tumpukan kayu bakar di halaman belakang. Kemudian, sekarung kacang *hickory* muncul di tangga belakang. Natal datang bersama sekerat **bunga smilax dan holly**. Pada musim semi, ketika kami

menemukan sekarung lobak, Atticus berkata bahwa pembayaran Mr. Cunningham sudah lebih dari cukup. (p.49)

The example above shows that the translator had applied a translation strategy of loan word plus explanation. Smilax is a plant genus of about 300-350 species, found in temperate zones, tropics and subtropics worldwide. They are climbing flowering plants, many of which are woody and thorny. Holly is a genus of 400 to 600 species of flowering plants in the family Aquifoliaceae, and the only living genus in that family. The species are evergreen and deciduous trees, shrubs, and climbers from tropics to temperate zones worldwide. The translator preserved the source language words and added information about the meaning of those words with 'bunga' to explain that 'smilax' and 'holly' are the name of flowers.

### **3.3 Additional Information**

Newmark (1988:91) stated the additional information a translator may have to add to his version is normally cultural, technical, or linguistic, and is dependent on the requirement of his, as opposed to the original, readership. Additional information in the translation may take various forms: within the text, notes at bottom of page, notes at end of chapter, notes or glossary at end of book.

In the translation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the translator gave additional information within the text. Additional information in the novel was used to explain certain word or term that are considered important by the translator, such as explanation about historical background, cultural-specific items, and abbreviation.

#### **Example 1**

##### **Source Text**

Being Southerners, it was a source of shame to some members of the family that we had no recorded ancestors on either side of **the Battle of Hastings**. All we had was Simon Finch, a fur-trapping apothecary from Cornwall whose piety was exceeded only by his stinginess.

### **Target Text**

Sebagai orang Selatan, merupakan aib bagi sebagian anggota keluarga kami bahwa tak ada nenek moyang kami yang berperan di pihak mana pun dalam **Pertempuran Hastings—Pertempuran menentukan di Hasting, Inggris, pada 1066 antara Inggris dan Normandia.** Yang kami miliki hanyalah Simon Flinch, apoteker pemasang jerat dari Cornwall yang kesalehanya hanya bisa dikalahkan oleh kekikirannya. (p.16)

The example above illustrates the use of additional information within the text to explain “the Battle of Hastings”. The Battle of Hasting was fought on 14 October 1066 between the Norman-French army of Duke William II of Normandy and an English Army under the Anglo-Saxon King Harold Godwinson, beginning the Norman conquest of England. It took place approximately 7 miles northwest of Hastings, close to the present day town of Battle, East Sussex, and was a decisive Norman victory. The additional explanation in the target text is considered important to give a brief explanation related to the historical background of the story, so the readers of the translation will know what “the Battle of Hasting” was and its relation to the plot of the novel.

### **Example 2**

#### **Source Text**

Dill left us early in September, to return to Meridian. We saw him off on the five o'clock bus and I was miserable without him until it occurred to me that I would be starting to school in a week. I never looked forward more to anything in my life. Hours of wintertime had found me in the treehouse, looking over at the schoolyard, spying on multitudes of children through a two-power telescope Jem had given me, learning their games, following Jem's red jacket through wriggling circles of **blind man's buff**, secretly sharing their misfortunes and minor victories. I longed to join them.



### **Target Text**

Dill meninggalkan kami untuk kembali ke Meridian pada awal September. Kami mengantarnya menaiki bus pukul lima sore, dan aku merana tanpanya sampai aku teringat bahwa aku akan mulai bersekolah seminggu lagi. Belum pernah aku menanti-nantikan sesuatu seperti itu dalam hidupku. Aku menghabiskan berjam-jam waktuku selama musim dingin di rumah pohon, memandangi pekarangan sekolah, memata-matai seabrek anak melalui teleskop berkekuatan ganda pemberian Jem, mempelajari permainan mereka, mengikuti jaket merah Jem menembus lingkaran geliat-geliut **permainan blind man's buff--si "kucing" ditutup matanya, sementara teman-temannya berusaha menyentuhnya tanpa tertangkap; kalau ada yang tertangkap, si "kucing" menebak siapa orangnya** --diam-diam berbagi kekalahan dan kemenangan kecil mereka. Aku ingin sekali bergabung dengan mereka. (p.39)

The example above shows the translator added information within the text to explain "blind man's buff". The blind man's buff is a children's game. It is played in a spacious area such as outdoors or in a large room, in which one player, designated as "it", is blindfolded and groups around attempting to touch the other players scatter and try to avoid the person who is "it", hiding in plain sight and sometimes teasing them to make them change direction. The explanation in the target text is considered important to inform the reader about the game and how to play it.

### **Example 3**

#### **Source Text**

Atticus said professional people were poor because the farmers were poor. As Maycomb County was farm country, nickels and dimes were hard to come by for doctors and dentists and lawyers. Entailment was only a part of Mr. Cunningham's vexations. The acres not entailed were mortgaged to the hilt, and the little cash he made went to interest. If he held his mouth right, Mr. Cunningham could get a

**WPA** job, but his land would go to ruin if he left it, and he was willing to go hungry to keep his land and vote as he pleased. Mr. Cunningham, said Atticus, came from a set breed of men.

### **Target Text**

Kata Atticus, para professional jatuh miskin karena para petani jatuh miskin. Karena Maycomb County adalah wilayah pertanian, kebanyakan penduduknya sulit megumpulkan uang untuk membayar dokter, dokter gigi, dan pengacara. Masalah warisan hanyalah salah satu kesulitan Mr. Cunningham. Berhektar-hektar tanah yang tidak diwariskan digadaikan seluruhnya, dan sedikit uang tunai yang didapatnya dipakai untuk membayar bunga pinjaman. Jika dia mau menjaga mulut, Mr. Cunningham bisa memperoleh pekerjaan di **WPA (Works Project Administration)**, tetapi tanahnya akan terbengkalai jika ditinggalkan dan dia lebih rela menanggung lapar untuk mempertahankan tanahnya dan memberi suara sesuka hatinya. Mr. Cunningham, kata Atticus, adalah orang yang unik. (p.50)

The example above shows the translator used additional information within the text to explain “WPA”. WPA is the abbreviation for Work Project Administration. It was the largest American New Deal agency, employing millions of unemployed people (mostly unskilled men) to carry out public works projects, including the construction of public buildings and roads. In a much smaller but more famous project, the WPA employed musicians, artists, writers, actors and directors in large arts, drama, media, and literacy projects. The explanation in the target text is considered important to inform the reader what the WPA is.

### **3.4 Generic Word**

Baker (2011:23) states that translation by a more general word or generic word is one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalence, particularly in the area of propositional meaning. It works equally well in most, if not all, languages, since the hierarchical structure of semantic fields is not language-specific.

**Example 1**

**Source Text**

The Radley Place jutted into a sharp curve beyond our house. Walking south, one faced its porch; the sidewalk turned and ran beside the lot. The house was low, was once white with a deep front porch and green shutters, but had long ago darkened to the color of the slate-gray yard around it. Rain-rotted shingles drooped over the eaves of the veranda; oak trees kept the sun away. The remains of a picket drunkenly guarded the front yard— a “swept” yard that was never swept— where **Johnson grass** and **rabbit-tobacco** grew in abundance.

**Target Text**

Radley Place menjorok ke tikungan tak jauh dari rumah kami. Kalau berjalan keselatan, kami akan berhadapan dengan berandanya; trotoar membelok dan memanjang di sisi pekarangannya. Rumah itu rendah, dulunya berwarna putih dengan beranda depan yang luas dan daun jendela hijau, tetapi warna putihnya sudah lama menggelap menjadi sewarna dengan pekarangan abu-abu batu di sekelilingnya. Genting yang dikeroposi hujan menjuntai dari tepian serampi; pohon ek menghalangi matahari. Sisa-sisa tiang pagar bagaikan orang mabuk menjaga halaman depan—halaman terlantar yang tak terawat--yang banyak ditumbuhi **semak-semak** dan **rumput liar**. (p.26)

The example above illustrates the use of a general word to overcome a relative lack of specificity in the target language compared to the source language. The translator used generic words “semak-semak” and “*rumput liar*” to translate “johnson grass” and “rabbit-tobacco”. Johnson grass is a plant in the grass family, Poaceae, native to the Mediterranean region, but grows throughout Europe and the Middle East. The plant has been introduced to all continents except Antarctica, and the largest islands and archipelagos. It reproduces by rhizomes and seeds. Rabbits-tobacco is a member of the Asteraceae

family. Annual herb to one meter, stem white-tomentose, involucre 5-7 millimeters (0.20 – 0.28 in) long, cream colored or brown, with cream-colored flower heads. Leaves opposite, lance-linear, sessile, tomentose below and olive green above.

### **Example 2**

#### **Source Text**

Miss Caroline was no more than twenty-one. She had **bright auburn** hair, **pink** cheeks, and wore **crimson** fingernail polish. She also wore high-heeled pumps and a red-and-white-striped dress. She looked and smelled like a peppermint drop. She boarded across the street one door down from us in Miss Maudie Atkinson's upstairs front room, and when Miss Maudie introduced us to her, Jem was in a haze for days.

#### **Target Text**

Miss Caroline tak lebih dari dua puluh satu tahun. Rambutnya **merah terang**, pipinya **merah jambu**, dan kukunya dicat **merah**. Dia juga mengenakan sepatu hak tinggi dan rok bergaris merah putih. Penampilan dan wanginya seperti permen *peppermint*. Dia tinggal di seberang jalan, satu rumah dari kami, di kamar depan lantai dua rumah Miss Maudie Atkinson, dan ketika Miss Maudie memperkenalkan kami kepadanya, Jem terbeleng-beleng selama sehari-hari. (p.41)

The example above shows the translator used generic word to translate “bright auburn”, “pink”, and “crimson”. Auburn is a dark reddish-brown color, often used to describe hair color. Pink is a pale red color, which takes its name from the flower of the same name. Crimson is a strong, red color, inclining to purple. These specific red colors have not one to one correspondence in target language. Thus the translator decision to use generic word “merah” which means “red” is appropriate to overcome the lack of specificity in the target language.

## D. CONCLUSION

In translating cultural-specific items in literary texts, translators may choose strategies that not only show faithfulness to the source text, but also give information to the target text readers. In the translation of Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the translator applied several strategies to translate cultural-specific items, which are loan words, loan words plus explanation, additional information, and generic words.

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