

THE INDONESIAN TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH SEXUAL EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS IN *DESPERATE DUCHESSSES* BY ELOISA JAMES

Anita¹, M. R. Nababan², Riyadi Santosa³, Agus Hari Wibowo⁴

Universitas Sebelas Maret

Surakarta – Indonesia

¹poponitalovely@gmail.com, ²amantaradja@yahoo.com,

³riyadisantosa1960@gmail.com, ⁴agushari67@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

Translation cannot be separated from culture; therefore, a translator must have sufficient knowledge about the culture of the language that is going to be translated. This knowledge will help the translator to determine the most suitable equivalent of any text containing cultural elements. Euphemism is one of the texts. Euphemism is used to replace an expression that considered threatening the face of the speaker, the audience or some third party when it is uttered. Sex is the topic that will offend people when it is talked about openly. People in every culture tend to use euphemism when they talk about sex. However, different culture will see sex with different point of view. This study aims to find out the differences through the translation of English sexual euphemistic expression into Indonesian. It will describe how those expressions are translated into Indonesian. This study is a descriptive qualitative study. The source of the data is an English novel by Eloisa James entitled *Desperate Duchesses* and its Indonesian version *Memikat Kekasih*. The result shows that English sexual euphemistic expressions in the novel are translated into Indonesian euphemisms, Indonesian dysphemisms, literal meaning, and description.

Keywords: culture, sexual euphemisms, translation

Introduction

Culture is tightly bound in translation, because language is a part of culture. Newmark [1] stated that culture "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". Thus the main task of a translator is as a bridge of cultural gap between two languages. A translator must have broad cultural knowledge of the language that is to be translated as well as the target language. It is important due to quality of the translation. Lack of cultural knowledge will lead to misunderstanding or wrong interpretation, as Nida [2] said "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure".

Venuti as cited in Anber [3] argues the reconstruction of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist in the target language. One of the texts is euphemism.

Euphemism is "used as an alternative to a dis-preferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face; either one's own face, or, through giving offense, that of the audience, or of some third party" [4] Euphemism is used as an expression that shows politeness, for instance, instead of using the word *ass* that is offensive, people tend to use the word *bottom* that is milder and less offensive.

Euphemisms are used in many topics, such as death, religion, politics, social, and sex. Sex is very potential for euphemisms. It is a part of human life and a sensitive matter. Religions forbid their believers to talk about sex openly because it is close to sin. Social values think that sex is animalistic behavior that should be avoided to discuss. Every societies has different point of view about sex, western societies tend to be open about sex compared to eastern people. However, Allan and Burrige [4] claimed that in English, there are 1200 terms used to replace the word

vagina, 1000 terms to replace the word *penis*, 800 terms to replace the word *copulation* and approximately 2000 terms to replace the word *whore*. This phenomena makes me interested to conduct a research on how English sexual euphemisms are translated into Indonesian which has very different point of view in seeing sex.

Euphemism as one of figurative language is challenging to be translated. Unseth [5] stated that there are several ways to translate euphemisms: translate the euphemism literally, translate the original euphemism using a different euphemism that has a similar meaning in the target language, translate the euphemism using plain language, and translate the euphemism using a combination of two of the above. However, once again a translator must be able to recognize a euphemism or euphemistic expression to be able to translate it.

Researches on the translation of sexual euphemistic expressions are many. Abdalla in his thesis entitled *Translating English Euphemisms into Arabic: Challenges and Strategies* [6] found that 1) a translator must consider metalinguistic features when translating euphemism. 2) a translator must have sufficient knowledge about the culture and linguistics system of both source language and target language. 3) it is difficult for a translator to stay neutral when translating hidden expressions when translating political euphemism. 4) the strategies used in translating euphemisms are, literal, dynamic equivalence, cultural equivalent, substitution, explicitation, omission, borrowing, and using generic terms when they cannot find the equivalent. Hamad [7] found that the translator used a technique called linguistic approximation when there is no lexical equivalent in target language and cultural approximation when there is no cultural equivalent. Albarakati [8] conducted a research on how translators have dealt with some Qur'anic euphemistic expressions and uncover what translation procedures and strategies have been applied. A sample of euphemistic expressions collected from the

Qur'an and explained; five published translations are then reviewed and analyzed. The sample examination leads to designing a translation model that would explain euphemism translation process. He found that translators can miss the euphemistic meaning in the first phase. When this happens, translators tend to provide a semantic rendering of the text; a translation which renders the meaning without conveying the euphemistic function produced by the formal structure of the source language. However, it is possible that a translator could have followed an exegetical opinion that had not identified the euphemistic function in first place. When translators decide to translate the euphemism, they choose a technique by which the euphemistic function could get conveyed. Anber [3] investigated the sociocultural differences in translating Euphemistic expressions from English into Arabic by two translators. He found that both translators employed omission and literal strategy frequently which may not express euphemistic words functionally. Additionally, both translators attempted to translate the euphemistic expressions semantically at the expense of rendering them adequately into the target culture.

Those studies show the strategies that are used by the translators in translating euphemisms. This study has similar purpose with the previous studies, however this study is going to describe the equivalent of English sexual euphemism and sexual euphemistic expressions in Indonesian. To reveal wheather the translator has sufficient cultural knowledge about sexual euphemistics of both language.

Methodology

This research is a descriptive qualitative research. It aims to find out the Indonesian translation of English sexual euphemistic expressions The source of data of this research is a novel titled *Desperate Duchess* which was published in 2009 by Harper Collins and its Indonesian translation *Memikat Kekasih* which was published in

2011. The researcher collected the data in the form of sexual euphemistic expression, classified the data based on the translation, then analyzed the classified data using the theories. After that the researcher drew a conclusions and verified the findings.

Findings and Discussion

This study found 154 sexual euphemistic expressions. They consist of euphemisms of sexual activities, body parts, prostitutions, and extamarital sexual relationships. Those euphemistic expressions are translated into euphemisms, dyphemisms, literal meaning and description.

1. Euphemisms

Most of sexual euphemisms that are used to replace the word *copulation* in source language (SL) are translated into the similar euphemism used in target language (TL).

Examples:

- SL : “He’s a devil with women: **beds** them, leaves them.” (p.75)
 TL : “*Dia seperti iblis kalau sudah menyangkut masalah wanita: **tiduri** mereka, tinggalkan mereka.*” (P.97)

The word *bed* in source language is a euphemism to replace the word *copulation*. *Beds* originally means a place where a husband and a wife have their union. It is translated into *tidur*. *Tidur* in Indonesian has two senses, to lay down to sleep or to have sex with someone. Although having different references, both *beds* and *tidur* are equivalents. They both used as euphemism to replace the word *copulation*.

Another sexual euphemism used to replace the word *copulation* that is translated into the word *tidur* is sleep with.

- SL : “.....The man **has slept with** most of the women in London.” (p.127)
 TL : “... *pria itu sudah **tidur** dengan sebagian besar wanita di London.*” (p.161)

Sleep with is the most commonly used euphemism to replace the word *copulation*. It

has been made a standard English [9]. *Sleep with* in SL is translated into *tidur* in TL. Both euphemistic expressions use the same reference, to lay down or to sleep. The word *tidur* is also used as the equivalent of the word *screw*. *Screw* is used as e euphemism of the word *copulation*. It is used if the subject or the doer is a male [9]. It is considered less polite compared to the other euphemisms that is used to replace the word *copulation*.

Example:

- SL : “We don’t marry the women we **screw**,” he said.... (p.252)
 TL : “*Kami tidak menikahi wanita yang kami **tiduri**,*” *Kata Villiers....* (p.314)

From all of the euphemistic expressions that are used to replace the word *copulate*, *make love* is the most commonly used. In the early use, this expression is known as euphuism (an artificial, highly elaborate way of writing or speaking). The meaning of *make love* at that time is not more than to court. Actually, this expression was known as the euphemistic for the word *copulate* in 1976, however there are evidence that showed the expression was used as an euphemistic expression in 1850s [10]

Example:

- SL : “It’s possible to watch oneself **make love** in a glass,” he said. (p.131)
 TL : “*Kita juga bisa melihat diri kita sendiri yang sedang **bercinta** di cermin,*” *kata Damon.* (p.167)

This expression is translated into the word *bercinta* in target TL. In TL, the word *bercinta* is an euphemistic expression that is used to replace the word *copulate*.

The word *bercinta* is the most polite euphemism to replace the word *copulate* in TL. *Make love* is the most suitable equivalent for the word *bercinta*. However, it is also used as the equivalent of the word *tup*. *Tup* is also used to replace the word *copulate*. *Tup* is a word describing the mating of rams. It is used as euphemistic expression when it is applied

to human [9]. Just like the word *screw*, *tup* is also considered less polite compared to the word *bercinta* and *sleep with*.

Example:

- SL : “I may not have seen anyone **tupping** before, but I have certainly been kissed.” (p.126)
 TL : “*mungkin aku belum pernah melihat orang bercinta tapi jelas aku sudah pernah dicium.*” (p.160)

Eventhough *bercinta* in TL has higher degree of politeness compared the word *tupping* in SL, they are equivalents.

2. Dysphemism

Dysphemism is the opposite of euphemism. It is a harsh or derogatory terms that will threat the face of the audience. There several euphemisms that are translated into dysphemism.

Example:

- SL : “There was a very awkward moment early in our marriage when I asked my husband if he loved his **mistress** and he told me the truth.” (p.77)
 TL : “*Pada awal pernikahan kami terdapat masa-masa yang canggung ketika aku bertanya kepada suamiku apakah dia mencintai gundiknya dan dia menjawab dengan jujur.*” (p.100)

Mistress is a label for a man’s regular extramarital sex partner. Originally, this word means a female lead of a household [11]. This word is translated into *gundik* in TL. *Gundik* in Indonesian means an illegitimate wife. In Indonesian *gundik* has negative meaning. This word is common to be used as swearing word. Another word that used as the name of a man’s regular extramarital sex partner is concubine. It is translated into *selir*, which is more polite than *gundik* in TL.

Example:

- SL : “A **concubine**, you see, will always display her nature, and I am happy to pass my ownership to Gryffyn... (p.357)

TL : “*Selir, kau tahu, akan selalu menunjukkan sifatnya, dan aku senang menyerahkan hak milikki kepada Gryffyn...*” (p.442)

Sexual euphemistic expressions that are translated into dysphemism is the ones used to replace the words *prostitute*.

Examples:

- SL : “Sometimes it does feel a bit complicated. Sophia is a **courtesan** to be reckoned with, you see. She games, she kisses, she has many demands.” (p.220)
 TL : “*Terkadang memang terdengar sedikit rumit. Sophia merupakan seorang pelacur yang layak diperhitungkan, kau mengerti. Dia gemar bermain, gemar berciuman, dia memiliki banyak tuntutan.*” (p.278)

Courtesan is a euphemism of the word *prostitute*. *Courtesan* is considered the most elegant prostitute compared to others. Originally courtesan was used to describe a female courtier, however, by 1635 it had come to mean a kept mistress or prostitute [11]. *Courtesan* is translated into *pelacur*. In the target language the word *pelacur* is not a euphemism. It is considered rude to say the word *pelacur* openly.

Other sexual euphemism that are translated into dyphemism is the word *bastard*. Although now it is often used in a swear word, *bastard* was used to be a euphemism. The word comes from the Old French *fil de bast*, packsaddle child, where the bast, or packsaddle, often was used as a bed by mule drivers [10]. *Bastard* is used to describe a child that illegitimately born (born outside marriage). This word is translated into *anak haram* (sinful child/forbidden child). *Anak haram* and *bastard* has the same meaning, however, *anak haram* in the target language is considered rude. A child born outside marriage in Indonesian society is considered sinful.

Example:

- SL : “Bastard children,” she stated. (p.248)
 TL : “*Anak haram*” *Roberta menegaskan.* (p.310)

3. Literal Meaning

There are two kinds literal meaning found in the translation of English sexual euphemism. The first one is literal meaning that contains euphemistic expressions.

Example:

SL : One of his hands was **between her legs**, playing a rhythm that matched the sound of the water. (p.336)

TL : *Salah satu tangan Damon berada di antara kedua kakinya, memainkan irama yang senada dengan suara air.* (p.419)

Between her legs is a sexual euphemistic expression to replace the word *vagina*. It is translated into its literal meaning in TL *di antara kedua kakinya*. Eventhough it is translated literally, the euphemistic expression is still preserved. The readers of TL still understand that the expressions *di antara ke dua kakinya* is used to replace the word *vagina*.

Another example:

SL : “You might want to turn the lock next time you decide to **shed your breeches** in public,” Villiers said, just when he considered that Gordon might be actually concentrating on a move.(p.355)

TL : “*Lain kali kau harus ingat untuk mengunci pintu sebelum memutuskan untuk melepaskan celanamu,*” kata Villiers, tepat ketika menurutnya Gordon sedang berkonsentrasi memikirkan suatu langkah. (p.440)

Shed your breeches is a sexual euphemistic expression that replace the word *copulate*. it is translated literally into *melepaskan celanamu* in TL. Eventhough it is the literal meaning of the euphemistic expression in SL, the reader of TL understand that *melepaskan celanamu* means *to have sex*, or *to copulate*.

The second one is the literal meanings that miss the euphemistic sense.

Example:

SL : It made her feel restless, as if small sparks danced **between her legs**, as if the pooling warmth she felt in her stomach after leaving the sitting room were turning into something

altogether more embarrassing and more—more dangerous. (p.129)

TL : *Itu membuat Roberta merasa gelisah seolah ada percikan api yang menari-nari di antara kakinya, seolah kehangatan yang ia rasakan di perutnya sejak ia meninggalkan ruang duduk jadi semakin memalukan dan semakin-semakin berbahaya.* (p.164)

Di antara kakinya misses the euphemistic expression that the author wants to say. *Di antara kakinya* will make the reader think that the spark is *between her legs* literally not *between her legs* euphemistically. The reader will miss the euphemistic expression that replace the word *vagina* as the author wants to say.

Another example:

SL : “**You are too generous in the front**,” Brigitte stated, dispelling that dream.(p.68)

TL : “*Anda terlalu bermurah hati di bagian depan*” ucap Brigitte, membayangkan khayalan Roberta.” (p.89)

The clause *you are too generous in the front* is another way to say that you have big breasts. It is translated literally into *anda terlalu bermurah hati di bagian depan*. This literal translation will make the readers in TL misunderstand the real meaning that the author wants to say. If you do not read the SL you will lose the meaning. It is literally mean *you are too generous in the front*.

4. Description

There are several sexual euphemisms that are translated by describing the definition of the term. It loses its euphemistic sense, however, the reader will not mis understand the meaning that the author wants to say.

Example:

SL : “Women of honor do not offer their husbands a **cuckoo**.(p. 252)

TL : “*Wanita terhormat tidak akan melahirkan anak dari pria yang lain untuk suaminya.* (p.315)

Cuckoo is a euphemism refers to a male profligate. It comes from a name of a bird that

live in another cuckoo's nest [11]. In the SL context *cuckoo* is a child that is born from the relationship of a *cuckoo* and a woman. It is translated by describing the meaning of the term. *anak dari pria lain* is not a euphemistic expression but the meaning that the author wants to say is understood by the TL readers.

Another example:

- SL : "I will explain precisely why I was so distraught, and include a commentary about the practices of **hardened rakehells!**" (P.2)
- TL : "Aku akan menjelaskan dengan saksama mengapa aku begitu kesal, dan menyertakan komentar terhadap **orang-orang yang tidak bermoral dan tidak memiliki perasaan itu.** (p.8)

Rakehell is a man who is immoral and womanizer. Usually a rakehell is a rich man who inherits money from his father and spend it carelessly. *Hardened rakehells* in SL is translated into *orang-orang yang tidak bermoral dan tidak memiliki perasaan itu.* This translation is the definition of the *hardened rakehells* in Indonesian.

Conclusions

From the result it can be concluded that:

1. English has more sexual euphemistic expressions. It can be seen that to replace one word English has many terms. For example to replace the word *copulate* English has *make love, sleep with, bed, tup,* and *screw*. Meanwhile Indonesian only has *tidur* and *bercinta*. Indonesian sexual euphemistic expressions are mostly used in spoken language and have not been standardized.
2. The Translator tends to use euphemistic expressions when she recognize the term in SL and TL has the equivalents.
3. The translator translates the English sexual euphemistic expressions literally when she cannot recognize the terms. It leads to misunderstanding. However, if the translation still preserve the euphemistic meaning, the reader will understand though it is translated literally.

4. The translator translates euphemistic expression into dysphemistic expression and description of the term when she cannot find a suitable equivalent in TL.
5. Lack of standardized sexual euphemisms in TL is also the reason of poor translation besides the gap between cultures.

References

- [1] P. Newmark, *Textbook of Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988.
- [2] E. A. Nida, *Toward a science of translating: with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Brill Archive, 1964.
- [3] S.J. Anber, "Influence of Sociocultural Differences in Translating Euphemistic Expression from English into Arabic in "A Grain of Wheat" *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 6, Desember, 2016.
- [4] K. Allan. & K. Burridge, *Euphemism and dysphemism: Language used as shield and weapon*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
- [5] P. Unseth, "Watch Your Language!: Translating Euphemisms", *ATA Chronicle*, February, 2006.
- [6] M. A. Abdalla, "Translating English Euphemisms into Arabic: Challenges and Strategies.", Thesis, American University of Sharjah, 2010.
- [7] A.S. Hamad, "The Translatability in the Holy Quran", *European Scientific*, Vol.9, No. 2, 2013.
- [8] M. Albarakati, *Translating Euphemisms from Arabic into English*, Thesis, Leeds University, 2013.
- [9] R.W. Holder, *How Not To Say What You Mean: A dictionary of Euphemisms*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [10] H. Rawson, *A Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk*. New York: New York Times Company, 1981.
- [11] J. S. Neaman, & G. C. Silver, *The Wordsworth Book of Euphemism*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.