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BEYOND TRANSLATION: CLARITY, SENSITIVITY, AND ARTISTRY IN BENEDICT ANDERSON'S READING OF INDONESIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This research was to reconfirm Anderson's theory (and praxis) of translation, i.e., transfer of language and culture from one to another with clarity, sensitivity, and high artistry. The analytical method used the application of diverse translation strategies to achieve pragmatic equivalence, i.e., the use of footnotes and foreignization-domestication principles. To consolidate the discussion, this research examined closely Anderson's English translation of part of Titie Said's "Bidadari" in his analysis of the novel and his translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's short story "Nyonya Dokter Hewan Suharko". The results indicate that what appears in his translation work is a broad range of discourses that help expound foreign-language (in this case English) intelligibility from the translating (Indonesian) one. His treatment of domesticating and the foreignizing translation is critically done owing to his gift of interests, passion, and persistence in the subject.

Keywords: *footnotes, pragmatic equivalence, foreignization, domestication*

INTRODUCTION

Benedict Anderson's mastery of new languages and cultures in his mid-career has made him suspicious that this rare polyglot must have owned more than mortal powers (Hirschman, 2011). Hirschman's statement of commendation is read when Anderson received the 2011 Albert O. Hirschman Prize, one of the prestigious awards in social science. After English (plus, probably, Irish dialects) and Spanish, Indonesian is the first Asian language he becomes proficient at. With Anderson opens the door for interdisciplinary Indonesian studies that are marked by the establishment of the journal *Indonesia* during his graduate school days at Cornell. Next, his comparative inclination allows him to work seriously and later publishes original research in Thailand and Philippine studies while learning Thai and Tagalog language, literature, and culture. Since then, numerous research and publications in the expanding fields of Southeast Asian Studies by later scholars have indebted to the immortality of his works to date. His classic appeared in 1983, *Imagined Communities*, to mention but one has continued to inspire scholars of varied disciplines such as history, literary studies, political sciences, and many more.

Indeed, speaking of translation and literary studies, *Imagined Communities* is one among numerous works by Anderson which is most relevant to cite as proven by literary scholars including the notable Jonathan Culler. Arguing that the rise of print culture and especially the rise of novels and newspapers expedite the translational translation, Culler (1999) has claimed that Anderson helps people think through the possibility of imagining a nation as a shared, special collectivity among strangers. However, what is relevant to the present discussion is the translation's effects on literary history as shown later by Walkowitz (2009) who build on this seminal work of Anderson. She has argued that transnational translation of novels in the varied, multiple, and the comparative edition is helpful in encouraging networks of collectivity. As it is, Benedict Anderson's contribution is important up until the present time with the rise of migrant writings, diaspora studies, trends in comparative literature, and translation studies.

Added to Anderson's gift of interests, passion, and tenacity in the subject, such as interdisciplinary scholarship on Indonesia especially by means of literature is his critical and transformative vision for the country he loves most. It is the critical and transformative vision that differentiates Anderson's translations from the often framed, Eurocentric, ideologically manipulated translation of non-Western texts into English which is used globally as *lingua franca* (Lefevere, 2016; House, 2013; Ning, 2010).

The wealth of research on Anderson's contribution to Translation Studies focus mostly on his seminal theory, that is, the spread of newspapers expedites the formation

of imagined communities that become the basis of a nation (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2008; Walkowitz, 2009; Buden et al., 2009). Anderson's important influence on transnational translation in the Asian region has also been documented as in his own book published two decades ago, The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World, comparing as it does Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. While studies on Anderson's translation of texts in the Philippines and Thailand have been done as for instance in the works of, respectively, Aguilar et al. (2011) and Jackson (2005), research on the translation dynamics in Indonesia is scarce although Anderson's translation of Indonesian texts abounds. It is thus important to discuss Anderson's legacy. His communicative and stylish translation of Indonesian texts into English is worth discussing.

This article, therefore, is to show how Benedict Anderson's translations of Indonesian literature go beyond changing words and/or interlingua meaning transfer. Dewi (2016) has said that translation is an intersection point (linguistic, cultural, and symbolic) to a system which is often ignorant of the linguistic and cultural specificities inferred in the source text. While translation is commonly understood as a process of transferring meaning and sense from one source language (SL) to the target language (TL), Anderson resists this conventional definition of translation. Translation for Anderson (1996), as proven in his many transnational translations, is more than the communication of meaning of an SL text by means of an equivalent TL text. Anderson's translations involve a broad range of discourse to expand on language intelligibility.

Although Anderson's translated texts appeared decades ago, his trajectories may provide insights to Translation Studies that is now an integral part of the study of cultures and comparative literature (Bassnett, 2006). Anderson's commentary on the fictionalization of transgender lives in Indonesia, as this research will soon show, is pertinent to juxtapose with today's Indonesian coercive handlings of this community. In addition, the translator's gender-sensitive approach in translating one Indonesian short story discussed is, likewise, contextually apt in cultural terms.

METHODS

The nature of this research is Translation Studies theoretical application and its implications (Tymoczko, 2005; Hatim, 2014; Munday, 2016). Used as two main research data are Benedict Anderson's article on Titie Said's novel and his translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's short story. The secondary data comprises of several issues on theory and practice of translation. This article contends that the translation of literary works is inclusive of the interpretation thereof (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1998; Johnson, 2002; Tymoczko, 2005). As such, two different but related text-types are used in the discussion, *i.e*., literary analysis and a piece of literature.

Specifically, this research attempts to point out first, the use of footnotes, and secondly, Anderson's handling of domestication and foreignization issues. Therefore, a number of translation strategies which are well-matched to his translation praxis will be used in the analysis. They include techniques of footnoting (Eco, 2012) and glossary compilation (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010) as well as various trajectories in foreignizing vis-à-vis domesticating translation chiefly from Bassnett (2006) and Munday (2016). To procure concepts of smooth translation, also consulted in this research is Venuti's renewed edition (2008) of his classic *The Translator's Invisibility* that was published for the first time nearly two decades ago but still relevant to date.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To begin with the first translation case, the data used here is Anderson's own article (1996). This article is a book chapter in Laura Sears' *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* – an esteemed, oft-quoted book by esteemed gender specialists. The intention of this current research is not to discuss the novel, but simply to look at salient points in the way Anderson translates parts of the novel for the purpose of his article. Titie Said's novel *Bidadari* brings Anderson's attention, hence his analysis on the bizarre, or to use Anderson's own term 'phantasmagoric' novel published during Suharto's time (1996). In Anderson's thorough assessment, the novel has a dreamlike quality as shown by his footnoted comment in the epigraph of his article, "deliriously outré late-New Order novel" (Anderson in Sears, 1996).

A few words about the novel are necessary. Published in 1990, *Bidadari* tells of the oscillation of psychological and social frustration experienced by a metropolitan homosexual couple. The novel's protagonist is Michael Dimaz Antonio Daturuntu or Micky the effeminate son, the youngest of three siblings of a Menadonese ghastly businessman and Solonese noblewoman. Titie Said casts Micky as a character with insecure identity (a woman trapped in man's body). Micky's parents, especially his masculine father and international trader of exotic animals kept for leather goods and delicacy food, tries very hard to train him to be like his macho brothers Tobias and Donald who will all soon take over the business. Meanwhile, his gentle mother has no courage to interfere but to obey her husband.

Meant 'heavenly nymphs', the title of the novel refers to our womanlike hero who is unnerved, blissful, and peaceful like angels in the sky with stars as companions. Frequently bullied and shouted at home, Micky with his mother's help goes to Surabaya to live with his uncle but changes his mind and takes a ferry instead to Lampung leaving no messages to his family. Upon knowing that his father and Tobias have been stalking him, Micky frantically throws his body overboard and gets injured and five months later finds himself lying in a mental hospital having undergone psychiatric treatment for his impermanent memory loss. Micky manages to escape to Makasar, poses himself like an escaped tomboy girl, checks in at a hotel and subsequently wraps himself in women's clothes. In this hotel, hallucination hits him; he is haunted by the bizarre animals in his family farms and begins to scream hysterically.

It is here that the romantic journey begins when a handsome, sensual Mas Tonny comes to help by nursing, soothing and treating Micky like his younger sister and calls him Kahyang, a short form of the Javanese word *kahyangan* that means heaven. Tonny (Raden Mas Fathoni Kusumonegoro) is a successful businessman who then brings Kahyang/Micky home, and the two live together as brother and sister. Tonny-Kahyang intimacy invites envy and it impatience of Kamardi, the architect and now in charge of Tonny's luxurious three-story house which is also his office on the most lavish street in Makasar. Tension arises when Kamardi finds the couple in bed and accuses them incestuous with which they reveal that they are not related

and soon decide to get married. Since people in Makasar know them as siblings, they get married in Surabaya and will move shortly to Jakarta.

Micky's now dying father has continued to look for him and sent Donald and Tobias to take Micky back to receive forgiveness. When the brothers appear, a fight follows between them and the duet Tonny-Kamardi. It is during the struggle that the brothers, attempting to reveal Micky/Kahyang's identity, strip him naked, and toss him against the wall leaving him unconscious. Micky finally wakes up a month later lying again in a hospital bed and regains his memory, having been puzzled over his marriage to Tonny. Kissing Micky lovingly, Tonny says that he knows from the very first time that Micky is not a girl. The story ends with the sex-change operation, and the couple lives a good life like a 'normal' husband and wife.

This present discussion would argue that Benedict Anderson's use of footnotes to accompany the discussion of the novel deserves particular attention. Anderson analyses the story whilst translating the essential parts throughout his commentary that are possibly hard to understand intelligibly by non-Indonesian. In so doing, he uses footnotes; and his footnoting technique is of the comprehensive and sophisticated kind. To begin with, the title of the article draws in itself an interesting clue for the thrills inside thus: "Bullshit!" S/He said: The Happy, Modern, Sexy, Indonesian Married Woman as Transsexual". Here is the quote at the beginning of Anderson's article followed by his own translation.

> "Bullshit!" *Aku meniru gaya Amerika yang selalu diucapkan Kamardi*.
> "*Sungguh, Kahyang. Saya berusaha mengasihimu sebagai adik, tapi ternyata tidak berhasil. Saya ternyata mencintaimu…*"
> "Bullshit!"*
> "Bullshit!" I imitated the American-style swearing that Kamardi always used.
> "Honest, Kahyang. I tried to love you as my little sister, but it turns out I failed. It turns out I love you in a deeper way…"
> "Bullshit!"

Underneath the quote is the author's explanation in mini-notes for the word "Bullshit" as follows: "A characteristically mestizo exchange in Titie Said's deliriously outré late-New Order novel *Bidadari*" (Anderson in Sears 1996).

Here, it seems that Anderson is interested in Tonny's manner of seducing Kahyang/Micky using the English interjection "Bullshit", which is culture-specific in English speaking countries. For clarity sake, Anderson provides some little information about this common use of code-switching by the Indonesian middle class, hence leaving this "characteristically mestizo exchange" untranslated. As a gifted translator, Anderson could have used the concept of equivalence for this outburst of mixed nonsense and disbelief often uttered by two people in love such as '*gombal*' (literally means 'rag' to show uselessness), '*Bohong*!' (short for '*Jangan bohong*!' or Don't lie to me, please). Given that Anderson has a deep understanding and very good grasp of both languages and cultures, he retains the word "Bullshit" for his English readers to show the dynamic use of language and social class in Indonesia. A literal translation is indeed a useless translation.

This is to say that using comprehensive footnotes, Anderson's translation here agrees with the notion that non-equivalence. In this case, his retention of the original English word sometimes gives results in a "better" translation (Kashgary, 2011). His equivalence is pragmatic, or what Hatim (2014) earlier calls it as cross-cultural pragmatics.

The doyen of translation theory in the likes of Paul Newmark and the eminent Bible translator Eugene Nida as well as some recent authors avoid footnotes, except to carry wordplay. The example can be seen from Eco (2012) that has said:

> "There are losses that we could consider absolute. They are the cases when it is not possible to translate, and if such cases occur, let's suppose, in the middle of a novel, the translator falls back on the ultima ratio, introducing a footnote - and then the footnote ratifies her defeat. An example of absolute loss is provided by many wordplays."

Other writers in favor of footnotes include Delabastita (2002) with his three-prong strategy, *i.e*., prototext, metatext, and prototext-metatext in place of footnotes. Similarly, although undesirable sometimes, says Ordudari (2007), the use of footnotes can be seen as the best in terms of translation strategy and translation procedure. It is because the foreign language readership could benefit from the text as much as the source readers do.

Thus, being said, there are 18 footnotes that Anderson provides the readers with his analysis of the novel *Bidadari*. Half of the footnotes discuss the rendering of several Indonesian terms into English in a sound, clear, and precise explanation. To take but one example is the Indonesian loan word '*konglomerat*'. To quote his footnote in full:

> "*Konglomerat* is probably most gracefully translated as "tycoon", but this would miss the wonderfully insouciant way in which a gray, abstract, collective institutional noun in English has become a very vivid, concrete, personal, and titillatingly [sic] menacing noun in Indonesian" (Anderson in Sears, 1996).

Rereading Anderson's article in today's Indonesia, his observation of primordial, anti-Chinese (business baron) feeling of the country is all the more relevant. For the last few years, sectarianism has threatened the integrity of Indonesia as a nation-state. One example is the religious-ethnic card currently played in Indonesian politics as evident in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election (Wilson, 2017; Suryadinata & Negara, 2017; Lim 2017). The LGBT group has also found a hard time amidst the increase of conservatism in Indonesia (see, e.g., Boellstorff, 2004; Oetomo, 2010; Khanis, 2013; Boellstorff, 2016).

Next, another important footnote Anderson mentions, in the beginning, is the use of the third-person singular pronoun. Anderson uses random translation and paraphrase of the Indonesian word '*dia*' into 'he' and 'she' throughout the article. English third-person singular is gender-marked, while the Indonesian 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular are uninflected for gender. It is surprising that Anderson promotes the use of gender-neutral language when such an issue is almost unheard of in the 1990s. When referring to Micky, Anderson makes an alternating usage of 'he' and 'she' as follows:

> Family tensions rise to the point where the mother secretly gives Micky some money, and tells *him* to go and live with his kind uncle in Surabaya. Instead, Micky takes the ferry to Lampung, fleeing any contact with *her* family. (Anderson in Sears 1996).

The recently mounting use of non-binary pronouns although yet to be formalized yet in the US universities is evident of Anderson's innovative use of gender queer pronoun. As reported by the BBC News in 2015, the LGBT Resource Center of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has been widely copied and circulated non-binary pronoun cards across the US since 2011. The card contains a list of 8 (eight) pronouns, i.e. 'e/ey', 'he', 'per', 'she', 'sie', 'they', 've', 'zie', and its corresponding pronouns in each position (subject, object, possessive, reflexive). Thus, 'he/she', 'him/her', 'his/her', 'his/hers', and 'himself/herself' become respectively, 'ey', 'em', 'eir', 'eirs', and 'eirself', or 'zie', 'zim', 'zir', 'zirs', and 'zirself'. According to the Research Centre director, the use of gender-neutral language is to support inclusive environment in order to respect individual's preferred gender identification (Chak, 2015).

Indeed, in today's mounting demand for gender equity and all-inclusiveness, Anderson's usage of "S/He" in the title and all through the assessment of the novel can be seen as a language overture to the increasingly spread of these unfamiliar pronouns. As it is, Anderson could have aptly given "Bullshit" *Sie* Said for the title of his article. Here it can be seen that not only does Anderson provide the readers with a sound literary analysis, but he also has a lot to offer through his fine translation; sociology of literature, culture, and politics of Indonesia.

To sum up, for now, Anderson's article is replete with footnotes, but not a single one is intrusive. In fact, the footnotes are of great assistance to the untrained eye of Indonesian language and culture. One can liken it with, for example, Peter Kalkavage's erudite translation of Plato's *Timaeus* whereby the translator makes an extra effort to include footnotes and glossary for the benefit of the inexperienced readers of Plato and those who hardly read Greek (Altman, 2014; See also Bloom, 2017).

The discussion now turns to the second translation case, *i.e.*, Ben Anderson's very own translation of Indonesian literature. Anderson's familiarity with Pramoedya Ananta Toer's writing needs no explanation. The weekly assignment for students of Southeast Asian Studies at Cornell University, Saya Shiraishi recalls, is to translate Pramoedya's works among other Indonesian literary pieces into English (Shiraishi, 2011). This section is to discuss Anderson's translation of one Pramoedya's short story *Nyonya Dokter Hewan Suharko* that previously published in Studies on Southeast Asia Journal. The text used herein is taken from *Tales from Djakarta*, a collection of Pramoedya's short stories translated and published by Equinox (Toer, 2000).

The main translation technique shown in translating the short story includes Anderson's effective oscillation of foreignization-domestication. Foreignization is the retaining foreignness, culture-specific items of the original, (e.g., personal names, national cuisine, historical figures, streets or local institutions), while domestication is transparent, fluent style of translation to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for the target language reader. To use Venuti's (2008) vision of the invisibility of the translator, the technique is no other than 'sending the reader abroad' *vis-à-vis* 'bringing the author back home'. This article will argue that Benedict Anderson does both gracefully.

First is the catchy title: *Mrs. Veterinary Doctor Suharko*. Anderson translates the honorific term *Nyonya Dokter Hewan* into *Mrs. Veterinary Doctor*, which might put any English speaking reader to smile, yet appears normal to readers of the source culture. Indeed in Indonesia, let alone in the 1960s, it was still common to call a wife by her husband's surname plus his professional title. Doctors, lawyers, government officials, and many more are all male pursuits that women hardly occupied. When a woman is called 'Bu Lurah', for example, she is the wife of Pak Lurah (sub-district head). No women have ever taken the helmet of leadership even at the smallest constituency level until a few years ago. It is not up to the country's post-1998 democratization era that women have obtained the opportunity to become government officials in Indonesia. Only when a woman gets an official or professional position, she can use her name – a case in point being Lurah Susan, the controversially appointed sub-district head of Lenteng Agung, South Jakarta in 2014. It must be restated here that the political landscape has changed since Anderson's translation of the short story in question appeared.

One research, for example, claims that despite the predominantly Muslim population, Indonesia has gradually adopted a non-Arab Islamic democracy by supporting women leaders (Fattore, Scotto, Sitasari, 2010), notwithstanding the post-truth politics shown in the latest case of the gubernatorial election in Jakarta (Lim, 2017). Thus, Anderson's adoption of foreignizing technique in translating the honorific name of the doctor's wife in the short story is to be understood against the backdrop of Indonesia's cultural norms of the time.

Another instance of Anderson's foreignization is leaving the words '5.000 rupiah' untranslated from its original 'Rp.5.000'. Mindful of the fact that the naturalness and smoothness of the translated text are usually achieved at the expense of the cultural and stylistic messages of the source text (Yang, 2010), Anderson makes use of wordlist to supplement the information. He provides the glossary at the end of the story using mostly domestication, and again, his comprehensive footnotes. The examples are *surat piutang* (IOU), *sitje* (Dutch word for the sofa - footnoted), *Morris* (An English make of car - footnoted), and *djaran kepang* (hobby - horses with the interactive footnote) (Anderson, 1996). The use of glossary plus footnotes is useful as to give immediate contexts to ease the readers.

Suffice it to say here that Anderson's discursive strategy to either foreignize or domesticate his translation products is contingent upon his interpretation of the given cultural situation and historical moment of the source country to where the text(s) belong. It is interesting to note that Anderson's idea of the nation (and translation) is among the diverse concepts employed by such a leading figure in translation theory as Venuti says (2008).

Thus, believing that language is a powerful instrument for the formation of a nation-state, Anderson's translation of a text from SL to TL aims to challenge the ethnocentric tendency and ignorance of cultural differences often seen in the dominant culture. While, English-speaking readers enjoy the fluent and natural-sounding translation, Indonesian readers, likewise, do not feel culturally oppressed or intimidated by the representation.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has firstly shown that for readers of both Indonesian and English, Anderson's translations show clarity. His translation strategies include footnotes, pragmatic equivalence, foreignization, and domestication.

Secondly, the discussion has also shown that Anderson's translation is praised for its sensitivity. His

knowledge of Indonesian languages and cultures allows him to become the cultural ambassador for international readers. Understandably, an acceptable translation should produce the same or at least similar effects on the target readers the way the original work generates effects on the source readers. Anderson, however, goes beyond the boundary of acceptable translation. His translation has made source readers (read: Indonesian) of the novel become more aware of the milieu with which the novel is written. He does this with empathy without losing even once his critical outlooks. Indeed, to reflect on his translating strategy in today's Indonesian politics thwarted lately by extremism, Anderson's translation products may shed light on the country's uphill journey toward democracy.

Finally, artistry is the third characteristics of Anderson's translation that this research attempts to reveal. He resists conventional translation by revisiting the closed, normative usage of translation strategies. His translation is therefore fluent, erudite, and graceful, thanks to his multilingual tongue.

Charles Hirschman quoted at the beginning of this article is right to say in the conclusion of his speech that Benedict Anderson is an impossible model for other scholars to follow because of his extraordinary multifaceted, imaginative, and craving for the creation of new fields of (Southeast Asian) studies. Anderson translates intellectually and artistically. His cultural translation has opened up theoretical, critical, and textual problems in Translation Studies, literature, history, and anthropology alongside their own intrinsic and political meanings. Given that this present research limits itself in examining Anderson's translation of two pieces of Indonesian literature, further research needs to pursue his translation of other Indonesian literary texts. In addition, literary translation of other Indonesian writing by other translators is likewise worth pursuing, not only for comparative analyses but also to challenge Hirschman's conviction of Anderson's matchless virtuosity.

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