



The Translation of Cultural Words in Folk Tale “The Origin of the Word Babah” on the Google Translate Service

Mohammad Siddiq¹, Ahmad Juma Khatib Nur Ali², Taufiq Effendi²

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

²Universitas Gunadarma, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Background: Folk tale contains words that are bound to a certain cultural context. Globalization and technological developments have made wider access to the folk tales. Google Translate is a translation service that can help translate folk tales with a wide range of users.

Purpose: The focus of this research is limited to how the Google Translate service translates the cultural words in the folk tale of The Origin of the Word Babah.

Design and methods: This research method is descriptive qualitative with research data on the cultural words in the folk tale The Origins of the word Babah which is published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1978. This study used analysis of translation strategies and Newmark’s Cultural Words categories as referred classification.

Results: The result of the study shows that the 10 (ten) research data are all in the category of social customs. The translation strategies used are Loan with 5 (five) data and Literal Translation with 5 (five) data. This research shows that Google Translate has not been able to detect cultural contexts, hence it is not accurate in translating cultural addresses and special terms.

Keywords: Google translate, translation strategies, cultural words, folk tales

Introduction

Globalization and technology development are two things that cannot be separated in the current postmodern era. Especially in the post-Covid-19 pandemic period when digital and technological literacy has been massively stimulated by circumstances. Technology has become a part that influences our daily lives and also our connectivity interactions. Pratiwi stated that the impact of technology is in all fields, from education, economy, communication and others (Pratiwi & Khatib, 2021), so that technology has become a necessity.

The development of technology has penetrated in the field of translation as well. Baker and Gonzales stated that translation is a form of linguistic mediation in which writing or text is extracted from one language into another (Alyfia, 2021). Thus, referring to Baker and Gonzales’ opinion, technology can act as a medium in the mediation process between languages. Simply put, the translator as the meaning conveyor from the source language to the target language is replaced by artificial intelligence (AI) in machine translation. The question then is whether the AI can translate correctly. Robingah and Ali stated that in translating, the translator tries to find the most acceptable equivalent so that the message

CONTACT Mohammad Siddiq ✉ siddiq@uinjkt.ac.id

© 2023 Mohammad Siddiq, Ahmad Juma Khatib Nur Ali, Taufiq Effendi. Published by Mitra Palupi. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([3http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).

from the source language can be conveyed and received in the target language (Robingah & Ali, 2021).

The existence of internet-based translation machines as a form of technological development has made it easier for people to communicate and understand cross-language texts. However, there are challenges that arise, one of which is translating the cultural words. This is because text basically has its own cultural content which can be different from one another. Newmark stated that several academics view culture as the core of translation, in which become a challenge in achieving accurate translation (Robingah & Ali, 2021). Therefore, studies on cultural words in translation and also on the translation quality of machine translation, especially Google Translate, have been considerably conducted.

One of the conducted studies is Maulida, who discusses student perceptions in translating using Google Translate for English material. Maulida's research used a qualitative method with interview and questionnaire instruments on students of English Education major as subjects. The results of this research show a positive perception of speed and accuracy according to context (Maulida, 2017). As for the cultural words, Robingah's research discusses the cultural words in the novel *Tarian Bumi*. The results of the research show that from 58 (fifty-eight) data there are 4 (four) categories; 1 (one) ecological data, 14 (fourteen) material culture data, 6 (six) social culture and 35 (thirty-five) data of concepts and ideas. Subsequently, the used strategies are; 9 (nine) data of general word; 12 (twelve) data of cultural substitution; 25 data of loan word; 11 data of descriptive equivalent; and 1 data of omission (Robingah & Ali, 2021).

The studies above show that the cultural words and translation through Google Translate is something that can still be explored further. The text that is presumed to contain considerable cultural words is folk tale. Anindya explained that folk tale tends to contain traditional characteristics which accommodate various cultures in it, that include the cultural and historical resources of the region (Anindya et al., 2019). Based on this opinion, folk tale texts become an interesting object, in which its translation result is studied using Google Translate. Therefore, the focus of this research is on the results of translating folk tale, especially Cultural Words using the Google Translate service.

Methods

This study focuses on the translation of the cultural words in the folk tale "The Origin of the Word Babah". This folk tale comes from East Java. This folk tale is included in the publication as a record of regional culture by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1978. In this study, the discussion is related to how Google Translate service translates the cultural words. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative-descriptive method. Ali explained that the qualitative research method is about quality related to the meaning and understanding of the research object (Ali, 2018).

The object of this research is the text of the folk tale "The Origin of the Word Babah", so that the data collection is conducted using documentation techniques. This technique is used to document event records, writing, pictures and others, with identification, classification and categorization procedures (Ali, 2018). The work procedures for collecting data in this study are; identify the text of the cultural words; classify cultural words from the source language and the results of the English translation of the Google Translate service; and categorize them based on Newmark cultural words categories. The results of data collection then are analyzed using the translation strategies.

Findings & Discussion

This study identifies 10 (ten) cultural words in the Folktale "The Origin of the Word Babah". Then, the data is categorized based on the category of cultural words by Peter

Newmark. Robingah explained that Newmark categorizes the cultural words into five (5) categories, namely; 1) ecology which consists of plants, animals, local winds, mountains, plains among others; 2) material culture which is a concept like food, clothes, housing, transportation, communication, artifacts; 3) social cultures which refer to work and leisure; 4) organization, concepts and ideas including political, social, religious, artistic aspects; 5) gesture and habit, it is about how people in different cultures behave differently in certain situations (Robingah & Ali, 2021).

This study identifies all the 10 (ten) data included in the organization, concepts and ideas including political, social customs, religious, artistic aspects category, with 10 (ten) customs terms. The obtained data then is translated using the Google Translate translation service. The details of the translation results can be seen in table 1.1.

1.1. Research Results

Datum	Source Text	The translation by GT	Category of Culture	Strategy
1	Babah	Babah		Loan
2-5	Le'	'Le		
6, 8	Bagus	Good	Customs, Social Customs	Literal
7	Bagus	Nice		
9	Bagus	Fine		
10	Pak De'	Uncle		

Table 1.1. shows a category with two aspects of social customs and religious terms with the dominance of the translation strategy used on Google Translate is Loan.

Social Customs

Newmark explains that most cultural words are easy to detect because they are related to a particular language and cannot be translated literally which can distort their meaning (Newmark, 1988). Based on this statement, the translator is required to get an equivalent that is functionally appropriate.

In datum 1 and 10 the words identified are the words “babah” and “Pak De”. In the narration of the story, it is explained that the word comes from the word “mbabah” which means ‘looking for a way’. However, the word “babah” is not translated with the meaning of ‘looking for a way’. Then “Pak De” is an absorption language from the Javanese “Bapak Gede” which means the address for mother’s or father’s older brother (Bahasa, 2008). Google Translate translates the text by retaining the words “babah” and “pak de”, pay attention to datum 1 and 10.

Datum 1

Kata nenek, kata “babah” itu berasal dari kata “mbabah” tersebut, yang artinya “mencari jalan.”

Grandmother said, the word “**babah**” comes from the word “mbabah”, which means “find a way.”

Datum 10

Menurut Pak De, dongeng ini tidak benar.

According to **Pak De**, this tale is not true.

The same thing is found in datum 2 to 5, namely the word “Le”. The word “Le” comes from the word “tole” in Javanese. The word is used by Javanese people as a nickname for boys. In datum 2 to 5, the word “Le” appears as a call from older people to younger ones. This can be seen from the narrative context of the story. Pay attention to the following datums 2 to 5;

Datum 2

Le’, kalau kau membeli sesuatu di toko cina, kau sering berkata demikian : “Bah, bah, mau beli beras sekilo.”

Le’, when you buy something in a china shop, you often say: “**Bah, bah**, want to buy a kilo of rice.”

Datum 3

Le, kuceritakan, ya, konon asal mula kata “bah.”

Le, let me tell you, yes, supposedly the origin of the word “bah.”

Datum 4

Ini cerita dongeng, le. Jangan percaya.

It's a fairy tale, **le**. Do not believe.

Datum 5

Pendek kata cerita ini buatan cina, le.

In short, this story is made in China, **le**.

In the six data above, Google Translate retains the original language ‘le’, because it has not been identified the Javanese cultural word in the Indonesian-English translation arrangements. Therefore, the strategy used is loan. The loan strategy is borrowing individual items and syntagms (Pratiwi & Khatib, 2021). This choice is rational because according to Newmark, in general, readers may be more or less familiar with the source language (Newmark, 1988). As for other data, namely datum 6 to 10. Although they are in the same category, the translation strategy is different. Pay attention to datum 6 to 10.

Datum 6

Yang laki-laki, seorang bagus, yang lainnya buruk rupa.

The male, one is **good**, the other is ugly.

Datum 7

Untuk adilnya, putera laki-laki yang bagus itu akan dikawinkan dengan anak perempuan yang buruk rupa.

To be fair, the **nice** son will be married to the ugly girl

Datum 8

Pada suatu malam yang bagus dan yang cantik bersepakat untuk melarikan diri.

One night **the good** and the beautiful agreed to run away.

Datum 9

Maka dari itu orang-orang cina mpanya cantik-cantik dan bagus-bagus, sedang orang-orang Jawa tidak

Therefore, the Chinese people seem beautiful and **fine**, while the Javanese are not

In data 6 to 9 the word “bagus” has a different translation when using Google Translate, namely Good, Nice and Fine. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), the word “good” means ‘very nice; beautiful’ (Bahasa, 2008). In datum 6 and 8 the word “bagus” is translated into “good”, which according to the English-Indonesian dictionary means goodness; good (Echols & Shadily, 2015). The word “good” according to the Oxford dictionary means “...of high quality or an acceptable standard” (Press, 2023). In other translations on datum 7 the word “bagus” is translated into “nice” and datum 9 becomes “fine”. The two words according to the English-Indonesian dictionary have the same meaning, very nice; good.

The word “bagus” in datum 6 to 9 actually refers to the word “handsome” in Javanese (Utomo, 2015). The word ‘tampan’ has the meaning of a handsome or attractive face for men. Google Translate has not been able to identify the context of the story’s narration so the word “bagus” is translated literally. Pratiwi mentions about literal translation, which is a translation strategy that is maximally close to the SL form, but grammatical (Pratiwi & Khatib, 2021). Thus, the translation results become less contextually accurate.

Conclusion

The discussion of this research is about the cultural words. The focus of the research is how the Google Translate (GT) service translates the cultural words, specifically in the folk tale of the Origin of the Word Babah. The result of this study indicates that there are 10 (ten) data based on the category of Newmark cultural words included in the social customs category. In the discussion, it is discovered that Google Translate could not accurately translate the cultural words. This is because Google Translate has not been able to identify the context of the folk tale narration. In this study, Google Translate is known to translate cultural words using loan and literal strategies.

References

- Ali, A. J. K. N. (2018). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra*. Gunadarma.
- Alyfia, H. (2021). *Translation Analysis of Beauty Terms in Webtoon : The Secret of Angel and Make-Up Man*. 6(2), 393–409.
- Anindya, L., Jum, A., & Ali, N. (2019). Narasi Cerita Rakyat Riau “ Asal Mula Penamaan Pulau Matang dan Pulau Keras ” Pendahuluan. *Jurnal Sinestesia*, 9(1), 1–8.
<https://www.sinestesia.pustaka.my.id/index.php/journal/issue/view/3>
- Bahasa, P. (2008). *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Echols, J. M., & Shadily, H. (2015). *Kamus Inggris-Indonesia* (3rd ed.). PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Maulida, H. (2017). Persepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Penggunaan Google Translate Sebagai Media Menerjemahkan Materi Berbahasa Inggris. *Jurnal SAINTEKOM*, 7(1), 56.
<https://doi.org/10.33020/saintekom.v7i1.21>
- Newmark, P. (1988). Introduction to Translations. In *Curator* (First Edit, Vol. 65, Issue 2). Prentice Hall International. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12479>
- Pratiwi, E. D., & Khatib, A. J. (2021). Strategies Applied in Translating Information Technology (IT) Terms in Manual Books: Iphone 12 Pro and Samsung S20 FE. *Lingua Cultura*, 15(1).
<https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v15i1.7167>
- Press, O. U. (2023). *Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*. Good.
- Robingah, & Ali, A. (2021). Translation strategies of cultural words in Tarian Bumi novel and its translation. *LADU: Journal of Languages and Education*, 1(4), 141–149.
<https://www.alejourn.com/index.php/ladu/article/view/56>
- Utomo, S. S. (2015). *Kamus Indonesia Jawa*. PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.