TRANSLATING IDEOLOGY: A CASE OF MEDIATED POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN BRUNEI

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Abstract- This paper will attempt to look at the shifts of translation in relation to the case of disempowerment in the Target Text (TT), which is in this case, a *titah*- a culturally bounded political text. To establish a theoretical basis, a literature review on ideology, political discourse and their relevance to translation studies will be laid out. This will be followed by a brief account on Brunei Darussalam's national philosophy- the *Malay Islamic Monarchy* and the importance of this ideology as an underlying basis for the translated political discourse. Subsequently, the phenomenon of lexical shifts in the *titah* will be observed and so as the manifestation of 'disempowerment' in the TT. Throughout the discussion, Nida's (1964) notion of equivalences, Fairclough's (1995) guideline on critical discourse and two articles on shifts in political discourse will be exploited. Where it is considered relevant, the knowledge of pragmatics (Levinson, 1983) will be embedded. A conclusion will be made at the end of this paper to summarize and highlight the findings and other related significant issues. It is worth to mention here that, due to limitations, only lexical shifts will be observed with emphasis given to the religious-connoted terms and the highly-marked first person pronoun *Beta*.

Keywords: Translation Shifts, Ideology, Brunei, Malay Islamic Monarchy (*MIB*), Political Discourse, *Titah*

I. INTRODUCTION

As been mentioned in Munday (2001), 'translation shifts' (or 'shifts') was first coined by Catford (1965) in his book *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*[1]. The notion of 'shifts', however, has never been clear cut. Often it refers to a result from the translating process (Popovic, 1970; Bhum-Kulka, 2000), or a strategy used in achieving equivalences between the Source Text (henceforth ST) and the Target Text (henceforth TT) (Venuti, 2000). Where Catford (1965) described it as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL", 'shifts' remains as a process that lies in the 'Third Space'[2] within the translation domain. Catford (1965) distinguishes two major types of 'shifts', namely level shifts and category shifts (Munday, 2001). This 'shifts' occur on both lexical and grammatical level and accounts for literary, pragmatic, functional and communicative purposes (Venuti, 2000).

As much as the notion of 'shifts' is exercised on various verbal and written translation texts, vigorous works on translation and critical discourse has also taken place. Following Fairclough (1995:56), a discourse is the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular

point of view. It is cognitive-based and is appertained to 'knowledge and knowledge construction' of an individual or a certain society. Hence, different social or ideological practice is differently highlighted in different political discourses, according to the elements involved such as people, place and time. In the field of translation, the emergence of discourse-oriented scholars qua translators such as Basil and Mason (1990) had opened up for more communicative-related approach in analyzing translated texts and the processes within. Their studies incorporate different elements ranging from source-target relationships to different principles, norms and ideologies that underlie a particular translating process.

With regards to the analysis, Fenton and Moon's (2002) article on *The Translation of the Treaty of Waitangi: A Case of Disempowerment* and Loupaki's (2008) work on *Shifts of Involvement in Translation: The Case of European Proceedings* had given this paper a fundamental insight on how shifts in political discourse takes place. Each articles attempt to observe various elements shifted and how they might cause disempowerment/involvement in the TT. In accordance to that, both laid out the underlying ideology that motivates such shifts.

II. MALAY ISLAMIC MONARCHY: FROM IDEOLOGY TO NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The concept of *Malay Islamic Monarchy* is regarded as an ideology that shaped much of Brunei's nation building- Malays as a dominant race, undividable loyalty to the sultan, and Islam as a religion that underlies every norms and decision-makings. Over the decades, this ideology has survived as a social contract bound between the sultan and his subjects or *rakyat*. It is also found to be dominating both the formal political life of Brunei and its government ethos. In 1990, this ideology was emphasized as the Sultanate's national philosophy, and underlies the establishment of current policies and direction of the country including via the implementation of Syariah Law and its aspiration as a Dzikir Nation and Towards Vision 2035.

III. CHARACTERIZING TITAH AS A POLITICAL TEXT

One of the earliest researches on political discourse dated back to Pêcheux (1982) work on discourse and ideology in *Language, Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious.* In his account, Pêcheux (1982) stressed that 'every discursive process is inscribed in an ideological class relationship'. This is explicitly shown via his comparative research on the

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[1] It is also similar to the translating procedures analyzed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958, in Routledge 2009)

[2] To borrow Bhabha's term (1994, in Wolf, 2008), the notion of *Third Space* includes what lies in between the ST and the TT. It is where the negotiation and initiation of new signs (or meanings) occurred via innovation and hybridism.

Communist and Socialist parties in France in the 1970s (Fairclough, 1992).[3]

Needless to say, the inter-relationship between different elements (or 'materials' to borrow Pêcheux's term) in a discourse is able to manifest the ideology that underlies it. Subsequently, this ideology may impose a certain degree of influence towards the target audiences (or readers). It is often viewed as a mode or vehicle to promote or legitimate interests of a particular social group (Perez, 2003). In this respect, different sema-pragmatic elements are often emphasized, if not manipulated to give not only a 'powerful' impact to the target audiences but also a positive-connoted one.

With regards to the analyzed text, a *titah* is a form of imperial text[4] delivered verbally by His Majesty the Sultan to commemorate an event celebrated by the Sultanate (Brunei Darussalam: Culture & Information, 2009) nationwide. This commemoration covers a diverse scope ranging from domestic issues to global phenomena, or an interlinkage of the two. Despite the anonymous 'author(s)' or rather the transcriber of this text, a *titah* is made socially indoctrinated to be the mere words of His Majesty. It addresses the nation as a whole, but with particular target audiences at times (in concordance to the selected themes at which the delivery takes place). The content of a *titah*, although made to sound subtle, often exerts a great influence on the government and the society as a whole. It might initiate, support or condemn certain ideas or activities that take place in the Sultanate.

The sample text used in this analysis is His Majesty's *titah* for the National Teachers Day 2009[5] celebration-mediated via the national broadcasting agency- the Radio Television Brunei (RTB). Due to its dominant bilingual audience, prime news is televised in both Malay and English. The prime Malay News or *Berita Nasional* (BN) is aired two hours before the English *News at 10* (NAT) daily, and both news broadcast the same content (RTB News, 2009).

The original *titah* was delivered in Malay at the national level Teachers Day celebration on November 18th 2009, in front of more than 2 000 teachers who are dominantly Malays. The original *titah* then was recorded for news to be broadcasted later, and it was translated into English for the English news. This translating process involves the editors qua translators working under the News Centre of RTB, under the strict supervision of the Prime Ministers Office[6]. The modus operandi is to produce a TT in English, parallel, if not as close as possible to the ST.

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[3] A prior research on 'critical linguistics' was developed by the group based at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s, combining the linguistic text analysis and the Hallidayan functionalist approach.

[4] Also referred to as a proclamation (Blomqvist, 1997), or an order (Reid, 2001).

[5] Brunei's National Teachers Day is celebrated every September 23rd to recognize those in the teaching professions. As part of the yearly programme, a massive gathering for the teachers is held at a national level attended by His Majesty and the other Royals.

The shifts in the mode of the text inevitably change the type and number of target audience. In other words, the mediation of the *titah* would attract a bigger number of target audiences especially those who are outside the teaching profession. Despite the bilingual situation of the country, it is undoubted that most of the listeners or audiences are more proficient in Malay. However, for the purpose of internationalizing the local news, the TT is reproduced in English in such a way that it is accessible worldwide.

IV. SHIFTS OF DISEMPOWERMENT IN TITAH

Considering the cultural and political restrictions, the TT is produced in a 'tight' manner that it has to propagate the same message and subsequently receive the expected response from the audiences. This calls for the exploitation for Nida's (In Venuti, 2000) notion of formal equivalence (F-E) in the translating process. According to Nida (In Venuti, 2000)., an F-E translation is meant to be "source-oriented; that is, it is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message" Formal elements reproduced are diverse, ranging from lexicon to word usage (Nida, in Venuti, 2000), and it is the sema-pragmatic context that the next analysis will be looking at. The next section will observe how religious-connoted terms in the ST are translated and how these lexical shifts portray disempowerment in the TT. This will be followed by the disempowerment effects caused by the shifts in the translation of the deictic usage of the first person pronoun *Beta* in the ST to *I* in the TT. Through the analyses, not only the shifting phenomenon will shed light for the equivalence-related issues but also as to reveal the underlying ideological context for the translation (which will be *Islamic* and *Monarchy* in this sense).

Finding Equivalence for Religious-connoted Terms

As been mentioned beforehand, Islam is the main element that underlies the ideological trinity. Islamic teachings and its domain, therefore, penetrates every socio-cultural aspect including language. Such assimilation is very distinctive in terms of lexicon, especially if it carries a religious connotation such as those used in the Holy Quran. These lexicon (or loanwords) often manifest great emotive overtones and are transliterated respectively (Hussein, 2004). In the ST, a few of these religious-connoted terms are used with the intention to stir the audiences' emotions, specifically in terms of teaching responsibilities. This applies to what Sornig (1989) suggests that usage of emotionally-oriented lexical elements is able to create "an atmosphere of chumminess, shared fates and purposes." With the exploitation of these "Quran-specific" (Hussein, 2004) terms, the message delivered is somehow 'tied' to a certain degree of spirituality and devoutness to Islamic teachings, as in example of *beriman* and *bertaqwa* in the ST (1a),

(1a) … mempersiapkan generasi berilmu, **beriman** dan **bertaqwa**. (ST)

Taking *beriman* (*ber-* is an affix 'to have') as an example, it is rooted from the word *iman* which means total faith or belief in Allah the Almighty. Not only it defines ones conviction towards Islam, it also "reflects a sensitive meaning geared towards the core of Islamic faith" (Hussein, 2004). The

fundamentality of the term *iman* is evident in the 'Six Pillars of Iman' (the six core-foundations in Islamic faith). In the TT, *beriman* is simply translated as *pious* (OED: devoutly religious). Although it carries a generic semantic meaning (on faith), it is not able to reflect the original meaning embedded in the ST (see 1b),

(1b) … equipping a knowledgeable, **pious** and **Allah-fearing** generation. (TT)

The same situation occurs for the term *bertaqwa* or *taqwa* (1a) where it is translated as *Allah-fearing* in the TT (1b). The term *taqwa* is a complex mixture of fear and love towards Allah the Almighty. Hilali and Khan (1983) transliterated *Muttaqin* (a derivational form which refers to the person possessing *taqwa*) as "the pious righteous person who fears Allah much, perform all kinds of good deeds which he has forbidden, and love Allah much, perform all kinds of goods deeds which he has ordained." As can be deduced, this term holds a more specific meaning than the translation in the TT (1b). In other words, it has diminished the spiritual effect imposed to the target audiences.

The struggle in finding for formal equivalences for the religious-connoted terms is not only true for the abovementioned but also occurs in words like *insan* where the meaning is more than just 'human being, man or person' (Al-Mawarid Dictionary, 2007). In the Islamic sense, *insan* refers to a person, who owns positive qualities in terms of faith and performance of good deeds. This is true in the context of ST (2a) where being teachers or teaching is regarded as a noble profession that produces innovative *insans*. In the TT (2b), however, not only the meaning is barely 'delivered' but is translated as *individual* which is ambiguous in its semantic nature. The term *individual* might carry bipolar connotations- it can either be emphasized in terms of originality or positively distinctive, or being accredited as self-centred and egoistical. It is only with the presence of context that this ambiguity can be resolved (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

(2a) Guru adalah agen yang melahirkan **insan-insan** innovatif… (ST)

(2b) Teachers are agent of producing innovative and versatile **individuals**… (TT)

Another phenomenon observed in the TT is the complete omission of these religious-connoted terms such as the ultimate praise *Alhamdulillah* which means 'all praise belongs to Allah' (Al-Mawarid Dictionary, 2007) as depicted in ST (3a). Unlike in cases where omissions in translated political discourse often reflects manipulation of powers and oppression (Fenton & Moon, 2002), the omission that occurs in TT (3b) cannot seem to be accounted for rationally. However, the omission of a highly-marked religious praise in the ST does catalyze the disempowerment effect in the TT.

(3a) **Alhamdulillah** kita juga sedang berada di landasan yang sama… (ST)

(3b) **[]** We are also in the same situation… (TT)

In response to the omission issue, it seems to be contradicted to what Sornig (1989) proposes;

"Elliptic language forces the recipient to complete the utterance and through this mental activity where he busies himself with what somebody else may have meant he/she is lured into identifying himself/herself to a degree with the speaker."

Translating *Beta-* as a highly marked pronoun

The pronominal system is often regarded as the most obvious manifestations of persons. It also acts as a basis for communicative usage, mainly as a way of referencing and addressing people. Nonetheless, such system is also able to depict a particular social system or structure. Where level of social complexities is high, pronouns are differentiated according to what the society values most. In Japanese, for instance, pronouns are differentiated with respect to the sex of the speakers and the addressees, social status and the degree of intimacy (Levinson, 1983).

In the case of Brunei Malay, the singular pronoun 'I' covers six forms[7]. Each is assigned according to the different groups where each speaker belongs, and is used in relation to who the addressees are (Figure 1);

Speaker's group	Renderings of Singular Pronoun 'I'
I	*Beta*
II (a)	*Patik, Saya, Aku*
II (b)	*Patik, Peramba, Saya, Aku*
III	*Patik, Peramba, Kaola, Saya, Aku*

Figure 1: Different renderings of Singular Pronoun 'I' in Brunei Malay Language

As can be deduced from Figure 1, the form *Beta* can only be used by the first class elites (**I**). This form of pronoun is intended to be used for addressing all social class groups, in both formal and informal situations, as well as in verbal and written expressions. The form symbolizes the ultimate superiority that the speaker possesses and suppresses the effect of *primordial loyalty* on the addressee(s) (Hashim, 1999).

It is undoubted that the usage of *beta* carries a special connotation in Brunei's socio-cultural context. Misusage of this form is socially unaccepted and can be regarded as highly treasonous. In TT (4b), *beta* in ST (4a) is merely translated as *I* which is more generic in form and function.

(4a) **Beta** ingin pesan … (ST)

(4b) **I** wish to remind … (TT)

This follows Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958/1995 in Venuti, 2000) *modulation* strategy, by utilizing the hypernym or superordinate form of the first person pronoun. However, this strategy has caused a disempowerment effect in the TT. By using the generic form, the social status and sovereignty embedded in the pronoun *beta* cannot be shown in the TT context. In other words, with this shift, any individual from any social class can redeliver the same speech- which is not quite the case in Brunei's socio-cultural context. The absence of the social status grammaticalized in the pronoun (in TT) has somehow 'reduced' the authority of the speaker (His Majesty).

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[7] This excludes honorifics and other form of nominal expressions.

V. CONCLUSION

From the analyses, it can be deduced that despite the attempt to produce a pseudo-parallel text, there are limitations at to which extent formal equivalence is permissible. Different translating strategies are employed in order to compensate for equivocal meaning in both texts (ST and TT). However, since "there can be no fully exact translations" (Nida, 1964 in Venuti, 2000), transfer of meaning, as well, can be inevitably disrupted. In the case of the political text *titah*, meaning transferred or shifted has experienced disempowerment in the TT. In other words, exact meanings of the ideological-bounded terms in the ST are not fully rendered or transmitted in the TT. Nature of translations and language are not solely to be blamed in this matter. Related norms and factors affecting the translating process exert a great influence over the editors qua translators, especially when the text is mediated and kept under the authorities' supervision. Nevertheless, the need to cater for the bigger audiences' decoding ability has also enforced the translators to opt the generic meaning of the specific-oriented terms. This coincides to Wilson and Sperber's (1988, in Katan & Straneiro-Sergio, 2003) notion of relevance that in mediated contexts, audiences favour for minimum cognitive effort in order to reach a maximum cognitive effect.

In addition to that, it is obvious that translation does not only play a role in transferring lexico-grammatical and sema-pragmatic elements but is also regarded as an instrument to maintain an ideology perceived legitimately by a particular group of society. While the exact 'transfer-at-all-level' cannot be made permissible at most times, translators from time to time try to accommodate the deficiencies in the translating process. At an idealistic level, this is not certainly an easy task as translators have to, in the long run, "establish the cultural grounds of diplomacy, reinforce alliances, antagonisms, and hegemonies between nations" (Venuti, 1994 in Faiq, 2004).

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