

# Pragmatic Failures in Translating Indonesian Culture Implicatures Into English of the Novel 'The Rape of Sukreni'

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# Pragmatic Failures in Translating Indonesian Culture Implicatures Into English of the Novel 'The Rape of Sukreni'

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## ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the successes and failures of the translator in understanding the intended meaning of cultural implicatures and their maxims of all translated utterances in the novel of 'The Rape of Sukreni' using translation and pragmatic approaches. It is a qualitative research using content analysis method. The research comes from the lack of awareness from translation scholars in Indonesia to engage pragmatic approaches in translating results the translations are poorly done due to the misconception that translation only deals with language. This research reviews the accuracy of translation in achieving the pragmatic meanings of implicatures and their maxims as well as gives a proposal concerning the teaching of pragmatics in translation education. The findings of this research show there are 17 errors made: 7 local errors, and 10 global errors. The global errors indicate the translator failed to catch the intended implication meaning of the original text since consideration must be taken if the material to translate is related to pragmatic. Thus, it is highly suggested the teaching of pragmatic theories for prospective translators in Indonesia are very necessary to be meticulously done.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic, Translation, Sukreni Gadis Bali, The Rape of Sukreni, Novel

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research is held to fill the gap of the previous translation studies because the lack of interest and attention from translation scholars especially in Indonesia to apply pragmatic approaches in examining translation results. Many studies have been done about translation or pragmatics, but there are not enough studies about inadequate equivalence in translation due to failures in understanding the pragmatic meaning.

The relationship between translation and pragmatics can be seen through the understanding that translation text is a form of communication between languages and cultures, while pragmatic is what is meant by the act of the communication. That statement is based on the arguments of some translation experts, such as [1-4]. To explain, translation has various speech act features which can be examined through pragmatic insights, remembering that in communicating, an interlocutor or translator may face an interlocutor or reader who has different cultural backgrounds.

The term cross-cultural pragmatic failures is defined by Thomas (1983) as a failure of a communication member in understanding "what is meant by what is said" [5]. This pragmatic failure is term for pragmatic error in her description about pragmatic error done by foreign language learner. According to Thomas (1983), in pragmatic analysis, such as the use of speech act, there is no speech act "error" [5]. There is only an interlocutor's "failure" in delivering his/her goal or speech illocution, or the failure of an interlocutor in understanding the goal or illocution contained in the speech delivered by another interlocutor.

Previous studies have shown that translation of a text can occur in many linguistic levels. However, the pragmatic level that deals with meaning of how the language being used in communication related to its context needs particular attention; Baker (2018) even wrote a full chapter about pragmatic equivalence in her book [1]; Ruiz and Pardo (2014) found the importance of pragmatic theories to construct the framework of evaluating translation of implied meaning [6]. Their research highlighted the film titles translated into other

languages and cultures that intrigued the audience which is similar with the case of this research. The translator translated the title of the original novel "Sukreni Gadis Bali" into "The Rape of Sukreni" which was very much different in meaning. Luo and Gao (2011) [7] in their research implied when the pragmatic force of a language is misunderstood, the communication fails leading to pragmatic failures. According to them, the choices the translators had made were bold and resembled to their pragmatic competences; Perez (2017) in his research of "The Translation of Humour Based on Culture-Bound Terms in Modern Family" analyzed the translation of cases in which humor is based on culture-bound terms which are not shared by the target culture [8]. The results show that translation technique selection is determined, among other factors, by the principle of relevance. According to Perez (2017), realizing how importance the pragmatic message delivered, the translators strive to give some of the cognitive pragmatic effects intended by the original author, particularly those associated with the processing of wordplay [8].

One cohesive conclusion can be drawn from the results of previous studies above is that the success and failure in translating pragmatic texts depend on the pragmatic competency of a translator in understanding the implicit meaning in a text. According to Grice (1967), what a speaker means by an utterance can be divided into what the speaker "says" and what the speaker thereby "implicates" [9]. This is called conversational implicature that is divided into generalized and particularized implicature. Grice (1967) then set up the classification of implicatures into four maxims: The maxim of quality (do not say what you believe to be false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence); the maxim of quantity (make your contribution as informative as is required); the maxim of relation/relevance (be relevant); and the maxim of manner (be brief and avoid ambiguity) [9].

Based on theories above, implicatures related to the implied meaning of what we say as the example bellows:

A: Will you come to my party tonight?

B: Victor will come to visit me.

A: Oh, okay.

It can be seen that the B's reply feels weird. The question from A is a "yes" or "no" question that also requires the "yes" or "no" answer. But why does B state something that seems on the surface does not answer the question?

In this case, there must be a context which enables of both speakers to grasp the meaning lies behind the conversation. To make it relevant, A should have knowledge about Victor that is mentioned in the conversation. Otherwise, A will question B's reply with another question such "Who is Victor?" or "So?" However, the dialogue above shows that both of the speaker adheres to the maxim of relevant. The utterances implied a particularized implicature because it needs a special context to understand the intended meaning of B.

"The Rape of Sukreni" (TRS) has been chosen as the corpus of this research because this novel contains lots of translated utterances with cultural implicatures of Indonesian culture that needs to be deeply examined. It

was translated by a professional translator named George Quinn and participated in a cultural festival in New York which reflected Indonesian culture through literary works.

## 2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the research is to fill the gap of the previous studies about the importance of relationship between translation and pragmatics. The lack of awareness from translation scholars, especially in Indonesia, to engage pragmatic approaches in doing translation makes this field requires further research especially ones concerning the failures of translating the cultural implicatures and their maxims since there are many literary works come from certain cultures. Based on this thought, this research studies the accuracy of translation in catching the intended meaning of cultural implicatures and their maxims of all translated utterances in the novel of TRS which appear in the speech acts of the dialogue translation of the novel.

## 3. METHOD

This is a qualitative research using content analysis method to analyze the intended meaning of cultural implicatures and their maxims of all translated utterances in the novel of TRS using translation and pragmatic approaches. According to Denzin, & Lincoln (2011), qualitative research is a research which uses natural background in interpreting the phenomenon that happened by utilizing data gathering method, like interviewing, observing, and utilizing documents [10]. Dialogue texts in the novel were utilized as corpus. The data of this research consist of speech act phrases from an Indonesian literature work and its English translation, which is various dialogues that have elements which reveal cultural implicatures and their maxims.

The practical steps done in data analyzing using Miles, & Huberman, (2014) approach are as follows [11]:

- a. The data of this research are verbal expressions, which are utterances containing cultural implicatures and their maxims. These utterances were then reduced by categorizing them into pragmatic forms which are either successfully or unsuccessfully delivered into the target text.
- b. Data in the form of dialogue translation that are not successful translated into the target language were categorized according to translation strategies proposed by [1, 3, 4, 12, 13], i.e., making sense; conveying the spirit and manner of the original; having a natural and easy form of expression; and reproducing a similar response
- c. The results from the above categorization were inserted into a display data in the form of matrix based on Grice (1967) theory of implicatures and their maxims concerning the success and failure in delivering the pragmatic meaning into the target language [9].
- d. The next step was confirming the conclusion (verification) which were inferred since the gathering of data and were loosely, openly, and skeptically held. Conclusion confirmation was done through

discussions with translation experts, lecturers of translation subjects, and colleagues of translation studies; this includes written discussions with the original translator of this novel, George Quinn. Discussions were intensively done by rechecking every data and the suitability of the categorization that had been done. This step was meant to further develop intersubjective agreements as the meaning appeared from the data were tested for their truthfulness and strength, which is also a form of their validity.

#### 4. RESULTS

There are 41 data found of using implicatures and their maxims. The data are divided into the followings: 23 times of employing generalized implicature and 18 times of employing particularized implicature. The maxim of manner has the highest frequency which is used 13 times. The maxim of quality is used 11 times, followed by the maxim of quantity that is used 10 times. The lowest frequency goes to the maxim of relevant which used 7 times. Related to the findings, the writers made an interview with the translator due to his choice of translation strategies and the reasons lie within.

There 17 data of errors found. These errors create some deviations in the deliverance of the translated message. These effects or deviations are global and local. There are 10 global errors and 7 local errors. What is meant by global refers to the message which is wanted to be delivered can no longer be understood by readers (distorted) of the target language due to a fatal deviation within the translation.

The use of each translated maxim can be seen on the data strategy samples below (the full data is attached):

##### 4.1. Maxim of Manner

| 4 SL Text   | 1 TL Text  |
|---|--|
| "Benar katamu itu," kata menteri polisi sambil tersenyum-senyum dengan senangnya, "walaupun siapa juga, harus engkau <u>hindarkan dari tempatku</u> . Hai Negari, siapa tadi itu?" (h.36) | "I have indeed," the police chief answered with a smirk. "If anyone tries to take my place - I don't care who he is - you just tell him <u>to move on</u> . Who was that man just now?" (p.45) |

The translated utterance of "I don't care who he is - you just tell him to move on" is a particularized implicature because it needs special context to understand the intended meaning which is in this case related to I Gusti Made Tusan's command to refuse every man who wants to get close to Ni Negari. The utterance is particular implied from the condition where a lot of male customers are trying to hit on her. However, based on the interview, since the conversation happened in the food stall, the translator thought the words of "hindarkan dari tempatku" means to move something on from its original place, or in other words, to send those men out of the stall. Thus, he used the phrase "to move on" to replace the words "hindarkan dari tempatku."

This translated utterance violates the maxim of manner because the translator failed to the intended meaning of the writer of SL text. It is a global error since he really missed the mark. Therefore, the suggested translation which was thought able to minimize translation failure is to translate the utterance "hindarkan dari tempatku" into "to stay away".

##### 4.2. Maxim of Quality

| 1 SL Text   | 1 TL Text  |
|---|--|
| "Aku baru datang dari Singaraja," kata I Gusti Made Tusan. "Bilakah Men Negara <u>anak beranak</u> ..." (p. 33) | "I've just come from Singaraja," I Gusti Made Tusan said to him. "When do you plan to have Men Negara and <u>her men</u> ..." (p.42) |

The translated utterance of "When do you plan to have Men Negara and her men ..." is a generalized implicature because it does not need particular context to understand the situation. The translator also used the same style as the writer of the SL text to translate the utterance explicitly. However, his choice of translating the words of "anak beranak" into "her men" violated the maxim of quality because the translator failed to catch the intended meaning of the writer of the SL text. The speaker of the utterance is referring the phrase of "anak beranak" as a mother and her daughter. The word "men" is definitely not suitable in this translation. It is a global error since the meaning has really completely distorted. Therefore, the suggested translation which was thought able to minimize translation failure is to translate the phrase "anak beranak" into "her daughter."

##### 4.3. Maxim of Quantity

| 1 SL Text   | 1 TL Text  |
|---|--|
| "Jika tidak karena Ni Negari, anak Seraya itu, sudahlah Men Setan serta <u>panakawannya</u> meringkuk atau berpeluh di panas terik menumbuk semen merah di bui!" katanya dalam hati. (h.33) | "If it hadn't been for Ni Negari," he said to himself, "the old devil and <u>her pack of clowns</u> would be locked up by now, or sweating it out under the sun smashing bricks for cement in a prison chain-gang." (p.42) |

The translated utterance of "If it hadn't been for Ni Negari, the old devil and her pack of clowns would be locked up by now or sweating it out under the sun smashing bricks for cement in a prison chain-gang" is a particularized implicature because it needs special context to understand the intended meaning meant by Made Aseman. The utterance is related to the Men Negara's accomplices and can be easily misunderstood if someone does not possess the cultural knowledge of the SL text, which unfortunately the translator in this case.

The translator translated the word "panakawannya" literally into "her pack of clowns"



while the writer of the SL text intended meaning refers to the people who help Men Negara committing a crime. Therefore, the translator violated the maxim of quantity because he gave too much information by translating literally the word of *“panakawan”* that is necessarily not needed in this case. Thus, the suggested translation which was thought able to minimize translation failure is to translate the words of *“panakawannya”* into *“her man.”*

4.4. Maxim of Relevant

| 4 | SL Text   | TL Text  |
|---|---|--|
|   | “Selamat jalan, kanda, sampai bertemu lagi,” katanya dengan sayu. “Selamat tinggal, dinda, lekas ke ...” (h.36) | “Good-bye,” she said with a look of yearning. “Until we meet again.” “Good-bye. I hope you’ll come soon.” (p.45) |

The translated utterance of “Good-bye. I hope you’ll come soon” is a generalized implicature because it does not need particular context to understand the situation. The utterance is a translated text of *“Selamat tinggal, dinda, lekas ke ...”* It contains the maxim of relevant since the translator grasps the intended meaning as the writer meant to although the writer consciously has made it into an unfinished sentence. However, since the translator used modulation technique as a strategy in translating the phrase *“lekas ke ...”* into “you’ll come soon”, this strategy resulted a global error on the translation because the phrase “you’ll come soon” has changed the message which the writer wants to convey in the source language. The speaker of the utterance is Ketut Rai, the one who is saying goodbye to his fiancée. Thus, the phrase “you’ll come soon” is not suitable in this case since the speaker is the one who is leaving. The suggested translation which was thought able to minimize translation failure is to translate the utterance *“Selamat tinggal, dinda, lekas ke ...”* into “Good-bye. I hope I’ll see you soon”.

The modulation technique is the one mostly used by the translator as a translation strategy in translating speech acts containing cultural implicatures and their maxims in the novel of TRS. The translator tended to use his own perspective in translating and let themselves be released from the bindings of grammatical structure and literal meaning of every word.

Based on the samples above, it is clearly shown that the global errors were made because the translator failed to grasp the intended implication meaning of the original source language since he has different cultural backgrounds. These failures of understanding the intended meaning of cultural implicatures and their maxims had made him choose the wrong translation strategy as well. He did not carefully take into account the purpose of the translation in translating the culturally bound words or expressions. These kinds of errors could be avoided if the translator would have engaged pragmatics approach, especially implicatures and their maxims in his work.

5. CONCLUSION

Translation and pragmatics are two important components of communication that are inseparable. A translator must understand the pragmatic meaning in an utterance in order to have the understanding of why a speech is spoken. After carefully analysing the data, including doing discussions with the translator of the TRS novel, it can be concluded that the reason for failures in the translation of the intended meaning of cultural implicatures and their maxims is because the translator faces a source language text which has different cultural backgrounds, including its language. As De Mameffe (2012) concluded from her research that humans are very complex. The answer of yes or no still needs to count in the context before it can be translated into whether a ‘yes’ really means agreeing, and ‘no’ really means refusing [14].

The success and failure in interpreting are very much depend on the pragmatic competency of a translator in understanding the implicit meaning in a text. In this research, the failures of understanding the intended meaning of cultural implicatures and their maxims have made the translator choose the wrong translation strategies since he does not carefully take into account the purpose of the translation in translating the culturally bound words or expressions. The translator has failed to convey the intended pragmatics meaning of the utterances which are different than the ones actually written by the writer of the SL text.

This research is hoped can fill the gap of the literature studies in the subject of translation, especially pragmatic translation. Also, the writers hope the findings of the research can convince the policymakers in language education especially in teaching translation, translation experts, lecturers, and translation practitioners to fully engage the pragmatic approach in translation practice, especially in the specialization education of master’s degree of Translation in Indonesia. The scholars of translation not only need to be prepared with on the surface translation skills but also need to be exposed with the pragmatic competency. Understanding translation strategies is not good enough without the adequate pragmatic competency to produce a good translation result.

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