

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

One must transfer meaning from the source language into the target language when making an attempt at translation. However, how can one translate a text if it has no meaning? This question represents the paradox of translation, particularly towards a nonsense text. It is clear that one cannot translate nonsense, as it is near impossible to do so. In spite of this, one “must” translate a nonsense text because if there is a small possibility of sense, there is also a small possibility of translation (Lecerle, 2019). Such a statement brought another perspective regarding the paradox of translation, specifically that as long as the text is written in a comprehensible language, there is no such thing as untranslatable text.

Throughout history, nonsense text or literature has become a particular genre of literature, with the term “nonsense” itself coming from the recent phenomenon in the Romantic and post-Romantic eras of British literature (Tigges, 1988, as cited in Chris, 2020). It is described as a “playful tension” between sense and nonsense, as could be seen in literary works including Edward Lear’s “The Owl and the Pussycat” as well as Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky” (Sewell, 1952, as cited in Heyman and Shortsleeve, 2021). Furthermore, Wim Tigges (1988, as cited in Turcotte, 2022) defines nonsense literature as “a genre of narrative literature which balances a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of meaning”. In the perspective of translation regarding this definition, the line of balance between the multiplicity and absence of meaning, or, fundamentally, sense and nonsense brought challenge for translators as it is both a theoretical impossibility and a practical necessity. As such, it presents itself as the limit of “translatability” (Slote, 2019).

The term “translatability” itself, according to Steiner (1998, as cited in Yang, 2017), is divided between both universalist and monadist views. The universalists argued that since all human beings share a common sense of reason as well as experience, any meaning could be conveyed, thus effectively making translation possible. On the other hand, the monadists believe that each language

has its own unique conception of the world expressed through its lexicon and grammar, thus making a fully adequate translation challenging or perhaps impossible. Both perspectives convey the extent of translatability, which depends on whether the translations can accurately capture the original text's aesthetics and purposes (Lee, 2012).

However, an attempt to increase translatability will inevitably reach its limit, particularly into the term of “untranslatability”. Lee (2012), stated that translator’s anxiety over untranslatability validates the need for acceptability as well as readability of a text, which includes the relevant articulation, representation, as well as cross-cultural aspect within target text. He further stated that the frequent definition of a “substandard’ translation is the inadequacy or loss that makes the text become ‘obscure’ and ‘unreadable’. This loss is caused by the act of deletion of untranslatable areas including imagery, puns, concepts, metaphor, as well as rhetoric, in which the essentials within the production of literary nonsense.

This means that untranslatability is inevitable when faced with nonsense (Xu and Jiang, 2019). However, because it serves as a reminder of the reality of diversity, untranslatability inspires respect for distinction and originality. This led to the need for a study regarding the viability of cross-cultural communication (Sun, 2012). Furthermore, this aforementioned anxiety towards untranslatability does not impede the activity of translation, as translators always attempt to face the impossibility. One such occasion could be seen in Shaobo Xie’s research towards the translation of Wang Wei’s “Deer Park”. He concluded that while translation ‘failures’ of the poem is caused by structural problem of untranslatability, it is still a productive one as it still triggers the production of poetical and linguistic newness, which includes the new poetic syntax, texts, and possibilities of imagination (Xie, 2020).

In the research of translating literary nonsense, more often than not, researchers analyze the occurrence of nonsense within the children’s literature, as nursery rhymes tend to be a fantasy, riddles, and light verse, full of portmanteau, puns, and neologism (Heyman and Shortsleeve, 2021). Within their research relating to the Chinese translation of Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky”, Derong Xu

and Jianli Jiang (2019) stated that such a poem is solely meant to amuse child readers. This resulted in most translators of the text not taking the translation seriously as it does not bear such importance. They stated that the majority of the translation changed the nonsense aspect of the poem into a normal and much more readable language. They argued how nonsense poem should not “make sense” and how these translators remove the value of original work for a more “child-oriented” readability (Xu and Jiang, 2019). However, if a literary nonsense is not intended towards the younger audiences, would translators take such text in a serious manner? This question derives from the lack of analysis towards translating literary nonsense outside the realm of children’s literature.

One of the instances of such nonsense literature could be seen in John Lennon’s book titled *In His Own Write*. Despite his known status as a musician, particularly as one of the members of the British rock band the Beatles, Lennon was also included as one of the noteworthy authors of English nonsense literature along with figures such as T.S Elliot, Theodore Roethke, and Laura E. Richards (Turcotte, 2022). The book was released in 1964 and consists of various kinds of nonsense literary works, ranging from poems to short stories, which were influenced by the writer’s childhood living in Liverpool. Even though it is initially intended as a children’s literature, Lennon, in 1980, stated that it turned out not to be the case as it contains lots of anti-authoritarian statement as well as morbid jokes. The book itself has been compared with other nonsense literature that are not intended towards children such as James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* as both articulate the same kinds of nonsense (Everett, 2001). One of the main influence of the book came from an English author, Lewis Carroll, in which Lennon stated that his works made a great impact for his life (Lewisohn, 2013). As a result, the content of the book is mainly characterised with the rational type of nonsense literature, specifically word and letter play types of nonsense that are very similar to the “Carrollian nonsense”, as Tigges stated (1988, as cited in Turcotte, 2022). The book was translated into several languages such as French, Spanish, and German. However, there is no attempt to translate this book into the Indonesian language.

This study is going to select all of the works within John Lennon's *In His Own Write* and translate them into Indonesian language. In particular, this paper will observe translatability as well as untranslatability of the various literary works when being translated into the target language, namely the Indonesian language, for the reason to determine the "limit" of translation between the two languages, considering the cross-cultural representation from the source into the target language. Another particular reason about this study is that, based on the researcher's examination, there are little to none studies regarding the translation or translatability of nonsense literature in the context of the Indonesian language. This lack of study encourages the researcher to start the aforementioned study. For the sake of achieving such aim, this research will apply the annotated translation method, meaning that the researcher is going to openly discuss, reason, and justify every chosen solution during the translation process. This method was chosen for the reason that it serves both the purpose of a detailed analysis of the translation as well as broadening the researcher's translation capability.

In addition, this research will be looking as well as inspired by various previous studies for all the necessary aspect of translating John Lennon's *In His Own Write* to Indonesian language. For the particular aspect regarding nonsense literature, the aforementioned study conducted by Derong Xu and Jianli Jiang's "Translatability or untranslatability: Perspectives in Chinese translations of *Jabberwocky*" provides a conclusion regarding the lack of attention in translating a nonsense literature and how the occurrence of untranslatability is inevitable between two distinct language and culture. Furthermore, the translator continued to analysed the aspect of untranslatability through the research such as Shaobo Xie's "World literature, translation, and untranslatability" which concluded how in the sphere of world literature, untranslatability gives both challenges and respect towards the difference between cultures that could accommodate the translators to enact cultural interactions within the process of translations. The translator realised that both of these research were focused on the sphere of Chinese language translation. The reason was because the translator could not find the similar study regarding translation of literary nonsense in the Indonesian language. In spite of that, the translator believed that the result and conclusion of these

research could still be applied in the context of the Indonesian language. On the other hand, the aspect regarding annotated translation, the translator use the previous research such as Honza Tsabitha Trisnaninggar's "An Annotated Translation of a Novel Entitled *The Phoenix and The Carpet* by E.Nesbit Focusing on Allusion", Hermenegildus Agus Wibowo's "An Annotated Translation of *Any Minute*", as well as Trias Noverdi's "An Annotated Translation from English into Indonesian", in which concluded that the relevant translation strategies and procedures are needed as well as the acknowledgement regarding the culture between the source and the target language.

In the process of annotated translation, the research is going to utilise Dirk Delabastita's strategies in translating wordplay. Because this book was influenced by Lewis Carroll, it is within the category of "Carrollian nonsense", in which wordplay being the main characteristic of this nonsense literature (Tigges, 1988, as cited in Turcotte, 2022). This strategy provided the means for the translator to achieve the appropriate translation of wordplay in the target text. Furthermore, the strategies in translating idioms by Mona Baker is also going to be applied. The reason is because idiom could also served as a wordplay. As Screech (2015) stated how "Carrollian nonsense" emphasises the sense of paradox, which means a certain idiomatic expression could be interpreted outside of its designated meaning.

In order to apply this strategies, the translator will apply Peter Newmark's translation procedure for literary translation as well as for "unfindable" words. Through these methods, the researcher will attempt to find the closest alternative or equivalent in the target language. Furthermore, these method is going to find the aspect of "untranslatability", specifically in how the researcher encountered difficulties during the translation process. Lastly, in the retrospective aspect of this annotated translation, the researcher will define the "limit" between translatability and untranslatability in this book. This discussion will incorporate Jean Jacques Lecercle's theses regarding the translation of English literary nonsense, specifically how whether or not will serves as the most complete and satisfactory translation of the book.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the “nonsensical” aspects found in John Lennon’s *In His Own Write* and what are the chosen solution for them?
2. What is the observable ‘limit’ of translatability within John Lennon’s *In His Own Write* after the translation process into Indonesian language?
3. How is the researcher going to reason or justify the chosen solution of these “nonsense” words and phrases when being translated into Indonesian language?

1.3. Research Purpose

This study aims to determine the translation “limit” of John Lennon’s book titled *In His Own Write* into Indonesian language. This limit is set between both translatability and untranslatability of the text. It considers the difficulty of reaching the perfect translatability because of lexical, grammatical, and cultural differences between the two languages, while also considers the inevitable fact of untranslatability that needs to be compensated to avoid the lack of readability as well as acceptability. In addition, the value of nonsense within the book is also being considered in order to avoid the complete “normalisation” of the works for the sake of readability, thus keeping the uniqueness of this nonsense literature even after being translated into the target language. For this research in particular, the analyzed “limit” will only be set within the realm of “nonsense” English words and phrases, namely within John Lennon’s *In His Own Write*, as well as its closest equivalent in Indonesian language.

1.4. Significance of Studies

The significance of this study is to answer the philosophical paradox regarding the need of translating text even if it lacks meaning. This answer is specified towards the translation between the nonsense English language within John Lennon’s book titled *In His Own Write* into Indonesian language. Additionally, the answer presented in this paper will set the lines between the impossibility of perfect translatability as well as the inevitable possibility of untranslatability.

1.5. Scope of the Studies

This study will be conducted through the researcher's attempt to translate the content of John Lennon's book titled *In His Own Write*. During this procedure, the researcher is going to find and translate the nonsense words and phrases found in the text. The chosen translated words and phrases will then be further analyzed, discussed, and justified in order to find how they are the most suitable translation according to the researcher when the text into Indonesian language. For the translation process, the researcher will be using both Delabastita's strategies in translating wordplay as well as Baker's strategies in translating idioms. Furthermore, Peter Newmark's translation procedures and procedures regarding "unfindable" words will be applied to perform the aforementioned strategies. Lastly, the last conclusion will incorporate Jean-Jacques Lecercle's theses of literary nonsense to deduce the "limit" in translating this literary nonsense.

