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SEMANTICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
IN TRANSLATION PRACTICE

Engliana
engliana.seok@gmail.com
Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta

ABSTRACT
This writing is conducted to demonstrate the interrelationship between the concepts of semantics and philosophy of linguistics and its implication in translation discipline. The writer starts by pointing out methods and emphasis of semantics and translation theories, although the writer will specifically discuss the practice of semantics in translating semantic situation. There are three parts of discussions in this paper: part one is mainly discussed the semantic and translation theories, part two describes the relation between the two subjects, and finally, part three shows the readers of how the semantics take place in translating written language. The writer finally wishes that the readers, especially Indonesian translators, will take benefit of understanding the semantics and use it for the benefit of as well as to denote and solve the problems and barriers in practicing translation.

Keywords: translation, semantics, philosophy of language, Indonesian

INTRODUCTION

In studying the human language, there are several concepts adopted by linguists in describing, explaining, and breaking down the language: Syntax, which studies the organisation of the language's properly constructed expressions, such as phrases and sentences; Semantics, which studies the ways expressions exhibit and contribute to meaning; Pragmatics, which studies the practices of communication in which the expressions find used.

Philosophers and linguists are driven by different concerns and goals in determining methods and emphases. The philosophers tend to investigate the normatively of language and theoretical claims, whereas the linguists concern with variations in linguistic patterns and language acquisition.

Starting from Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoic philosophers in the Antiquity era had contributed some important concepts to language analysis and most of their basic concepts accounts on the aspect of reality. Philosophers commonly draws a triangle that briefly represented the aspects of reality which connected by three elements: 'Language', 'Mind', and 'World' and all of them comprise "…the *meaningfullnes* of language." Grimmins (1998) mentions that 'Mind' - 'World' study mind relations to world in which we are exist, such as "…perception, action, the mind's bodily constitution and intentionality (the mind's ability to think *about* what is in the world." Then the relation between the 'Mind' – 'Language' are regarding "the using and understanding language in a heavily mental

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activity. Further, this activity seems to be what the real existence of meaningful language consists in. In short, mind invests *meaning* in language." (p. 3).

Many of the philosophers believe that 'Mind' and 'Language' are best conveyed through understanding so as to hold 'the meaningfulness of language'. Moreover, 'Language' and 'Mind' denote (Grimmins, 1998, p.4) that

> If mind assigns meaning to language, so also language enables and channels mind. Acquiring and trafficking in a language brings one concepts, thoughts and habits of thought, with all sorts of consequences.

Also in the same page, 'Language' and 'World' are defined as:

> Since language is the vehicle of our descriptions and explanations of reality, philosophers are concerned about what if anything makes for a *true* or *apt* characterisation of reality. Philosophers have these concerns for reasons of philosophical methodology, … but also owing to the naturalness and plausibility of a certain picture of meaning.

Thus, the concept that believes that meaning is constituted by 'Language', 'Mind', and 'World' has played a major part in philosophy and presumably explained the attention to language for centuries both by philosophers and linguists.

Semantics is the study of meaning. In language, semantics covers the study of meaning at the levels of words, phrases, sentences, and larger units of discourse. Furthermore, in philosophy of language this semantics studies are also related to reference studies. Other than sense and reference, semantics is also covered some fields of study, such as truth conditions, argument structure, thematic roles, and discourse analysis as well as syntax.

Proposition, Sense, and Reference

The elements of words, phrases, and sentences are strictly crucial to semantics study because each of them conveys different meaning in different 'Language', 'World', and 'Mind'. A single word can refer to several concepts that might be ambiguous to particular recipients or readers, depending on their:

- **Mind-Language**, that conveys actions and perceptions
- **Mind-World**, that includes using and understanding language contributed by an individual's mind on a particular language.
- **Language-Mind**, that enables language to connect and channel an individual's mind.
- **Language-World**, that pictures the true or apt characterisation of reality.

In that matter, it does make sense to ask what language (i.e. English, French, Indonesian, Melayu, etc.) a sentence belongs to because a sentence itself is associated with a particular characteristic especially in utterance language, such as accent, pronunciation. Meanwhile, in written language, sentence and phrase consist of a set of words and phrases expressing meaning and intention of the writer. Semantics is concerned with the meanings of phrases and incomplete sentences as well as complete sentences. Heasly and Hurford (1984) say that:

> The meanings of whole sentences involve propositions; the notion of a propositions is central to semantics … A

PROPOSITION is that part of the meaning of the utterance of a declarative sentence which describes some state of affairs (p.19).

In other words, proposition means the persons or things referred to by expressions in the sentence and can be grasped by the mind of an individual person as an object of thought. Propositions that correspond to the facts can be said as true, whereas the false propositions do not correspond to any facts. For example, the phrase "…the President of the United States…" is grasped by our mind as a particular person and as the object of our thought., the U.S. President exists and is based on the facts and reality, thus we might say that the phrase is a true proposition.

The "President" is also the object of the expression refers to and in the appropriate context; we might be able to mention a name of the object. The referent of the phrase "…the present President of the United States…" is Barrack Obama because this is a normal every day expression that never refer to different things. Although in the context of previous years then we might capture another person, that is, George W. Bush as the object of our thought.

As one of the basic ideas of semantics, reference indicates which things in the world (or persons) are being talked about. It is the object of an expression refers to and two different expressions can have same referent, for instance, if we are talking about a situation in which *Budi is sitting alone in the middle of the room*, then we also could have different expression to the same referent by saying *the person in the middle*. Another example is *the Morning Star* and *the Evening Star* are both refer to the planet *Venus*.

According to Heasly and Hurford (1984), "… the SENSE of an expression is its place in a system of semantic relationships with other expressions in the language." (p.28). The sense is the "cognitive significance" or "mode of presentation" of the referent. For example, although the referent for phrases "*the present President of the Indonesian Republic*" and "*the Establisher of Demokrat Party*" is Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, yet these two expressions differ in sense.

In other cases, the same word can have more than one sense. For instance, the words *bank* in the phrase "*the **Bank** of Indonesia*" and "*the other **bank** of the river*" are not the same in meaning for a reason that *bank* is a single word with many senses. A sentence can also have different senses, first look at the first two sentences.

(1) *The chicken is ready to eat.*

(2) *The chicken is ready to be eaten.*

The object of thought of sentences (1) and (2) is *chicken*. Next sentences show clearly different senses:

(3) He greeted the girl with a smile

(4) He greeted the smiling girl

Sentence (3), *he* smiles and in (4) *the girl* smiles. According to Heasly and Hurford (1984), "On the relationship between sense and reference: the referent of an expression is often a thing or a person in the world; whereas the sense of an expression is not a thing at all." (p.30). Every expression, either it is utterance or non-utterance, that has meaning has sense, but not every expression has reference.

For example, when we look up the meaning of a word in a dictionary, we may find many expressions with the same sense. Dictionary is full of words and a foreigner who learns the meaning of his or her first word in English possibly could not learn only by looking them up in an English

dictionary. He/she might be able to learn his/her first words by having typical referents pointed out to him/her.

Dictionary and Meaning

According to Heasbely and Hurford (1984), "a dictionary is a central part of the description of any language." (p.177). Dictionary can help the readers to learn and distinguish between various semantic senses of a word, for instance between the sense of *free* as adjective and *free* as verb. For instance, *next of kin* is not every day English vocabulary, but it is a technical terms used in referring to someone who has family connections, relatives. The meaning of *next of kin* contains no concept of female or male.

Regarding the word meaning in dictionary (Heasly and Hurford, 1984: 184), "the linguistic semanticist is interested in the meanings of words and non in non-linguistic facts about the world." Thus a dictionary describes as the sense of predicates, whereas an encyclopaedia contains factual information of a variety of types, but generally no information specifically on the meaning of the words (p. 184). For instance, according to Concise Oxford, the word walrus is defined as "Large amphibious carnivorous arctic long-tusked mammal (*Odobenus rosmarus*) related to seal and sea-lion. On the other hand, in Webster's New Collegiate, walrus is "A very large marine mammal (*Odobenus rosmarus*) of the Arctic Ocean allied to the seals, but forming a distinct family (*Odobenidae*). In the male the upper canine teeth form greatly elongated protruding tusks. The skin makes valuable leather, the tusks are fine ivory, and the blubber yields oil." (p.185).

DISCUSSION
Meaning in Translation Theory

Larson (1984) mentions:

…translation consists of transferring the **meaning** of the source language into the receptor language. This is done by going from the **form** of the first language to the **form** of a second language by way of semantic structure. It is **meaning** which is being transferred and must be held constant. Only the **form** changes. (p.3)

It can be noted the significance role meaning has taken in the translation process. Meaning of the target language must be liner or equivalent to the source language, without disregarding the form of both languages. She also suggests that meaning becomes the cornerstone of translating, in which the process of re-expressing the meaning into the target language. Thus semantic analysis is required to perform such duty.

According to Larson (1984), there are three kinds of meaning which should be taken into account into translation: Referential meaning says that the word refers to a certain thing, event, attribution, or relation which a person can perceive or imagine; Structural/organisational meaning; Situational meaning which is very significant in understanding any text. It is the relationship between the writer or speaker and the addressee that affect the communication, such as place, time, age, sex, social status, relationship, presuppos-itions, cultural background, etc.(p.36-37)

These kinds of meaning have important roles in understanding certain things about the communication situation. Communic-ation situation are factors in which the translator must be able to recognise, since

the meaning is determined by (Larson, 1984, p.421):

> …who the author was, the purpose he had in writing, who the document was written for, the relationship between the author and his audience, the culture of the source text, how much common information is shared by the audience who reads the source text and the audience for whom the translation is being prepared, …"

Once the author has determined his intention to write, he will choose a particular discourse type for the text. In the example given below, Westall (2000) chooses fiction story for teenage audience with the World War I as its background information. He surely has a great deal of information about the culture and other contextual matter related to the story, characters, as well as his teenage audience. Look at the sentence below that contains information the translator needs to be aware of.

Table 4 Example

| My mother, who had gone very hungry **during the U-boat campaign of World War I**, and who frequently remembered queuing all day for a piece of suet, and being turned away empty-handed, became terrified that I, her only chick, would be starved to death by Hitler. | Ibuku, yang menderita kelaparan **selama kampanye *U-boat* Nazi dalam di Perang Dunia I yang memotong jalur pasokan makanan**, dan yang sering teringat saat mengantri seharian demi sepotong lemak atau gemuk sapi untuk dipakai memasak, dan kembali dengan tangan hampa, amat ketakutan bila aku, anak satu-satunya, akan mati kelaparan karena Hitler. |

The author shares his 'common' information to his audience through narrative using historical background. The goal of the translator (Larson, 1984, pp.421-422) then

> ... is to communicate to the receptor audience the same information and the same mood as was conveyed by the original document to the original audience. To do this, he must have the author's intent firmly in mind as he translates.

Semantics and Translation in Practice

Since meaning is the most discussed issue in translation, it is necessary for translators to know that Larson distinguished two kinds of translations namely literal and idiomatic translations. She stated than literal translation tends to maintain the form of the source text instead of underlying the result on the meaning, meanwhile the opposite of literal translation is idiomatic translation which is also known as meaning-based translation, which "…make every effort to communicate the meaning of the source language text in the natural forms of the receptor language" (Larson, 1984, p.15). Translators who are aiming to produce meaning-based translation result instead of another one need to be aware that "idiomatic translation uses the natural forms of the receptor language both in the grammatical constructions and the choice of lexical

items. A truly idiomatic translation does not sound like a translation." (Larson, 1984: 16).

Duff's principle of meaning (1990) who emphasises the importance to preserve meaning in translating says that "the translation should reflect accurately the meaning of the original text" (p. 10). For those reasons, translators should be able to preserve the meaning of the source language in reproducing it into the target language, and then the form or structure will follow the rest of the result.

On the matters of overtranslation and undertranslation are often occurred in trying to preserve the meaning and reproducing the closest natural equivalent in the translation. According to Newmark (1981),

> A semantic translation tends to be more complex, more ackward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought-processes rather than the intention of the transmitter. It tends to *overtranslate* [italics added], to be more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search for one nuance of meaning. (p.39)

Nida & Taber (1982) differentiate overtranslation or expansions into two types: syntactic (or formal) expansions and lexical (or semantic) expansions. Syntactic expansions is categorised into four kinds: "(a) identification of the participants in the events, (b) identification of objects or events with abstracts, (c) more explicit indication of relationals, and (d) filling out of ellipsis, which may involve in any type of syntactic structure." (p.166). Meanwhile, the lexical expansions are divided into three different areas: "(a) classifiers, (b) descriptive substitutes, and (c) semantic restructuring" (p.167).

Table 2 shows example of semantic restructuring so as to achieve its equivalence in translation.

Table 5 Semantic restructuring

Source Text	We didn't *grieve for our school*
Target Text	Kami tidak *merasa sedih karena sekolah kami hancur lebur*.

The Indonesian translation of '… *grieve for our school*.' is '…*merasa sedih karena sekolah kami hancur lebur*.' The translation carries more explanation and additional information in order to make it clearer for readers of the target text. In this context, the translator/researcher added information that was not stated in the source text. The additional information '… *karena sekolah kami hancur lebur*.' is taken from the previous context saying their school '…**had been flattened by a landmine**'. Newmark's over-translation which (1981) explained:

> A semantic translation tends to be more complex, more ackward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought-processes rather than the intention of the transmitter. It tends to *overtranslate* [italics added], to be more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search for one nuance of meaning. (p.39)

In preference to have the original form of the source text reproduced in the target text, the translator/researcher decided to emphasize on the fine distinction of the meaning by including more information so as the readers can have comprehensive understanding.

Below are two examples of English – Indonesian Translation. English teenage novel is the souce text of these sentences. The first example (see Table 3) shows us that description of word meaning from dictionary does not always alter the correct sense for translator in order to exploit the meaning of the author. The writer of this teenage novel indeed had considered the purpose he had in choosing and writing for and the goal of the translator is to communicate the same information, intention, and tone of text to the audiences/ readers.

Example 1

Source Text   Playground ***Delights***
Target Text   ***Suka Duka*** Tempat Bermain

The word 'delight' means "something that gives you pleasure" (*Longman Active Study Dictionary*, 2005, p.194) and can be literally translated into "*kesenangan*" or "*kesukaan*" (*Kamus Inggris – Indonesia*, 2000, p.172). However, here the translator/researcher translated '***delights***' into '***suka duka***'. This is in line with the meaning of the context because the phrase '*suka duka*' is more explicit for readers to understand. Idiomatic translation is applied for a reason that the translator/researcher uses the natural forms of the receptor language to communicate the meaning.

The second example (see Table 4) shows us the relation between meaning and cultural aspect of the two languages. As has been noted, as cited in Dostert, that translation is "the transference of meaning from one another set of patterned symbols in another culture …" (Larson, 1984, p.431).

Example 2

Source Text   We rejoiced, for it had been ***a soot-black Victorian prison***.
Target Text   Kami bersukacita karena sekolah kami ***seperti penjara yang amat suram di jaman Victoria***.

According to *Longman Active Study Dictionary* (2004), 'soot' means "a black powder that is produced when something burns" (p.712). Meanwhile, it may also be defined as "black powder in smoke, or left by smoke on surfaces" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 1984, p.822). The context describes that '…***a soot-black Victorian prison***…' is a figure of speech suggesting the gloomy atmosphere of the school. Thus, the translator/researcher decided to translate it into Indonesian as '…***seperti penjara yang amat suram***…'.

The selection of an appropriate genre and type of discourse for which the compound adjective of '**soot-black**' indicates an extremely black colour is understandable because Indonesian does not have an equivalent translation for such phrase because it happens in another culture that is different from the Indonesian culture. Thus, the translation of "…**a soot-black Victorian prison**…" should be made clearer to the reader of the translated text.

In the theory of translation, figure of speech cannot be translated word for word and if it is translated then equivalent

translation would not be precisely implied to the speech as it may diverse in meanings . According to Duff's (1990) Principles of Translation, "Idiomatic expressions are notoriously untranslatable … If the expressions cannot be directly translated…*use a non-idiomatic or plain prose translation* [italics added]…" (p.11).

Since the purpose of translation is to preserve the meaning of the source language, the translator/researcher decided to use plain prose of Indonesian '…***seperti penjara yang amat suram di jaman Victoria***' emphasising the similarities between the object or concept of '…***soot-black Victorian prison***'.

Meaning is very important in translation and in order to expose implicit information from the source text, which could be misinterpreted by target readers of different language, the translator/researcher should recognise the situational setting and meaning of the specified information. Duff (1984) says that "The dictionary can say only what words mean, not what they do *not* mean. Sensitivity towards attitude goes well beyond formal knowledge of a language." (p.88).

CONCLUSION

The writer concludes that translation can benefit from semantics and language philosophy. Although they are driven by different concerns and goals, yet the methods, emphases, and different analysis can be summarized that the meaning of a complex expression, especially in translating text, is fully determined by the meaning of its parts and the way in which they are put together.

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