

## Textual Competence in Translating Poetry: Classroom Experiences Practice

Sri Handayani

<sup>1</sup>Sri Handayani / [handayani.ukri@gmail.com](mailto:handayani.ukri@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** This research was aimed at describing the textual competences taught in the literary translation course, identifying, and analysing the activities done by the lecturers in the process of teaching literary translation. The research employed a qualitative method by applying a case study as a research design. There were two lecturers and 85 sixth semester students of the Translation Literary Works course who had participated in this research. The data were collected through observation and questionnaire ways to explore the information as the data. The results of the research showed that the genre and topical knowledge could be trained with the techniques used by the lecturers in translating literary works such as (1) introducing and practising the translation in different genres; (2) focusing the translation activities in a certain genre; and (3) applying reading for effect.

**Keywords:** *Textual competence; Poetry, Translation, Classroom Experience*

### 1. Introduction

Translation has been defined in varied definitions by the experts. As generally defined, translation is transferring meaning from a source text into a target text in a different language that includes several phases of process from the earliest process in the source text to the final target text. An individual ability to perform a translation task is needed to result in the qualified target text in the processes of translation. It includes both translation skills and competences that show cognitive resources as declarative and procedural knowledge for transferring appropriate meaning. The translation skill and competence involve several different stages from novice to expert one that are needed in every stage in the process of translation. According to (Bell, 2001) in (Baker, 2001: 187) there are at least three phases of translation process that the translator should face and acquire to reach rich experiences, e.g. analysis, synthesis, and revision process. These phases have different stages of activities that show the level of difficulty in the process. In the analysis stage, the translator reads the source text and draws on the background knowledge in order to comprehend the features contained in the text. After that, the translator produces the translation in the target language by considering the appropriate meaning, translation intention, and users' needs. This stage is known as synthesis. Finally, in the revision stage, the draft of the translation resulted in the synthesis stage then revised based on the terms of the sender's meaning and intention, the translator's intention in translating the text, and the user's need.

Translation skills and competences are the important aspects that show a variety of mental processes as a cognitive domain that involves some different phases from novice to expert one (Albir & Alves, 2009). Meanwhile, (Nida & Taber, 1969) explained that the transferring of text meaning constitutes a mental process which relates to the skill or competence of how the translator produces the target language. This transferring process of translation is known as the translation process generally consists of some phases, problems, and strategies (Bell, 2001 in Baker, 2001). Moreover, it also embraces the idea of preserving meaning and structure entailing efforts that should be exerted by every translator to achieve the intended final product (Bassnett, 2002). Shreve (2006, in Albir and Alves, 2009: 65-66) identifies that the translation competence (TC) covers some knowledge, namely: first language (L1) and second language (L2) linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge of the source and target culture, including the knowledge of specialised subject domains, textual knowledge of source and target textual conventions, and translation knowledge, that is the knowledge of how to translate using the right strategies and procedures. Meanwhile, (Neubert, 2000) in (Schäffner & Adab, 2000) categories translation competence into six main categories e.g. linguistic competence, textual competence, cultural competence, subject competence, research competence, and transfer competence.

In accordance with translation competences and skills, they cannot be obtained quickly and instantly because they relate to cognitive processes. Building the translation competences is needed, therefore, in order to meet qualified translators needed to bridge the gap between the translator's abilities to the demands of the translation results and the target text according to their field (Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017). Furthermore, Al-Batineh & Bilali (2017) found that 10% of translation programs in Arab countries have not met their curricula with translation competencies that met the demands of the target market. Thus, translation training programs still need to develop their curriculum and training materials to meet the needs and demands of the job market. Meanwhile, (Abu-ghararah, 2017) found that there is a rising demand in translation needs in the translation industry so it is necessary to increase the quality of translator competence which can be done through universities or other translation training programs. In Indonesian context, (Dewi, 2019) stated that increasing translation competence is still very necessary for novice translators to meet the market demands of the translation industry.

A research of translation competences has been conducted by many research with different topics of research. Conducted research from a linguistic perspective that looked at the definition of translation competence and found that translation competence has been defined as involving at least 4 aspects of competence, e.g. translator competence, translation competence, transfer competence and translation ability. Meanwhile, (Sundari & Febriyanti, 2016) explored the techniques and competencies applied by EFL learners in Indonesia in the practice of translating informative texts from English source texts into Indonesian target texts. (Resurrecció et al., 2008) explore the relationship between text genre and translation

competence to develop a pedagogical framework for developing translation competence based on the concept of text genre which includes categories that combine formal, socio-communicative and cognitive aspects of communication. Meanwhile, (Wijaya, 2019) researched translation techniques applied in translating by identifying the main idea of the text before translating a technique for problem solving in translating practice. Furthermore, (Alim, 2015) investigated how translation competencies are taught in the classroom context in the level of higher education.

Several studies on translation competence were conducted to see how competence is taught by taking types of literary texts such as poetry, short stories or novels because literary works translation is considered to have more complex difficulties for novice translators compared to other types of texts. In the process of teaching literary translation, the literary translation practice can be an exciting and challenging activity for college students. This translation practice provides an opportunity for the students to explore the literary works in terms of the author's emotions. In relation to the challenges of doing literary translation, (Anderman & Rogers, 2003) emphasise that there is actually no shortage of theories and models that describe the literary translation. However, they do not give the adequate insight into what actually happens when a literary text is translated from one language into another. However, translation of literary works provides interesting challenges both in the practice of translating and the teaching process to build skills for better textual competence and provide appropriate experience in the stages of the

Textual competence refers to discourse proficiency that covers the norms of the text worlds pertaining to the source and the target lingua-cultures and their subdivisions (Neubert, 2000) in (Neubert, 2000 in Schäffner & Adab, 2000). According to (Beeby, 2000) in (Schäffner & Adab, 2000) there are three contrastive knowledge awareness relates to the text both in the source language or target language, e.g. (1) knowledge of text type and genre differences between SL and TL; (2) awareness of the relationship between context and register and how the priorities and restrictions of each translation situation depend on this; and (3) knowledge of differences in textual coherence and cohesion between SL and TL.

The awareness of the characteristics and function of the text for the translators can be built by developing the discourse proficiency to specific extent in the language skills and by introducing the notion of genres as conventional and linguistically standardised textual patterns of the L1 and L2 text at the macro and the micro level. For example, the students or translators are introduced to some different texts such as leaflets, recipes, job offers, short news items, literary works, instruction manual etc. Therefore, by knowing the notion of genres learned they are aware that the appropriateness of the textual make-up determines the specific function of the texts in communicative situations (Schäffner, 2000) in (Schäffner & Adab, 2000).

In relation to the literary texts in translation, (Gile, 2009) elucidates that acceptability criteria in the translating literary texts is different from informational texts since the features of both texts are different as well. As indicated in the following:

*'In literary translation, this is easy to understand: literary texts are essentially vehicles for more than information, including emotional and aesthetic components, and readers may be aware and wish to retain in the target text linguistic traces of some features of the source language and culture and the author's literary personality. However, in the translation of primarily informational texts, translation instructors seem to hold the unanimous view that the sole applicable criteria of acceptability are those of the target language' (Gile, 2009).*

Therefore, the textual knowledge for the translators is essential in order to know the features and function of the texts. The techniques and procedures used in the process of translation of these texts chosen by the translator then can be applied properly.

## 2. Methods

This research employed a qualitative method by applying a case study as a research design. The purposes of applying a case study were to find out, to describe the translation competences taught in the literary translation course taught by the lecturers, to identify, describe, and analyse the activities done by the lecturers in the process of teaching literary translation. In addition, it aimed at describing and analysing the experiences obtained by the students in learning the literary translation course. Finally, it was also to describe and analyse the students' responses to the teaching of literary translation courses. According to (Creswell, 2019), The case study research design focuses on a program, event, or activity involving individuals with the main purpose was to explore a bounded system e.g. an activity, event, process, or individuals based on extensive data collection. Considering the characteristics of the research and the purposes of the study mentioned above, the case study research design is considered appropriate to apply in this research. There were two lecturers and 85 sixth semester students of the Translation Literary Works course who had participated in this research. The data were collected through observation and questionnaire ways to explore the information as the data.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Translation is the written product resulting from the processes of transferring the message from the source language text into the target language text and the functions in the socio-cultural context of the target language. Translation is also known as actual systems that conform to the norms of the text worlds pertaining to the source and target of lingua-cultures and their subdivisions. In relation to these theories, translation closely relates to the texts. The textual knowledge, as a result, is considered important for translators to identify textual

features, recognize words and structures, describe texts and categorise the types of texts (genre).

Considering the importance of textual knowledge, the data obtained from the interview and observation showed that the lecturers had high awareness of the importance of textual knowledge. The lecturers' awareness of the textual knowledge was shown through some literary texts introduced and practised by the lecturers in the TLW class. RL1 explained that:

- [1] *The overall background knowledge is directed to grasp the messages of the literary works that have been translated or the ones that will be translated. In other words, the topical knowledge is very important and genre knowledge is also important to make sure that the students are not misled in understanding a poetry, drama, and short story. Then, how to reconstruct these literary works into Indonesian in an appropriate way based on its own context of readership required by the translator (I:Q1:RL1).*

Based on [1], the competences considered to build the students' textual competence in TLW were genre knowledge and topical knowledge. The genre and topical knowledge could be trained by the lecturers through some techniques in translating the literary works, e.g. (1) introducing and practising the translation in different genres; (2) focusing the translation activities in a certain genre; and (3) applying reading for effect. The discussion of these steps is presented in the following.

### 3.1 Introducing and Practising Translation in Different Genres

Introducing and practising translation in different genres were proposed to build students' awareness of the characteristics and functions of the texts given to the students. The students were trained to translate words, phrases, or sentences in different literary texts. The purpose was to see the different features of the texts, such as text style, text form, choice of word, text element, etc. It is also to see the difference between meaning of words and their functions based on the context and types of literary texts since the literary texts were regarded as expressive texts (Newmark, 1988). During the interview (I) Respondent Lecturer 2 (RL2) shared the words in the following:

- [2] *Since I was assigned to be the lecturers for this [literary translation] course, I decided to include a prose in the form of a short story in the previous semester. During this semester, I also teach the students to translate comic scripts in addition to translating short stories (I:Q13:RL2).*

In accordance with [2], it was considered that the provision of translation practices for the students through some different text types helped them build their knowledge of texts

since the literary works consist of three different genres, e.g. poetry, prose or fiction, and drama (Minot, 1988). The students were then demanded to know the characteristics and functions of texts in each genre. The awareness of the characteristics and functions of the texts could be achieved by introducing the notion of genres as conventional and linguistically standardised textual patterns through practising translation exercises at the macro and micro level. It is also stated by (Schäffner, 2000) in (Schäffner & Adab, 2000) explaining that on the basis of sample texts in various genres, translation practices could be done at the macro and micro level in order to make similarities and differences of the genre convention on the target and source cultures.

### 3.2 Focusing the Translation Activities on a Certain Genre

Data interview and observation showed that translation practices done in the TLW class included poetry, short story and comic-script (I: RL1 and RL2). Seeing the activities done in the classes, however, translating poetry placed a dominant practice compared with translating short story and comic-script (Observation(O), Day 1-3 (D1-3), Respondent Lecturer 1 (RL1) (O:D1-3:RL1) and Observation (O), Day 1-6 (D1-6), Respondent Lecturer 1(RL1), (O:D1-6:RL1). There were 12 titles of poems, 2 titles of short stories, and 2 titles of comic scripts translated by the students in both classes.

The reasons which indicated that the translation of poetry was more dominant than those of short story and comic scripts were: (1) poetry was considered to be more difficult than prose and drama; (2) the elements of prose and drama were also covered in the poetry; and (3) the forms of text in the poetry were simpler than those in the prose and drama. As argued by (Connolly, 2001) in (Baker, 2001) that translation of poetry was generally held to be the most difficult, demanding and possibly rewarding form of translation. It also became a special case in the literary translation and considered to be more difficult than the translation of prose. The reasons were explicitly stated in the Interview (I) in response to Question 17 (Q17) by RL1 and RL2 in the following.

- [3] *I believe that a short story is not very different from an informational text. The students have been given tens of credit hours to translate the informational texts. Therefore, I want to focus on teaching some poetries to students so that they are at least introduced to three genres. Why do I not teach drama to my students? A drama is actually a combination of poetry and a story. Hence, I focus on poetry in my class (I:Q17:RL1).*

Compared with a poetry and short story, the text of drama was longer than those of poetry and short story, as a consequence, the lecturers did not use drama as the teaching materials in the TLW class considering that TLW was only taught in 2 credit hours. RL2 said:



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- [4] *We do not translate a drama text since it is too long to translate. Our focus is then on the translation of poetry and prose in the form of a short story (I:Q6:RL2).*

In accordance with these reasons, there were some considerations why the translation of drama was not taught in TLW class: (1) translating poetry was considered the most difficult compared with those of fiction and drama; (2) the elements of a drama were considered to be almost the same with the combination of a poetry and a short story. Therefore, if the students could translate poetry, it would be easier to translate a fiction or drama. Since it is considered that the text of a drama was longer than the other types of literary works, it would consume much time to translate and discuss it.

### 3.3 Applying Reading for Effect

Literary translation closely related to the literary texts. Viewing from the content of the text, literary texts consisted of more than that information. It consists of emotional and aesthetic components (Gile, 2009). The emotional and aesthetic components should be considered in translating literary works. As a consequence, the translators must produce the specific effect in the target text as stated in the source text. In order to meet this purpose, the lecturers were aware that the understanding of texts before doing some practices was important to be taken into consideration. It means that comprehension should be considered as one aspect of the requirements for the translator which have to be acquired by the students. "only by understanding the author's meaning thoroughly can the translator be sure to choose the best available words and to present them in the best possible structure". As a result, in the context of teaching literary translation, the students have to be taught how to understand literary texts well. The students' comprehension of text can be acquired by applying a specific skill of reading. Specific skill of reading was expected to help the students to comprehend and analyse the specific effects to the text. The ways how to analyse the effects were known as analysis of effect (Nord, 1991). RL1 considered that the element of comprehension and effect of texts held an important role in the literary translation as mentioned in the following.

- [5] *There are at least two main translation competences in the world of translation. First, the understanding of the original works. When a poetry is not understood by the students, then, the understanding of the message must be the first consideration (I:Q1:RL1).*

Furthermore, R6 explained that poetry translation had specific characteristics, e.g. it must be beautiful and followed the stylistic writing to catch up the effects contained in the texts or emotions that would be shared to the readers. R4 stated that:

- [6] *A good poetry translation must be beautiful. It means that if the source text is beautiful then the translation version must also be beautiful. In other words, a poetry translation must be done by a translator who knows and understands how to write a poetry since its beauty is in the poetry itself. That is why the stylistics are very important in doing the literary translation. Therefore, the emotive expression must be seized in the translation and this is what is known as translation for effect (I:Q1:RL1).*

### 3.4. Students' Responses

In general, most of the students (96.4%) shared their interest to study the course of translating literary works for various reasons. The reasons that came from the students then categorised into nine categories. The percentages of the students' reason for the interest in TLW class in general were presented in the Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Students' Interest in TLW Class**

No	Category of Students' Responses	Percent age (%)
1	The classes are good in developing understanding of doing quality translation	12.7
2	Types of materials presented in class are interesting, e.g. translating poems, short story, and comic scripts	10.9
3	Teaching and learning processes are not monotonous, easily understood, and relevant with the syllabus	16.4
4	Class activities, e.g. reading the translated version of the poem, sharing experiences of their unique challenges	25.5
5	True understanding of literary texts	5.5
6	Learning how to make a poetic language in the target language of the poems	9.1
7	Learning cultural bound words and the words relevant with the culture of other people's culture	7.3
8	Students are interested to study translating of literary works because they actually like literature	5.5
9	Students expressed their interest to study translating literary works but they do not state their reasons.	7.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

Questionnaire: Q

From the reasons presented above, it could be inferred that the lecturers were aware that teaching literary translation was not only giving the students texts to be translated and



judging the students' mistakes. Teaching, literary translation, however, was aimed at training the students to be professional translators. Table 1 shows that the lecturers had a high awareness in how to build the students

#### **4. Conclusions**

Knowledge of the text to build awareness of textual competence is one of the important aspects to be taught in translation classes. In the context of TLW classes, the textual competence can be taught by highlighting the focuses on the genre knowledge and topical knowledge. The genre and topical knowledge could be trained with the techniques used by the lecturers in translating literary works such as (1) introducing and practising the translation in different genres; (2) focusing the translation activities in a certain genre; and (3) applying reading for effect. By formulating clear objectives, choosing the right material, interesting teaching methods, and continuous learning evaluation, therefore, translation teaching is expected to be successful in providing interesting experiences and the competencies needed by novice translators.

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