An Analysis of Joke Translation in Date Night Movie
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Abstract - This is a descriptive qualitative research which focuses on analyzing translation techniques and quality of international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke found in a movie entitled Date Night. It aims at (1) explicating international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke, (2) finding out the translation techniques applied by the translator to translate international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke, and (3) explaining how the techniques affect the translation quality of international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke, in terms of accuracy and acceptability.

This research employs purposive sampling technique. Date Night is chosen as the source of data with international jokes and national-culture-and-institutions jokes taken as the data. The total data are 79 data which consist of 58 international jokes and 21 national-culture-and-institutions jokes. The other data are in the form of information taken from the result of questionnaire given to the three raters and in-depth interview with them.

The analysis of translation techniques shows that there are eight techniques used by the translator to translate international jokes and national-culture-and-institutions jokes, namely transfer, paraphrase, imitation, transcription, expansion, deletion, condensation, and decimation. Those techniques are applied as single techniques or combination of two to six techniques. There are 13 (16.46%) data translated using single techniques and 66 (83.54%) data translated using multiple techniques.

The findings of the research in terms of translation quality show that 47 (59.49%) data of international joke are accurate, 11 (13.93%) data of international joke are less accurate, 14 (17.72%) data of national-culture-and-institutions joke are accurate, and seven (8.86%) data of national-culture-and-institutions joke are less accurate. The analysis on the acceptability reveals that 47 (59.49%) data of international joke are considered acceptable, 11 (13.93%) data of international joke are considered less acceptable, 16 (20.25%) data of national-culture-and-institutions joke are categorized into acceptable, and five (6.33%) data of national-culture-and-institutions joke are categorized into less acceptable.

The technique which produces the largest number of accurate translation is transfer, as many as 61 (77.22%) data. Meanwhile, decimation produces the largest number of less accurate translation, as many as 11 (13.93%) data. Transfer is also the most dominant technique which results in acceptable translation, as many as 62 (78.48%) data. Meanwhile, less acceptable translation results from the use of uncommon terminologies, inappropriate diction, unnatural expressions, and incomplete punctuation mark used by the translator.

From the result, the translator has successfully translated most of the jokes. However, some jokes are less accurately or less acceptably translated because the translator uses wrong techniques or uses incomplete punctuation mark, inappropriate diction, unnatural expressions, or uncommon terminologies.

Keywords: joke translation, humor translation, types of joke, translation quality, translation technique

I. INTRODUCTION

Among other kinds of text, humorous text is considered to be a challenging text to be translated. Gåll (n.d.) says that “humor poses a real challenge for translators” (p. 1). It is culturally bound. Something considered funny in one language may not be funny in another language due to the different culture.

Joke as a humorous text also has its own linguistic structure which differentiates it from other types of text. It is categorized into some types so that in translating it, translators need deeper analysis. Zabalbeascoa (1996) classified joke in order to help translators translating joke. He states that “among other potentially useful classification of jokes, one could be made according to the way jokes lend themselves to translation and the sorts of translation solution-types associated with each of them” (p. 251). He proposed six types of joke, namely: a) international joke, b) national-culture-and-institutions joke, c) national-sense-of-humor joke, d) language-dependent joke, e) visual joke, and f) complex joke.

Joke can be found everywhere. It can appear in novel, movie, or in everyday conversation. Translating joke appearing in movie is different from translating joke appearing in novel. Movie translation is much more challenging than novel translation because it requires the translation to fit the rules concerning time, space, and presentation. Further, Díaz Cintas and Anderman (2009) say that “the space and time constraints inherent in the subtitling process usually enhance traditional translation challenges, such as grammar and word order, as well as problems related to cross-cultural shifts” (p. 26). Therefore, translators in translating jokes in a movie are demanded to pay close attention to how to recreate the jokes in the target language (TL).

Previously, researches applying Zabalbeascoa’s type of joke have been done. The first one is done by Nielsen in 2010 entitled “NCIS – An Analysis of The Macro- and Microstrategies Applied to Translate Language-Dependent Humor” and the second one is by Rodríguez and Gómez in 2012 entitled “Some Cultural References in Audiovisual Translation of Shrek 2”. From the phenomenon, I decided to conduct a research on international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke translation in a movie as they have different characteristics. International joke is a universally
known joke which does not need to be substituted when translated, while national-culture-and-institutions joke is a culture-bound joke which is challenging for translators to translate as it needs to be substituted in order to work in the TL. Date Night movie is chosen as it contains many interesting cases dealing with international and national-culture-and-institutions jokes translation.

Therefore, this research has three objectives, which are:
1. To describe international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke found in Date Night movie.
2. To know the techniques used to translate international jokes and national-culture-and-institutions jokes found in Date Night movie.
3. To find out how the translation techniques affect the quality of international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke translation found in Date Night movie, in terms of accuracy and acceptability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Definition of Translation

Basically, translation is “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)” (Catford, 1965, p. 20). It implies that translators should render all aspects of a text from the SL into the TL. However, there is a case when only parts of the elements of a text can be translated into the TL, such as humorous text where the content may not be funny in the TL so that translators should come up with a way to solve this problem. Nida and Taber (1982) explain that

As may be clearly noted from the definition of translating, one is constantly faced by a series of polar distinctions which force him to choose content as opposed to form, meaning as opposed to style, equivalence as opposed to identity, the closest equivalence as opposed to any equivalence, and naturalness as opposed to formal correspondence (p. 14).

It means that translators should choose which element that must be prioritized when facing such problem. Humorous text does not only carry its content but also its humorous effect. Thus, translators need to prioritize translating the humorous effect over content as it carries the purpose of the text to elicit laughter from its audience.

1.2. Equivalence in Translation

In the dictionary, equivalence means “having similar or identical effects” (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/equivalent). In terms of translation, equivalence is achieved when the message of a text is similar to its source text. Baker and Saldanha (1998) state that “proponents of equivalence-based theories of translation now define equivalence as a relationship between two texts: a source text (ST) and a target text (TT)” (p. 96). Following the explanation, equivalence in the context of joke translation can serve as the similarity between SL’s humorous effect to the TL’s humor, because the humorous effect carries the function of the text to invite laughter from its audience. As humor can be different from one country to another, the dictions and the vocabularies of the joke can be different as long as the function of the text and its humor are transferred successfully in the TL.

1.3. Problems in Translation

Translation is not as simple and as easy as what common people usually think. There are differences on the level of culture, grammar, etc which make translating very challenging. In terms of joke, what someone perceives to be funny might be different to what others do. Culture, social phenomena, etc are factors that influence people to call something to be funny. These factors may cause problems in the process of translation.

1.4. Translation Technique

As the data taken are in the forms of jokes which can appear in single utterances or conversation, Gottlieb’s translation technique is used. There are 10 techniques proposed by Gottlieb (in Ghaemi and Benyamin, 2010). However, only eight techniques are used in the translation by the translator. Those ten techniques are:

1. Transfer
   When an equivalent translation is successfully established, both form and content, the translator applies transfer in his/her translation.
2. Imitation
   When translators borrow a terminology or a word from SL as the translation of TL, they use imitation. It happens because there is no equivalent for the word or term in TL, or because there is no word representing the same meaning as the word in SL.
3. Transcription
   Based on Ghaemi and Benyamin (2010), “transcription is used in those cases where a term is unusual even in the ST, for example the use of a third language or nonsense language” (p. 42).
4. Expansion
   When translators add additional information to explain a terminology or a word from SL to TL, s/he uses expansion in his/her translation.
5. Paraphrase
   When translators change the form and/or the word to meet TL’s norms, culture, or grammatical features, they use paraphrase technique.
6. Dislocation
   “Dislocation is adopted when the original employs some sort of special effect, e.g. a silly song in a cartoon movie, where the translation of the effect is more important than the content” (Ghaemi & Benyamin, 2010, p. 42).
7. Condensation
   Condensation is used to make a shorter translation to express long conversation between two characters or more in a movie. It is done in order to make the translation meet the time and space restriction. The parts omitted do not change or affect the main message of the text.
8. Deletion
   It is used when the translator deletes certain element of
   the ST. Usually, the one which is omitted does not
   affect the important message of ST. The elements
   which are deleted are repetition words, internationally
   known words, exclamation, and etc.
9. Decimation
   It is used to delete some parts of the text. Even some of
   the important messages are also deleted.
10. Resignation
    Resignation is used when translators cannot translate
    the ST words or sentences.

1.5. Translation Quality and Translation Quality Assessment
     (TQA)
     In translating a text, translators do not merely change the
     language of the text, but they need to follow certain rules so
     that the translation can be called a qualified translation.
     According to Nababan (2012), a qualified translation covers
     three features, which are: 1) accurate in content, 2) acceptable,
     and 3) readable (p. 18). Accuracy deals with equivalence of
     the content or the message of the text. Acceptability deals with
     whether the translation corresponds to the TL’s norms,
     grammatical rules, culture, etc. Readability is associated to
     whether the readers understand the translation or not.

     To know whether or not a translation is qualified,
     translation quality assessment should be done. Translation
     quality assessment also helps translators improve their
     translating skill, and helps the development of Translation
     Studies. Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) propose a
     new model of translation quality assessment called holistic
     method. It assesses three features which are accuracy,
     acceptability, and readability.

1.6. Subtitling

    Subtitling is a term to call a translation process done in a
    movie. Gottlieb (as cited in Orero, 2004) defines it as “the
    rendering in a different language of verbal messages in
    movieic media, in the shape of one or more lines of written
    text, presented on the screen in sync with the original verbal
    message” (p. 86). It works when the source text is in the form
    of spoken material and the target text takes form of written
    material.

    As movie provides information in the form of verbal and
    visual contents, the product of movie translation should follow
    certain rules. It is done in order not to disturb the visual
    information of the movie. Díaz Cintas and Remael (as quoted
    in Díaz Cintas & Anderman, 2009, p. 22) say that

    Two lines of text are usually the norm, and the number
    of characters per line depends on a number of factors,
    including the subtitling workstation used. Since
    readability of the text is of paramount importance, it
    has been suggested that an ideal subtitle is a sentence
    long, with the clauses of which it consists placed on
    separate lines (2007:172–80).”

    Paes (2010) adds that “subtitles appear normally in one or
    more written lines that are most often presented in the bottom
    on the screen with the duration of approximately 6 seconds per
    caption” (p. 4). She also cites Gottlieb’s opinion that this rule
    is made due to that “humans are only capable of reading 12
    characters per second”. It means that the maximum characters
    in a subtitle per show should be no more than 72 characters.

1.7. Comedy, Humor, and Joke Theory

    In brief, the relationship between comedy, humor, and joke
    is that they stand in a different level. As comedy is known as
    “a play, movie, television program, novel, etc., that is meant to
    make people laugh” (www.merriam-webster.com), humor is
    known as “the quality of being amusing or comic, especially
    as expressed in literature or speech” (www.oxforddictionaries.com)
    or “the faculty of perceiving
    what is amusing or comical” (www.dictionary.com), and joke
    is known as “something said or done to cause laughter”
    (www.merriam-webster.com); I conclude that comedy is a
    collection of jokes and humors, while humor is the essence of
    the joke, and joke is a piece of humorous scene in a comedy.
    In other words, comedy is like a paragraph or a text, while
    joke is like a sentence of a text or a paragraph, and humor is
    the essence of the sentence.

    Further, Dean (2000) explains that “a joke contains two
    parts: (1) the setup and (2) the punch” (p. 1). He also explains
    that

    The setup and the punch are directly related to
    expectation and surprise. In order to work, a joke has to
    surprise you. The trick is that you cannot be surprised
    unless you’re expecting something else first. It causes
    you to expect one thing, then surprises you with
    another (p. 2).

    It is clear that joke has its own linguistic structure which
    should be paid attention to by translators in order to maintain
    its humorous effect.

1.8. Types of Joke

    Theory of type of joke used in this research is proposed by
    Zabalbeascoa (1996). Those six types of joke are:

1. International joke is joke where the humor is not built or
   influenced by cultural elements or specific features of the
   source language. Even if the joke uses a specific feature
   of the source language, it is already known by the target
   audience so that a substitution for the joke is not
   necessary. In summary, the humor is already known
   worldwide so that is easily understood by the target
   audience. Zabalbeascoa (1996) explains that:
   The international joke is a funny story or
   one-liner where the restrictive force of the
   language and cultural differences is greatly
   reduced insofar as the comic effect does not
   depend on either language-specific wordplay
   or familiarity with unknown specific aspects
   the source culture (p. 251)

2. National-culture-and-institutions joke is joke which
   needs substitutions when translated because the cultural
   elements and/or the specific features that build the humor
   do not present in the target language which make it
difficult for the audience to understand. Zabalbeascoa (1996) describes that “there is a need to adapt national, cultural or institutional references of the original to retain the humorous effect for a foreign audience” (p. 252) for the jokes that belong to national-culture-and-institutions joke.

3. **National-sense-of-humor joke** is “certain joke-types and joke themes that are apparently more popular in some countries or communities than in others and constitute a kind of tradition or intertextual frame of understanding” (Zabalbeascoa, 1996, p. 252). He also explains that national-sense-of-humor joke includes the joke about a country making fun of another country or about some communities in a country making fun of themselves. It is a kind of stereotype humor.

4. **Language-dependent joke** is joke which is built through the source language’s linguistic features. Zabalbeacoa (1996, p. 253) includes polysemy, homophony, and zeugma as the linguistic features that are usually used to create jokes.

5. **Visual joke** is joke in which the funny point is built through visual elements.

6. “**Complex joke** combines any two or more of the above mentioned types of joke” (Zabalbeascoa, 1996, p. 254). If the funny point is built through more than one types of joke, then it belongs to this type of joke, which is called complex joke.

1.9. **Humor Translation**

Some experts say that humor translation is a difficult task to do. It happens because there are some factors that may cause problems in the process of translating humor. Brussee (n.d., p. 4) presents Vandaele theory of why humor translation is seen to be “qualitatively different” from other types of jokes:

1. Humor as a meaning effect has an exteriorized manifestation, laughter and such, whereas other texts have less noticeable meanings;
2. Research has shown that humor comprehension and production are two different skills. Being 'funny' cannot be taught (which is why one can be 'funny' for a living);
3. Appreciation of humor varies as well. Humor can be recognized as such without it being found 'funny';
4. The rhetorical effect of humor may be so overwhelming it blurs out the specifics of its creation.

Although there are some gaps which make humor translation very challenging, this task is still possible to be done. Yus (n.d.) explains that “faithfulness to reproducing humorous effects is more important than faithfulness to reproducing coded content” (p. 6). He implies that translators need to prioritize translating the humorous effect rather than the content.

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### III. METHODS

This research focuses on defining international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke found in *Date Night* movie, identifying the techniques used by the translator to translate those two types of joke, and finding out how the techniques affect the translation quality in terms of accuracy and acceptability. As the data are in the forms of joke and information taken from the result of the questionnaire, this research is called qualitative research. Hancock (1998) says that “qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. It relates with the questions begin with: why? how? and in what way?” (p. 2). From Hancock’s explanation, qualitative research needs to explain its findings so that this research also belongs to descriptive research. “Descriptive studies primarily concerned with finding out "what is," involving gathering data that describes events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection” (Glass & Hopkins, as cited in AECT, 2001).

### IV. RESULTS

1.10. **Types of Joke**

Based on Zabalbeascoa’s (1996) theory, joke is classified into six types, namely international joke, national-culture-and-institutions joke, national-sense-of-humor joke, language-dependent joke, visual joke, and complex joke. This research only analyzes two types of joke which are international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke.

From the analysis, there are 58 (73.42%) international joke and 21 (26.58%) national-culture-and-institutions joke found in *Date Night* movie.

1.11. **Translation techniques used by the translator to translate international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke found in a movie entitled Date Night**

In determining what techniques used by the translator to translate international and national-culture-and-institutions joke found in *Date Night* movie, I use Gottlieb’s translation technique. He proposed 10 translation techniques, namely transfer, imitation, transcription, paraphrase, expansion, dislocation, deletion, condensation, decimation, and resignation. From these 10 techniques, the translator only uses eight techniques to translate those two types of joke found in the movie. Those eight techniques are: 1) transfer, 2) imitation, 3) transcription, 4) expansion, 5) paraphrase, 6) deletion, 7) condensation, and 8) decimation.

As the jokes can be in the forms of long conversation, short conversation, or single utterance, the application of technique in each datum varies. Some data are translated using only one technique while the others need multiple techniques in order to be successfully translated. The table below presents the findings about the translation techniques applied to translate international jokes and national-culture-and-institutions jokes in *Date Night* movie, the datum, total, and percentage.

| Table 1. Translation Techniques in International and National-culture-and-institutions Joke |
1.12. The impact of techniques used on the translation to the quality, in terms of accuracy and acceptability

The model of translation quality assessment proposed by Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) is used to know how qualified the translation is from three aspects, which are accuracy, acceptability, and readability. In this research, the aspects which are assessed are the accuracy and acceptability of the international and national-culture-and-institutions joke translation found in Date Night movie. The analysis of accuracy shows that 47 (59.49%) international jokes are classified into accurate, 11 (13.93%) international jokes are classified into less accurate, 14 (17.72%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are categorized into accurate, and seven (8.86%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are categorized into less accurate. The table below shows the findings about translation quality in terms of accuracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Translation Technique</th>
<th>Total Data</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single technique</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Multiple techniques</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>83.54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Translation Quality in Accuracy Point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total Data</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less Accurate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the analysis of acceptability, 47 (59.49%) international jokes are categorized into acceptable, 11 (13.93%) international jokes fall under less acceptable category, 16 (20.25%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are considered acceptable, and five (6.33%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are categorized into less acceptable translations. The table below presents the findings about translation quality in terms of acceptability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Categorization</th>
<th>Total Data</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less acceptable</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings previously presented, it can be seen that the translator of Date Night movie uses eight techniques proposed by Gottlieb (1992) to translate international joke and national-culture-and-institutions joke. They are: a) transfer, b) imitation, c) transcription, d) paraphrase, e) expansion, f) deletion, g) condensation, and h) decimation. From the analysis of the translation techniques, I found that from the total of 79 data, 78 data are translated using transfer, employed either as single technique or in combination with other techniques. Gottlieb (in Ghaemi and Benyamin, 2010) explains that transfer is used when the form and content of a text can be translated equivalently from the SL to the TL.

Translating international joke using transfer is feasible since this type of joke does not carry cultural reference and/or linguistic feature from the SL (Zabalbeascoa, 1996). International joke is also universally known worldwide so that applying this technique is still feasible.

The second technique mostly used in the translation is deletion. From the total 79 data, 52 data are translated using deletion, in combination with other techniques. It is used to omit part of the sentence or utterance which does not carry the important message of the sentence or utterance (Gottlieb in Ghaemi and Benyamin, 2010). In subtitling, the use of deletion is common as the subtitle should fit the limited time, space, and presentation. In this research, deletion is mostly used to omit repeated words; address forms; internationally known words, such as “yes”, “ok”, “no”; exclamations such as oh, ah, wow; and instances phattic communion such as “you know”, “well”.

The next technique mostly applied in the translation is paraphrase. There are 34 data out of 79 translated using paraphrase. Paraphrase changes the way the utterance or the sentence is expressed in the TL, and/or changes the form to fit TL’s grammatical structure, norm, etc. It happens because there is a difference between SL grammatical structure, expression, etc and the TL’s.

Compared to the two previous researches conducted by Nielsen (2010) and Rodríguez and Gómez (2012), the technique used by the translators to translate cultural referent joke is different. The findings of the two researches analyzing language-dependent joke and cultural referent joke show that the translators of Navy CIS and Shrek 2 substitute or adapt the jokes. The findings of those two previous researches is in accordance with Zabalbeascoa theory that cultural referent joke should be translated using adaptation or substitution. However, the translator of Date Night movie translates national-culture-and-institutions joke mostly using transfer as can be seen that transfer is used to translate 78 data out of 79 data.

Different from international joke, national-culture-and-institutions joke needs to be treated carefully when translated. Zabalbeascoa (1996) describes that translators need to substitute or adapt this type of joke to the TL in order to successfully amuse the target audience. It is important to be done since this type of joke carries specific information from...
the SL, and this information is not familiar in the TL.

Nevertheless, a unique phenomenon is discovered in this type of joke translation found in Date Night movie. Most of the national-culture-and-institutions jokes are translated using transfer, but the humor is still maintained. After being analyzed deeper, there is a difference between the element that builds the joke and the element that builds the humor which attaches to the joke. There is a case where the joke uses cultural element which is not familiar in the TL but the flow of the idea that creates the humor is universal. That is why without adapting the joke in the TL, the humor can still be delivered in the target language. Moreover, the visual element and/or the context of situation also help the target audience to get the message of the joke.

VI. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the findings show that:

1. There are 79 data taken in this research. Those 79 data consist of 58 (73.42%) international joke and 21 (26.58%) national-culture-and-institutions joke. Those 79 jokes are in the forms of single utterances, short conversation, or long conversation.

2. From these 79 data, the translator uses eight techniques proposed by Gottlieb (1992). Those eight techniques are transfer, imitation, transcription, paraphrase, expansion, deletion, condensation, and decimation. These eight techniques are applied as single techniques and multiple techniques. The details are as follow:
   a. Single technique: 13 data (16.46%)
   b. Multiple techniques: 66 data (83.54%)

3. By applying single technique or multiple techniques to translate those 79 data, the result of translation quality is as follow:
   a. Accuracy:
      - 47 (59.49%) international jokes are categorized into accurate translation
      - 11 (13.93%) international jokes are categorized into less accurate translation
      - 14 (17.72%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are considered accurate
      - 7 (8.86%) national-culture-and-institutions joke are considered less accurate
   b. Acceptability:
      - 47 (59.49%) international jokes are considered acceptable
      - 11 (13.93%) international jokes are considered less acceptable
      - 16 (20.25%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are categorized acceptable translation
      - 5 (6.33%) national-culture-and-institutions jokes are categorized less acceptable translation

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