

TRANSLATORS VS TRANSLATION SOFTWARE AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF TRANSLATION SOFTWARE IN INDONESIA FRIEND OR THREAT?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a qualitative study to find out whether the existence of translation software becomes a threat or a friend to translators. This is quite interesting because based on the initial interview, 5 of 8 Students of non English language learners who were accustomed to use the translators' services, as an advance in technology, prefer to use translation software today. However, based on the educational background and knowledge of the author, the primary hypothesis of this research is the translation software is more likely to act as a friend to the translators. The result of this study is expected to provide knowledge to people in Indonesia about the function of the existence of the technology.

KEYWORDS : translators, translation software, technology, friend, threat

INTRODUCTION

As social beings who need each other, humans communicate in various ways. Communication is basically a transfer of a message using specific media in two ways : transmission in the form of speaking and/or writing, and reception in the form of listening and/or reading. According to Nida & Taber (1974:12), translating is to transfer the most proportionate messages from source languages into target languages, both in the meaning and style. Therefore, it can be said that the translation is a form of communication.

As one of the communication activities, translation is a complex process. Larson (1984:3-4) describes the translation process as a series of activities from understanding the meaning of the translated texts to revealing the meaning of the text in target languages. There are three benefits of the translation: first, translation is an access to accelerate the transfer of science and technology; Second, translation is a bridge to spread and obtain information about socio-cultural issue; and third, translation is a study to be used as the object of a research

Every part of community basically needs translation to solve the problem in terms of difficulty in understanding foreign languages. Translation has become an interpersonal communication need for every individual in society. Three benefits of the translation mentioned above have a great impact on the academic society in particular. In order to accelerate the transfer of science and technology, the activities of translating textbooks mostly written in foreign language into the target language have become a basic requirement in the academic field.

In Indonesia, the activity of translating textbooks written in foreign language , English in particular, into Bahasa Indonesia and vice versa has become increasingly important currently. Based on several studies, the fact shows that most of the textbooks used in universities in Indonesia are still being written or published in English , on the other hand, the condition of library and the ability of the scholar and college students in reading English texts is still below the standard. This is of course due to their lack of English skills.

As the development of technology which penetrates almost any kinds of fields, translation is also hit by its influence. Translation these days is not only conducted by humans but also by a translation software or translator machines as a result of technological advances in the field of language. Many information technology experts participate actively to help spreading information and

knowledge for the development of translation world. Not surprisingly, today many translation software or translation machine can be obtained easily. One of them is a digital dictionary or translation software that can be used easily. Started with the invention of dictionary software whose capabilities was limited to translate the words and phrases only, now there are some translation machines (software) that claim not only are able to translate the phrases, sentences and paragraphs but also the full text and books. Even today, by accessing Internet, everyone can make free online translation of a variety of languages. Translation software are being improved in quality at this moment.

Some efforts to improve the quality of translation software are repeatedly conducted to get perfect results. Either manually or by using a machine or computer, the quality of translation is determined by three different perspectives: accuracy, clarity, and fairness. The accuracy of the translation is very important. Mistranslations give a bad impact on the readers' comprehension. Accuracy means how the messages in the source language text are accurately conveyed in the target language. Clarity means how the communicated messages in the source language can be easily understood by the reader in the target language. Therefore the meaning grabbed by the reader in the source language are proportional with ones in the target language. Fairness means how the message is communicated in the usual form, so that the reader in the source language feels that the script he/she read was the original manuscript written in his/her own language.

Based on classroom/environment observations, interview, blogs investigation, and chatting activity on Facebook, in Indonesia there are some parts of societies who still question the quality of the translation by using translation software or machine considering that the process of translation is not merely about transferring the language (linguistic transfer), or the transferring the meaning (the transfer of meaning) but it is also about transferring the culture (cultural transfer), hence, in the process of translating, the sense and feeling are involved. While some have no doubt in the quality of the translation by using software or machine. It is proven by the high level of their dependency in using translation software or machine.

It becomes interesting to study this phenomenon in which some groups claim that they do not completely agree with the use of the software; they prefer to use the service of human translators while several other groups agree with the use of translation software or machine in translating the texts. This brings us back to our initial question, is translation software going to replace the human translator?

Therefore, The writer is interested in studying the existence of translation software or machine among the academic society in Indonesia, hence, the research is entitled "Translators VS Translation Software. An Investigation of The Existence of Translator Software In Indonesia. Friend or Threat?"

Research Questions

Questions emerged from this research are :

1. How does the academic community in Indonesia translate the scientific texts?
2. How often does the academic community in Indonesia use the software or machine translator in translating scientific texts?
3. To what extent is the accuracy of machine translation software or translate text or text in scientific?
4. Do the existence of translation software or translation machines become a threat or a friend to the existence of professional translators in Indonesia

Theoretical Background

The Definition of Translation

Meetham dan Hudson (1969) in Bell (1991:13) define translation as the following:

"the process or result of converting information from one language or language variety into another. The aim is to reproduce as accurately as possible all grammatical and lexical features of the 'source language' original by finding equivalents in the target language. At the same time all factual information contained in the original text.... must be retained in the translation"

Bell (1991:5) quotes and translate the Dubois definition (1973) from France to English as follows :

Translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences.

The definition above give the meaning that in the process of translation, the content and the style of the original text (target language) should be maintained in the target language

Another teoritical contribution that gave important donation in the study approach of translation was given by Hans J. Vermeer (1986) with his *Skopostheorie* which strongly opposed the opinion stating that translation is merely about language problem. Vermeer's concept about translation is :

Translation is not the transcoding of words or sentences from one language to another, but a complex form of action, whereby someone provides information on a text (source language material) in a new situation and under changed functional, cultural and linguistic conditions, preserving formal aspects as closely as possible (Snell-Hornby dalam Bassnett and Lefevere (eds.), 1990-82)

There are two principle points in Vermeer's definition above. First, translation is a cross-cultural transfer, and in his point of view, translators should be bicultural or multicultural or should master various languages. The second is, Vermeer consideres translation as a form of action or in other words as 'cross-cultural event'.

From all the definitions above, it can be concluded that:

1. Translation is not merely transfer the problem of language (linguistic transfer), or the transfer of meaning (the transfer of meaning) but also the transfer of culture (cultural transfer);
2. The character of translation studies is highly dependent on the paradigm, namely the way researchers consider translation as an object of study. As an object of study, there are two ways of viewing a translation: (a) as a product, and (b) as a process, and
3. common features possessed by the translation are : (a) the transfer language (from the source language into target language), (b) the transfer of content

The Process of Translation

The view of the translator as a communicator was also confirmed by Houbert (1998) by saying that "the translator is essentially a message conveyor is not an author". Thus in the translation process, there are two point that have to be underlined, firstly, translator needs to anticipate the potential difference and ambiguity in the original text and understand the meaning to be conveyed , secondly, translators need to examine the syntaxtics structure of the original text and then formulate t the proportional messages in target language which finally would give additional value in the text of source language .

While Hoed emphasises more on the status of translators, Larson (1984:3-4) focuses on meaning in describing the process of translation. He describes the translation process as a series of activities from understanding the meaning of the translated texts to revealing the meaning of the text in target languages. The translation process may be stated as: decoding the meaning of the source text; and re-encoding this meaning in the target language. Behind this apparently simple procedure lies a complex cognitive operation. To decode the meaning of the source text in its whole, the translator

must interpret and analyse all the features of the text, a process that requires in-depth knowledge of the grammar, semantics, syntax, idioms, etc., of the source language, as well as the culture of its speakers. The translator needs the same in-depth knowledge to re-encode the meaning in the target language.

About Translation Softwares

Translation software is often referred to as " Translation Machine ". On a basic level, translation software uses a simple word substitution from one language to another. This presents a challenge to the linguist or translator using the software. The customization of the software can be an effective tool when formal language is used. But it is very challenging when more poetic, literary language is used.

The quality of output can be aided by human intervention. For instance, once the software translation is completed, for a professional translator to proofread and make corrections in the system that can be globally implemented or project based. Ultimately, it would be a high risk to utilize software translation tools without human supervision or quality control. Software translation is the use of computer software to translate one language into another. It's been around since the 1960s, with several ups and downs in terms of research and development. Fictional stories abound of the early days of software translation with phrases such as "*out of sight, out of mind*" being translated as "*blind fool*," and "*the spirit is willing but the body is weak*" becoming "*the vodka is strong but the meat is rotten*."

Today, translation software is gaining public exposure as the Web has become an essential part of global commercial communication. Improvements in translation software have helped in this resurgence, both for general purposes and for use by professional language service providers

About Google Translate

Google Translate (Google translation) is a service provided by Google Inc. to translate the text or web pages in one language to another. For some languages, users are asked to give alternative translations, such as for technical terms, which will be included for further updates in the translation process. Unlike other translation services that use AOL, Google uses its own translation software. Google Translate, like other automatic translation tool, has several limitations. Although it can help readers to understand the general content of foreign language text, but do not give an accurate result. About the quality of machine translation, Google Translate itself admits in their website that the most sophisticated machine translation has not even approached the quality of language to a native speaker or do not have the skills of a professional translator. With a firm, Google Translate also lists that they probably will take a long time before it can offer quality translation with human translation

Research Method

To examine the existence of translation softwares in Indonesia, both interview and observation were conducted to targeted students, faculties, and academic staffs, however, only an interview was conducted to the targeted translators. All are completed within a fixed session to address the research focus of this paper.

1. Interview

The technique of interview used in this qualitative research was in-depth interviews conducted by having face to face question and answer session between the researcher and respondents. The respondents were undergraduate students, faculty and all academic assistants at Communication Science Study Program at Institut Manajemen Telkom, Bandung West Java, as the representatives of academic community in Indonesia. The respondents were also some people who work as translators around the major cities in Indonesia such as Bandung, Jakarta, Tangerang, and Makassar.

2. Observation

Observations were implemented only on students, faculty, and academic assistants at Communication Science Study Program Institut Manajemen Telkom, Bandung, Indonesia. Based on Bungin's theory (2007: 115) which suggests some forms of observation that can be used in a qualitative study, researchers applied unstructured observation that is realized without using any guide of observation. In this observation, the researcher developed his/her ability in investigating the object of the research.

Undergraduate students were observed to discover the method (s) they often use in doing their assignment in English or any other subjects related to the translation. Beside observing students, scientific papers written in foreign languages, especially English. In addition, researchers also examine the academic staff or helpers in the task Indonesia language translation of documents into English or from English into Indonesian. The observation was conducted to find out how to what is used by them to the translation and how the quality of translation done

Result and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews and observations of the academic society in Indonesia, methods used in translating documents written in foreign language (English in particular) into Bahasa Indonesia, or vice versa is vary. Undergraduate students generally choose software translation than translating the text by their own or using the service of human translators. In general, the undreguates need to do translation activity in performing the paper tasks from the lecturers, to translate the textbook as the material of teaching-learning activity both in class or outside the class, even to find some references for their final task. Lecturers –except English subject teacher- would prefer to use human translator services for translating some texts or textbooks as the reference for writing scientific papers in international level, but they chose translation software or machine to translate textbooks for teaching materials. Academic assistants often choose translation software to translate documents for correspondence. However, based on the interviews and observations, the academic assistants would consult the permanent English teacher in Institut Manajemen Telkom to review the results of the translation. In other word, they always try to edit the result of the translation. However, for the more formal documents and the

The most popular translation software or translation machine used by the academic society in Institut Manajemen Telkom is Google Translate. For undergraduates there are several reasons why they prefer to use Google Translate than to use manual dictionary or having human translator's services. Three basic reason are: 1) time efficiency. Students are definelty aware that today is the digital era where the Internet can be accessed anywhere and anytime esily. Simply by connecting to the Internet, students can instantly translate articles or text, and the result of the translation can be obtained within a very short time. In contrast to translate it manually with the help of the dictionary that they think will spend a long time. 2) The cost efficiency. Currently in Indonesia, almost all universities are supported by easy access to the internet such as free wifi or hotspots that make students feel that they do not need to pay a bit to translate texts from English into Indonesian or vice versa. In contrast to ask the the human translators' service that are charged for each sheet of the translation. 3) Another reason is lack of confidence in mastering the English language so as to make students reluctant to translate by itself with the help of a dictionary. Most of them said that they are not confident enough to translate the text manually by their own because the lack of English skills ..

Different with the undergraduates, most of the lecturers and academic assistants in Institut Manajemen Telkom, except English subject lecturers, said the only reason why they use translation software because of the time efficiency. The teachers basically have good English language skills. One of the requirements to be a permanent lecturer at Institut Manajemen Telkom is a TOEFL score of 550, so they almost rarely find any difficulty in translation. But still some teachers would ask the help of human translator for translating the textbooks as the references for writing scientific papers presented or published at international level.

The result of the interviews and observations showed that the academic society in Institut Manajemen Telkom realize all the limitations of the translation software or machine. It can be concluded that they have an agreement on the accuracy of the translation by using machine translation, represented by the Google Translate ranged between 75-80%. They also agree that the choice of words generated by the machine translation is not standard and disorganized making it difficult to understand. In addition, the sentence is often not structured. And to translate text from Indonesian to English, the main difficulties concerning the use of tenses. Google translate does not use tenses to translate each sentence so that it becomes quite a complicated issue. Most of them think computers are not able to make sense of the text, for example if there is a polysemous word, the machine would not be able to understand the context and choose the appropriate word. It is Different with humans who are able to understand the context and therefore choose the right word. Most of respondents stated that If you use translation machines, you must play your role as an editor. When you edit, you must edit it manually because most editing tools provided by software only edit grammar. They cannot sense the meaning accordingly. Unfortunately, however, although many people realize the limitation of the software or machine, still there are some, especially students, who do not do the editing process even though they realize that they cannot understand the translated text completely. And it is clear that bad translation will lead you to misunderstanding the tex in target language.

In Indonesia, before the translation software is widely used, translation business is a promising business. How about today? As the development of technology, and the software is widely used by people in Indonesesia, especially among students, is the translation beaureu affected by this phenomenon? And in general most of the translators said in fact it doesn't affect their business. The rate for the result of translaion is quite expensive; it is about Rp 20,000-Rp 50,000 per page, but still many people use their service. Based on the interview, people who work as a translator think that the existance of translation software is not potentially as a threat, and it due to the limitation of the software to translate the text perfectly.

CONCLUSION

With a translation software someone will be able to translate texts from foreign language (English) in particular, into Bahasa Indonesia or vice versa, or even other languages. But when it is considered carefully by the process of translation, the software is still far from perfect. This means that the translation is not one hundred percent ready. There are many irregularities that we met here and there. This is partly due to the translation process is still word by word - word for word. Language is not mathematics, but it is a skill that also has elements of art in it. A language other than have a denotative meaning also has a connotative meaning. Translation machine can help us to speed up the process of translation. To obtain good translation results we certainly have to edit it. So that seems to learn the language and linguists are still needed, at least until this time translation software can not replace the role of linguists.

So as a conclusion, in Indonesia translation software is not acting as an enemy for a reliable translator to translate texts of a general nature and using colloquialisms such as some websites and content guidelines. But for scientific manuscripts with language that is unusual and not the daily language, this software is not reliable. Even so Google Translate is very helpful especially if you find content that is not English-speaking foreigners, such as Spanish, Chinese, German, and others.

Translation software can never replace the human element in translation. The accuracy of the result does not depend on the translation software but the man who uses the software. Translation software without editing process will lead to bad translation, and bad translation leads to misunderstanding. Translation machines are not the threats for translators. They are the supplemental tools.

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