

DISSEMINATING MULTICULTURALISM THROUGH THE TEACHING OF TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Students are expected to change the world. Their perspectives represent the way they view the world and its phenomena. The broader knowledge they possess, the more tolerance they have in interpreting life. In the global era, students should understand the importance of having good knowledge in multiculturalism. They will involve in an inter-cultural encounter since sources of information are widely offered. The willingness to have such an open mind is required in order to develop a better place to live and work. One way to disseminate multiculturalism values is using text containing information about culture and social values. The text written in English or Bahasa Indonesia for the class designed in disseminating multiculturalism is Translation. Here, students are taught to interpret the messages conveyed and translate the information from the source language to the target language correctly. Teacher must have good and creative technique in delivering the material so that students really enjoy the class and deeply understand the topic. The teaching and learning process in Translation class, therefore, is an effective medium to achieve the expected purpose as stated above. Theory of translation will not be the one and only theory to do the translation job, but it also needs comprehensive knowledge on other social sciences. Hence, translation class will not only discuss lines of words in a paragraph, but also reciprocal discussion among the members of the class. At the end, students will have the ability to translate such information in a text correctly and to establish civic society with more open comprehension over society and its culture.

Keywords: *theory of translation, multiculturalism, teaching-learning process, globalization.*

A. INTRODUCTION

In one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's great essays, he states "Society never advances. It recedes on one side as fast as it gains on the other" (Brodie, page 21, paragraph 4). His statement seems ridiculous since society indeed changes through times. The advancement of technology, fashion and life style, social stratification, and distribution of capital are all evidences of the *tumult* of social changes. However, Emerson's statement is actually a strong criticism toward the impact of those world's achievements. He implies that one achievement recedes other aspects of society in a way that the achievement impairs others. Hence, Emerson is actually saying that society changes and it influences every aspects of society. Those changes shall be responded wisely and appropriately. The gap between old and young generation is also another evidence of the *tumult* created by man's achievements. Further, cultural conflicts also occur in every part of the world, particularly in the area with diverse ethnic groups.

Previously, the concept of culture is defined as "to cultivate, to honor and protect, and by the nineteenth century in Europe it meant the habits, customs and tastes of the upper classes or the elite" (Nayar, 2009: 4). The statement above clearly explains how culture is dominated by the elite. It is the elite who rules and determines culture. Yet, the rise of industry has brought culture into a different concept even though the one who plays the significant roles is still the "elite", the capitalist. It is popular culture that defines the life style of today. Popular culture here is,

The set of practices, artifacts and beliefs shared by the masses, and is constituted by the everyday life of the masses: the food habits, fashion, forms of transport, the music, the reading habits, the spaces they occupy and traverse (Nayar, 2009: 6).

The word "traverse" in the quotation above depicts how complicated and complex the consumption of culture are. The impact may be good for the benefit of those involved in the production of culture or it may be harmful for those consuming the product of mass culture. Here, interpretation is considered crucial since communication is also based on the interpretation of the messages conveyed. The lack of knowledge or understanding towards certain phenomenon will lead to disruptive behavior. People may react aggressively towards provocative issues regardless the common sense they used to adopt. This phenomenon can be seen from the news below;

12 tahun lalu, 18 Februari 2001, konflik Sampit pecah. Ini adalah tragedi berdarah yang menelan banyak korban di masa orde reformasi dimulai. Konflik ini dimulai di kota Sampit, Kalimantan Tengah dan meluas ke seluruh provinsi, termasuk ibu kota Palangka Raya. Konflik ini terjadi antara suku Dayak asli dan warga migran Madura dari pulau Madura. Konflik tersebut pecah pada 18 Februari 2001 ketika dua warga Madura diserang oleh sejumlah warga Dayak. Konflik Sampit pada 2001 bukanlah insiden yang terisolasi, karena telah terjadi beberapa insiden sebelumnya antara warga Dayak dan Madura. Konflik besar terakhir terjadi pada Desember 1996 dan Januari 1997 yang mengakibatkan 600 korban tewas. Penduduk Madura pertama tiba di Kalimantan tahun 1930 di bawah program transmigrasi yang dicanangkan oleh pemerintah kolonial Belanda dan dilanjutkan oleh pemerintah Indonesia. Tahun 2000, transmigran membentuk 21 persen populasi Kalimantan Tengah. Suku Dayak

merasa tidak puas dengan persaingan yang terus datang dari warga Madura yang semakin agresif. Aturan-aturan baru telah memungkinkan warga Madura memperoleh kontrol terhadap banyak industri komersial di provinsi ini seperti perikanan, pertambangan dan perkebunan. Ada sejumlah cerita yang menjelaskan insiden kerusuhan tahun 2001. Satu versi mengklaim bahwa ini disebabkan serangan pembakaran sebuah rumah Dayak. Rumor mengatakan bahwa kebakaran ini disebabkan oleh warga Madura dan kemudian sekelompok anggota suku Dayak mulai membakar rumah-rumah di permukiman Madura. Sedikitnya 100 warga Madura dipenggal kepalanya oleh suku Dayak selama konflik ini. Suku Dayak memiliki sejarah praktik ritual pemburuan kepala (Ngayau), meski praktik ini dianggap musnah pada awal abad ke-20 (Republika.co.id, Jakarta).

The news from REPUBLIKA online version informs the terrible conflict between Dayak and Madura tribes in Kalimantan. Six hundred people died in the conflict (December 1996 – January 1997). The trigger was reported to be an unequal distribution of power and authority in which the new comers possess strategic areas. The local inhabitants have less power. Rumors spread and conflict occurred.

The conflict between *Dayak* and *Madura* tribes in Kalimantan is one of the phenomena explaining the failure of maintaining peace and understanding diversities among societies of different background. Even though, capital and power also play an important role in triggering the conflict, yet, civic society has the ability to overcome the problem. Civic society shall have more awareness,

comprehension, wisdom and solution to face such problems.

In order to prevent social disorder caused by different interpretations, there must be solutions for this problem. Here, I propose to apply translation studies as a medium to disseminate the idea of multiculturalism through the messages conveyed in the text. I am from the English Department and I teach Translation, therefore, translation can be a good way to provide students with better knowledge and information on the beauty of living in diverse society. Besides, English has become an obligatory subject in higher education curriculum. Therefore, students from different faculties have to take English. This is a big advantage to start the idea of disseminating multiculturalism as a way to enhance students' comprehension on living in diverse society.

The reason why I use Translation class is the idea that transferring messages does not only require good grammar but also the ability to see what lies behind the message. Translation class provides those two skills. It accommodates both grammar skills and interpretive skills. Here students are trained to understand the messages written on texts, and transfer the messages into the target language. Teachers/lecturers can offer to provide the materials used in class activities, or students can pick some materials and use them in class discussion. The discussion over the messages is interesting since two ways method of teaching and learning process is applied. It gives the teachers the opportunities to figure out students' interpretations over the texts.

B. DISCUSSION

Culture as man's effort to sustain life has a significant role in determining civilization. Culture is maintained and preserved as an artifact that defines the characteristics of a certain society. It is deeply rooted in the life of a person or a group of people and it is constantly changing through eras. The facts that occur

in our daily lives have opened our bare eyes of the importance of learning culture, particularly when we live in a multicultural society. It needs not only broad knowledge but also more open mind to understand culture and people. The coming of new technology, global impact and borderless networking system has created the spirit of exploring the world. Students are eager to study abroad and more graduates take big chances to work in foreign companies. At the same time, skilled labors enter and threaten domestic labors. The situation definitely needs comprehensive treatments. One of them is the ability to comprehend multiculturalism through texts. Texts written in English are considered beneficial in increasing understanding towards multiculturalism phenomena.

Mostly, students practice translating texts without considering the real messages. As one of the English lecturer at the English Department, Faculty of Humanities-Diponegoro University, I find students only focus on finishing the work fast. They seldom re-read their translation work. Once they finish translating sentences, they start talking to their classmates. Meanwhile, the essence of translating work is delivering messages from source language to target language correctly. It is not only about grammar accuracy but also about a process of interpreting texts into a correct message. Therefore, some students who have good grammar skills sometimes find difficulties in translating texts. They do not know how to construct the message into the target language. Their lack of knowledge and information on certain phenomenon becomes a serious obstacle in doing a translation work.

Moreover, students tend to use electronic dictionaries so that they do not consider the words they choose. Some students also connect to internet through their smart mobiles and access *Google Translate*. I have to remind them many times that *Google Translate* only helps

translating simple sentences. At this point, students may think that translation class is not interesting. Nevertheless, teacher/lecturer can raise students' attention by asking questions about recent issues or explaining the importance of learning translation and the advantages of having a good translation skill. Then, teacher/lecturer can start giving challenges on the relationship between translation and everyday lives. The discussion can be extended to the role of translation in defining our identity. Here, students will have the opportunities to share ideas and experiences about living in their own communities.

While conducting discussion, teacher/lecturer should explain the translation theory to give students the skills in translating texts. Students must learn the kinds of translation styles in order to obtain the right technique in doing a translation work. Nababan states there are four important factors determining translation styles, "(1) the different language system between the source language and the target language, (2) the different text material to be translated, (3) the assumption that translation is a means of communication, and (4) the different goal in translating texts" (1999: 29). Here, teacher/lecturer should also explain the difference between *word for word (restricted) translation* and *free translation*. These two translation styles are mainly used in doing translation practices. However, teacher/lecturer is expected to introduce the *ethnographic translation* style in order to use Translation class as a way to disseminate multiculturalism. Nababan states, "A translator tries to explain the cultural context of the source language in the target language while doing an ethnographic translation" (1999:37). At this point, translation practices become more challenging. Teacher/lecturer must have collection of stories, texts and materials related to multiculturalism topic. Below are several examples of messages that need

cultural interpretation in understanding the messages conveyed:

Braniff Airlines mempunyai slogan “Fly in leather” yang mengesankan bahwa terbang dengan Braniff berarti terbang dalam kemewahan. Terjemahan dalam bahasa Spanyol memberi kesan yang agak berbeda “Fly Naked”.

Slogan The Coors, “Turn It Loose (Santailah)” diterjemahkan ke dalam Bahasa Spanyol menjadi kira-kira “Suffer from Diarrhea (menderita diare)”

Penjualan Vicks Cough Drops di Jerman mengalami kesulitan. Orang-orang Jerman melafalkan huruf V sebagai F, yang mengubah nama perusahaan itu menjadi prokem untuk perilaku seks.

Puffs Tissue menghadapi masalah yang sama di Jerman, dimana nama perusahaan tersebut berarti rumah pelacuran

Slogan Pepsi “Pepsi Adds Life” (Pepsi Menambah Semangat) diprotes di Cina, karena terjemahan slogan itu menjanjikan: “Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave” (Pepsi membangkitkan leluhur Anda dari kuburnya). Para pemasar segera meluncurkan terjemahan baru, “Baishi Kele,” yang secara harfiah artinya “One Hundred Things to be Happy About (Seratus Alasan untuk Bersenang-senang)” (Robinson, 2005:388-389).

Those are several examples of cultural interpretation that lead to confusion when the messages are translated literally. The first example is an airline company’s slogan, which is aimed to show the exclusiveness of flying with Braniff Airline. However, the meaning is very different when it is translated into Spanish language. The second example shows how complicated it is to translate a certain message in English to Spanish

language. We can see how different the context is. The third example shows the problem faced by Vicks Cough Drops Company in Germany. In German, “V” is pronounced as “F” so that the company’s name means sexual behavior. This surely gives a big problem for the company. The fourth example also shows a company’s problem relating to different language system. “Puff Tissue” in German means “a brothel”. The fifth example shows the role of language in promoting products. Here Pepsi has to change its slogan in order to avoid misunderstanding among Chinese people.

Based on those facts, it is important to open students’ mind in viewing the world in various perspectives. At this point, teacher/lecturer must explain several types of meaning since “a word can have different numbers of meanings” (Nida in Nababan, 1999:47). The ability to comprehend meaning in relation to culture should consider the socio-cultural meaning in which the meaning of a word is closely related to the socio-culture of the users (Nababan, 1999:50). Thus, broad information and knowledge are inseparable issues that must be considered in teaching translation skills. Texts shall be explored and analysed by looking at the socio-cultural meaning.

Teacher/lecturer can distribute copies of material containing issues in Middle East, Asia, European countries, USA and even some recent issues in Indonesia. Materials are taken from newspaper, official blog, movie script and many others. It will also be interesting to play DVD/VCD about a certain region or culture in the world. Some people may not know the conflict in Egypt, Iran and South East Asia. Further, domestic violence regarding different ethnic group and religious faith become a trigger to chaos and conflict. It becomes worse when only a few people really hold high the freedom of acts. Others may be encouraged to attack those with different religious/ethnic background regardless the preamble of

Indonesian Constitution. The preamble clearly defines respect towards individual freedom. Therefore, it is time to disseminate the spirit of multiculturalism.

Students are provided with text on local wisdoms first before they learn about other cultures. It is important to look inside and find out our own identity before moving to the next steps of living with different people of different cultures. In one class, there may be students from different parts of Indonesia. They usually carry their own habits and identity. Teacher/lecturer can focus preparing translation materials on Indonesian people. When students practice doing the translation works, teacher/lecturer is supposed to repeatedly remind student with theory of culture and the power of language in understanding others. The result is expected to be a strong generation who are good in both translation skills and social awareness.

The next step is the discussion over recent issues around the globe. In order to avoid boredom, teacher/lecturer may invite students to bring their own materials, as long as it contains materials on culture. It will be interesting to compare students' works with the translation job done by *Google Translation*. Further, teacher/lecturer gives comment on students' translation work and observes the interpretation over the messages conveyed in the texts. This activity will also be more interesting by exchanging students' work among the members of the class. Students will find it interesting and perhaps funny while reading their classmates' works. They know others' thought and interpretation through translation.

Nevertheless, there are problems that might occur in the practice of translating texts. Students usually get bored easily after 45 minutes of teaching and learning process. Teacher/lecturer has to have innovative teaching method to overcome the situation. A glance history of the past may be useful to boost students' spirit, however, they may be bored since

they want to hear something new. It is possible to play song and give the lyric to them. Class activity will turn to an activity of translating song lyric. Therefore, teacher/lecturer must choose the lyric that have socio-cultural meaning. Another problem that might occur in the process of teaching translation to disseminate multiculturalism is lack of recent information. Some students live in the boarding house that they have to share TV, unless they have it themselves. It can be one logical reason why students do not have information on the recent issues. It is also possible to see students who do not read newspaper recently. Dealing with these kinds of students needs certain trick to maintain the rhythm of teaching and learning process.

It is true that the job of a teacher/lecturer is to educate, yet, teacher/lecturer can also be friend with students. This is one way to have the respect from students. Students are not afraid of teacher/lecturer, but they are reluctant to their teacher/lecturer because they respect their teacher/lecturer. Respecting teacher/lecturer also gives an opportunity to have an open discussion with students since they trust their teacher/lecturer. When it happens, talking about multiculturalism is interesting. Students will speak openly about their culture, family and ethnic group. They will consider teacher/lecturer as friend. Hence, good teaching and learning process can be achieved.

C. CONCLUSION

The idea of using a Translation class in disseminating the spirit of multiculturalism may be odd or awkward. However, this can be one alternative among so many ways of efforts and determination to maintain the unity of our country. The facts that religious intolerance, racial conflict and stereotype and prejudice against minority prevailed in Indonesia have called for our alertness to determine our attitude. Indonesia has survived from many conflicts.

However, several influences as a result of global tumult have given serious impact on the existence of religious tolerance and relationship among certain people in Indonesia. Problems shall not occur if dialogues on multiculturalism are maintained regularly. The spirit of multiculturalism will give a broader perspective of openness and mutual respect. One of the ways to preserve the spirit of multiculturalism is Teaching Translation. Translation is suitable to disseminate multiculturalism since it observes and analyses the meaning of the messages transferred. The theme of translation materials will give students new perspective on living in a very diverse country. Problems that might occur during the teaching and learning process are merely on the endurance of the students to actively involve in the class discussion. Another problem is the fear of stating the truth. Some students are raised in a family who maintain the roles of the senior. Therefore, some students do not have the courage to express their true feeling. Once a teacher/lecturer gets their attention, students will trust their teacher/lecturer and the process of teaching and learning translation as a way to disseminate the spirit of multiculturalism may run well.

Team Work. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar

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