ISSN : 2654-5152 Vol. 3 No. 1 (May, 2021)

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF TEACHING TRANSLATION FOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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Abstract

The focus of this study is to share how to teach translation to the English Department students. Majoring in English does not instantly qualify the students as good translators. As a lecturer frequently assigned to teach translation classes, the reseacher finds that teaching translation to the English Department students is often as challenging as the translation process itself. Therefore, this paper is presented as the researcher's shares of contribution to the field of translation teaching and training. The approach applied in this study is narrative inquiry.The researcher narrates the stories of how to teach translation based on her personal teaching experiences since 2015. The findings on how to teach translation are arranged into three orders: pre-teaching preparation, while teaching focus, and after teaching focus. The results of this study are expected to give insights and ideas for fellow translation lecturers and learners.

Keywords: translation, teaching, narrative inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

The role of translators in society is vital. Translators are integrated figures of the development of the world. By the helps of translators, knowledge, religious teachings and even entertainment are transferred thousand miles away from their original sources. In technology era like nowadays, being translators are not difficult as translation machines are there to assist anytime we need. However, being good translators is a different case. Good translators have to hold at least two competences: linguistic and cultural competencies.

Linguistic profeciency of translators both in source and target is a-must-mastered criterion to be good translators. No good translator depends too much on Google Translate and similar apps. Someone can only be a good translator when mastering at least two languages at similar level or at least almost similar level of profeciency. This is a fixed requirment every good translator should posses. However, having linguistic competencies in different languages is not enough to make one a good translator as translation is not simply changing one word from source language to another word in target language.

According to Torop (2002), translation is a process of converting ideas from one language into another

by taking sociocultural context of the language into account. This is line with Halai (2007) who stated that transformation of texts from one language to another is inseperable with sociocultural context. Moreover, Sharififar (2009) defined translation as an activity of conveying massages in source language to the target language without changing their semantic meanings and linguistic styles. Maintaining semantic meanings – not mentioning the linguistic styles – is a difficult job, though not impossible. This is because the intended meanings from the source language is not always transferable to the target language readers who may have different cultural background. Cultural differences between people of target and source languages share the biggest contribution on translation challenges. This statement is in accordance with Wu (2008) who stated that the biggest difficulty in translating lies on system and structural differences of target and source languages.

According to Newmark (1988), there are four issues in terms of culture often faced by translators. The first is **ecological issue**; ecology challanges the translators when there are living creatures that only exist in the source language but not in the target language. The second one is **material issues** that often occur when certain products of particular cultures are hardly translated to other languages as they are culturally specific. Food, means of transportation, housing, traditional clothes are part of this material culture. The third one is **socio-cultural issue**. This issue is closely related to people way of life. For example, translators may find it difficult to translate cultural ceremony explained in source language to the target language as the readers from the target language may not share similar cultural understanding regarding the ceremony. The last issue that may occur related to culture in translation process is **religion-related issue**. Translating specific terms of a religion to be understood by those from different beliefs is challenging as translators need to be cautious in delivering the meanings of the terms without making the readers confused.

Good translators should be able to position them selves as cultural mediator. Katan (2004, p. 21) mentioned that a cultural mediator must posses the ability to interpret cultural-bound terms so that when presenting the messages to the readers of different cultures, they will be able to comprehend the items in similar tone of the original. Good translators provide bridge that connects one culture to another. Therefore, it is important for the translators to have cultural awareness when translating any text.

As explained above, it is never easy to be translators. Even for professional translators, it is common to encounter difficulties in doing their works. For students, the difficulties may be bigger as they are still in learning stage. For undergraduate students taking English as their major, translation is one of the compulsory courses they must take in order to graduate. This study is intended to narrate researcher's experiences in teaching translation. The limitation of the study lies on the fact that the story shared is only based on the reseacher's point of views. However, as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) stated, life stories

and personal experiences are regarded as a means to understand teaching and learning process.

METHODS

The design of this study is narrative inquiry which is part of qualitative research. In education, the development of narrative inquiry was started in early 1990s by Connelly and Clandinin. However, the history of narrative inquary as part of qualitative approach has been started long before that. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative inquiry deals with people experiences of the world. Furthermore, Creswell (2013, p.71) states, “narrative stories tell individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves”. Clandinin dan Connelly (2000) claimed that narrative inquiry is a powerful source to see teachers’ reflections on their practical knowledge and how that knowledge is obtained. Narrative inquiry provides useful information for fellow teachers. Therefore, the narrative inquiry is the best approach for this research as the focus of this research is to narrate how to teach translation for the English Department students from my own experiences as a lecturer assigned for translation classes since 2015.

In this study, the stories of my teaching experience in translation are the raw data of the research. To conduct a narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to pay attention to three dimensions: (1) interaction, (2) continuity, and (3) situation. Interaction deals with both personal and social relationship of the story teller(s). Continuity deals with the timing (past, present, future). Situation deals with the place underlying stories being told (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This three dimensions of narrative inquiry is in accordance with Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) about how a narrative inquiry researcher maintains the authenticity of the research. According to them, the stories gathered as data in a narrative inquiry research must be analyzed and retold by the researcher in order to identify the time, place, plot, and scene. Furthermore, the researcher must rearrange these in chronological order fitting the theme of the research in order to present a more comprehensive narrative. Verification from the participant(s) of the research is crusial at this process. Thus, to make the stories meet the goal of this study, I arranged the presentation of the stories into three orders: pre-teaching preparation, while teaching, and after teaching. The three dimensions of narrative inquiry are integrated in the orders.

DISCUSSION

The disussion of this study is divided into three main focuses based on the researcher’s experiences. The three are pre-teaching focus, while teaching focus, and before teaching focus.

PRE-TEACHING FOCUS

Before teaching, there are two focuses that lecturers shall pay attention to prior to teaching translation: writing course outline and choosing appropriate resources for the class.

Writing Course Outline

Writing a course outline is the first activity I recommend all lecturers to do when assigned to teach translation

class. The course outline does not have to be original. Lecturers can always use ones written by other lecturers available for free as references. All we need is investing time to browse the internet and scan for the course outlines that may be suitable our students - at least based on our initial judgment. I usually took one or two course outline from internet and made them inspiration for my own. Of course taking course outlines from others without making changes will not be recommended. Our course outline shall meet our students' needs and qualifications. The template to make one is highly dependent to the policy of institution. However, the course outline usually consists of at least these key components: course description, schedule, objectives, contents per session, instructional method, and evaluation.

Writing a course outline is essential as it becomes our written guideline to run the class. Our course outline is not necessarily written in details. A more detailed plan for the class can be documented in lesson plans. Writing a lesson plan will be easier shall we follow the following steps:

1. Setting objectives or goals
   Setting the objectives of the lesson should be the first thing lecturers do when writing a lesson plan because the classroom activities are selected carefully based on the objectives we intend to achieve. The objectives that we set should be achievable, meaningful, and linkable to the mission and vision of our institution.
2. Arranging a set of activities to meet the objectives
   Our planned activities should be directly linked to the objectives we set. Lecturers also have to make sure the activities planned promote students' engagement. Furthermore, the activities should also give students chances for practices and feedbacks.
3. Making plan on how to evaluate the students understanding on materials
   Assessing students' level of understanding is a must to reflect the achievement of the objectives. In translation class, students' progress can be evaluated not only by the lecturer but also by their friends or even readers of their translation tasks outside the classroom.
4. Setting timeline
   Lecturers need to set timeline for each objective planned. That is why it is important to ensure that our objectives make sense and achievable within the time constraint. It is not wise to put aim too many objectives in a meeting. One objective may require more time than others, so it is fine if the timeline that we set for each objective is different. Even more, the timeline is not something rigid. While teaching, lecturers can always evaluate whether an activity requires longer or shorter time than planned based on the classroom situation at that time.
5. Planning for a recap
   A closure for every meeting is as important as the opening as it is the time to check the success of every meeting. Lecturers can use this opportunity to ask students about what they have learnt during the class to check students' reception of

the materials. Never leave your class before making sure your students know the key points of today's materials.

Choosing Appropriate Resources for Translation Class

We should admit that many of us as lecturers sometimes take this process for granted. It will always be easier for us to select a book and use it throughout the semester as our main source of materials and texts. However, of course we can do better shall we provide more time to choose appropriate resources for the class. Nowadays, we are blessed with abundant resources as the access of information is not as hard as it was back in the past.

To choose what texts to be translated by students as their practices in the class, I usually prepare more than one text. In the English Department, translation class is usually offered in senior years where students' proficiency in English is regarded as high. However, I commonly found students who are still struggling with their English even though they are in their senior years. Thus, choosing the texts ranging from A1 to at least B2 level is never wrong. In choosing the resources, make sure they support the objectives and are in line with the big mission and vision of the institution. In my case, one of the visions of the institution is to be the leading institution in the study of local wisdom. Thus, I choose the texts supporting this vision. For example, instead of practicing to translate an Indonesian song into English, I ask my students to translate a Banjarese song into English. Instead of translating a western fairytale, I ask my students to translate a text on local story into English.

WHILE TEACHING FOCUS

While teaching, the lecturers are advised to take the three focuses into serious consideration. The three are explained below.

Balancing between Theories and Practices

Theories give good grounds to support students' practices. However, knowing much without the ability to implement the knowledge into practices will not be acceptable. That is why balancing between theories and practices is a must. In translation class, before starting the course, I usually explained the course outlines to the students. This is to ensure that the class members understand where what the start and the expected objectives are throughout semester. This is in accordance with Becker and Calhoon (1999) who stated that at the beginning of the class, students want to know what they are going to get and to do per meeting. Furthermore, by giving course outlines, I inform the students about main and supporting references used in the class. This is to share the responsibility of providing the references with students. For me, providing information on the references, instead of providing the references directly to the students teach them to take responsibility of their own learning.

Theories and practices should support each other. It is one of the lecturers' jobs to make students understand useful techniques for translation. Molina and Albir (2002)

defined translation techniques as procedures used for analyzing and classifying equivalences when translating words or phrases. For example, in translation class, shall the students find difficulties in translating non-equivalent words, at least they are equipped with the knowledge of six translation strategies from Baker (1992):

1. Translation by a more general word
   This strategy is the often opted by translators when dealing with non-equivalence translation. The idea of this strategy is to find translation of non-equivalence word by making use of semantic field of the word being translated.
2. Translation by a more neutral word
   This strategy deals with translating a word in the source language to a word with the same tone in the target language by neglecting its literal translation.
3. Translation by cultural substitution
   This strategy is done by replacing culture-specific word in the source language with the word having the same impact in target language though the semantic propositional meaning is different.
4. Translation by using a loan word or loan words with explanation
   This strategy is useful when translating specific words related to culture, up-to-date concepts as well as buzz words. When the word(s) appears frequently in the text, the explanation of the word(s) is given only in its first occurance.
5. Translation by paraphrasing using related words
   This strategy, is applied when the concept in source language is lexicalized by different form in target language. Futhermore, this strategy is often applied when the concept is more frequently used in source language than the target language.
6. Translation by paraphrasing using unrelated words
   This strategy is applied when the concept in source language is not found in the target language.
7. Translation by omitting word(s)
   This strategy is done by weaving out the word(s) giving no significant contribution to the flow of the text.
8. Translation by giving illustration
   This stragegy is an option when the word in target language does not convey all aspects of original word. Illustration is given to keep the translation concise and not too wordy.

By understanding the eight strategies above, at least students get a hint on what they can do when translating difficult words. Understanding theories shape students to be better translators.

Evaluating Progress

Evaluation is an integrated part of language teaching (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). The success of learning can be seen from the learning outcomes. These outcomes are only visible when lecturers evaluate the students. I my translation class, I plan the evaluation in lesson plans, but the implementation of it depends on real classroom situation that I encounter. My favorite is peer review. The students are asked to translate a text and their friends review the quality of the translation based on the rubric. Peer review promotes collaborative learning as well as encourages students' confident as translators.

Beside peer review, the lecturers also need to provide the opportunities for students to have self-assessment and teacher-assessment. The three are equally important to give lecturers and students valuable feedbacks on whether the objectives of translation class have been achieved. After analyzing the results of evaluation, lecturers can decide whether to review the materials one more time with different teaching strategies or to go to the next objective.

Instilling Motivation during Teaching and Learning Process

Giving motivation to students is a powerful way to keep them believe in themselves. Also, according to Theobald (2006), motivation helps increase the learning of students. Encouraging students should be done whenever needed. It is to guarantee that our students are not down when facing difficulties in learning. Motivation can be instilled in any teaching and learning activity. Based on my experiences, motivating the students can be done in at least three ways:

1. Guide them to find their intrinsic motivation.
   Based on my experiences, students need to believe that translation class is useful for them. At the beginning of the class, after introducing the course outline and before starting any material explanation, lecturers can ask students to write down a short list on how the class will be useful for them.
2. Appreciate their works though still far from your expectation.
   It is crucial to appreciate the students not only when they manage to show a good progress but also when they are yet to meet your expectation. Giving feedbacks with in a positive manner will make them feel appreciated.
3. Ensure them that they are smart
   Make sure to say to your students that they are smart although they do not do well in translation. Back in my university year, one of my lecturers once told the students that as teachers even when we meet the lowest achiever students, we have to tell them that they are talented though their talents may not be shown in our classes. The words echoed in me years after I heard them. This is also what I have always believed. Failing in our class does not justify us to label them as hopeless students. When one or two students cannot meet the objectives we set for the class, it should be fine for us and for them. The case is different when almost all students fail; maybe our objectives need to be revised.

AFTER TEACHING FOCUS

Outside the classroom, translation lecturers are recommended to focus on reflecting and revisiting lesson plan for the sake of class improvement.

Reflecting

It is important for lecturers to take time to reflect on their class regularly. Regularly here does not mean lecturers must analyze what happened in the class every time it ends. It is the best to reflect after the achievement of one objective. In translation class, I usually make reflection on what I did in my class and how my plan went after three or four meetings. In this phase, it is

important to admit the weaknesses the lecturers have in terms of teaching strategies, classroom management, students understanding on materials and so on. Being honest about ourselves as lecturers is not always easy. We may find it is hard to accept that we are not good enough or we are yet to give our best in the class. However, honesty is the key in this stage. Lecturers must be a fair judge on their own performances. To help make a better reflection, I suggest lecturers to write down all strengths and weaknesses we have encountered in the class.

However, as we, lecturers, may miss some points to be reflected, we can always ask our students opinion on the class. At least two times in a semester, I usually ask my students to write down their opinions and suggestions for the class anonymously. The questions are as simple as 'What is your opinion of the translation class?' and 'Do you have any suggestion for improvement? Write down your suggestions!'. I always take my students' opinions and suggestions into accounts as I believe the class is not only about how well I teach but also about how they feel about the class. Many times, I find ideas of improvement after hearing from them.

Revisiting Lesson Plan

After reflecting, we can proceed to the next stage which is revisiting our lesson plan. Lesson plan is not a sacred document we always need to oblige. As its name suggests, it is a document about our plan as lecturers. Adjustment is always fine along the way. The results of our reflections should be the basis of any changing we make in our lesson plan. For example in my case, I initially wrote 'the students will be able to translate an academic journal' as one of my objectives in the lesson plan. However, I crossed the objective because after evaluating my students' abilities, the objective was too ambitious. I believe it is better if lecturers set the objectives that meet students' abilities instead of forcing them to reach what are too far from where they are right now. It is to make the learning meaningful. Moreover, it is to ensure that our students do not label themselves as stupid or failed students.

When making any changing in the lesson plan, make sure to keep the original file. The purpose of this is to compare the original plan with the one we have adjusted based on classroom situation. This process enables us to see in what areas the changes are made in one semester. This can help us write a new lesson plan for the next class. All changes we make each semester do not reflect our success or failure in the class; they are proofs that we have invested time and energy to make the class works no matter despite the output. As explained in the previous section, we need to motivate our students to keep learning and trying their best. This motivation should also be given to ourselves.

CONCLUSIONS

Planning, executing, and reflecting the translation class are not new activities for lecturers. Through this small scale study, I offer my personal experiences on what to consider and do for translation class. Prior to teaching, lecturers are recommended to make a short planning through course outline and to prepare supporting resources for

the class. While teaching, it will best if lecturers pay attention to theories and practices balance, evaluation, and motivation. After teaching, reflecting and revisiting lesson plan shall be the focus.

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