

TRANSLATING PRONOUNS, PROPER NAMES AND KINSHIP TERMS FROM INDONESIAN INTO ENGLISH AND VICE VERSA

Izak Morin

Universitas Cendrawasih, Jayapura

Abstract: This paper presents differences in pronominal system, proper name, and kinship terminology of both Indonesian and English which affect translation work. Such differences are discussed in detail by providing examples that commonly occur in written texts, particularly, the secondary senses of pronouns and kinship terms when their meanings are determined on the basis of the use in the receptor language and not on the basis of the form in the source language. Proper names in Indonesian which are mostly culture-based bear ambiguities the translating substitute devices that refer to those particular proper names in a text. Accordingly, some ways on how to deal with the differences are recommended in each topic discussed.

Key words: source language, receptor language, pronominal system, kinship terminology

Translation is another particular skill apart from the four common language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) that a language learner may acquire by learning, practicing, and involving directly in a real translation work. It is not a matter of knowing a new language that a person can spontaneously perform translation work easily, accurately, appropriately, and naturally. Mildred Larson mentions that translation consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context (Larson, 1984:3).

Accordingly, translating pronouns, proper names, and kinship terms from Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) into English and vice versa requires a translator to have an adequate understanding and command of both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the source language and the receptor language respectively. Most words, including pronouns and kinship terms, have more than one sense. These meanings are often called secondary meanings, or secondary senses. The primary sense is the meaning suggested by the word when it is used without context. Secondary senses are dependent on the communication situation or on the context in which a word is used. This article discusses on (1) secondary senses of pronouns in particular contexts; (2) ambiguities caused by unfamiliar proper names; (3) secondary senses of kinship terms in different communication situations.

PRONOUNS, PROPER NAMES, AND KINSHIP TERMS WHICH AFFECT TRANSLATION

Pronouns

Indonesian pronominal system is different from that of English. This is the fact that each language has a unique pronominal system and secondary sense of a pronoun. Such differences should be taken into account by translators because they present a real challenge to them. Display 1 and Display 2 show the differences between the two.

Display 1: English

	Singular			plural
1 st person	<i>I</i>			<i>we</i>
2nd person	<i>You</i>			
3rd person	masculine	Faminine	neuter	
	<i>he</i>	<i>She</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>they</i>

Display 2: Indonesian

		Singular			plural		
1st person		<i>Saya/aku</i>			inclusive	exclusive	
					<i>kita</i>	<i>kami</i>	
2nd person		Masculine	feminine	Both gender	masculine	feminine	Both gender
	familiar	<i>Bapak</i>	<i>Ibu</i>	<i>Saudara</i>	<i>bapak-bapak</i>	<i>Ibu-ibu</i>	<i>saudara-saudara</i>
	formal				<i>Kamu/anda</i>		
3rd person		<i>ia/dia</i>			<i>mereka</i>		

First Personal Pronoun

Notice that Indonesian distinguishes **inclusive** and **exclusive**. English has simply one subject pronoun for FIRST PERSON PLURAL, *we*. *We* may at times be talking only about the *speaker and someone else other than hearer*, and at other times about the *speaker and the hearer*. However, in Indonesian there are two words. *Kita* means *we and you*; that is, it is **inclusive of the hearer**. *Kami* means *we*, but *not you*; that is, the HEARER is not included and this form is, therefore, called **exclusive**. **Inclusive** means that the HEARER is included in the FIRST PERSON PLURAL form and **exclusive** means that the HEARER is not included. Thus, before an English sentence like '*We believe we can do this*' is translated into Indonesian, a translator has to discover if *we* means *kita* (inclusive: both writer/speaker and reader/hearer) or it means *kami* (exclusive: only writer/speaker). To discover the correct meaning, a translator has to study the paragraph or the whole text and the communication situation in which this sentence is present in order to know

the relationship between the author and the addressee(s), where the communication took place, when it took place, the age, sex, and social status of the speaker and the hearer, the relationship between them, the presuppositions which each brought to the communication, the cultural background of the speaker and of the addressee(s), and many other matters which are part of the context in which the discourse was spoken or written (Larson, 1984: 421).

By doing so s/he can come up with only one of the following translations:

Text: We believe we can do this

- (1) **Kami** percaya **kami** bisa melakukan ini.
- (2) **Kami** percaya **kita** bisa melakukan ini.
- (3) **Kita** percaya **kita** bisa melakukan ini.
- (4) **Kita** percaya **kami** bisa melakukan ini.

However, in translating Indonesian pronouns *kita* or *kami* in a particular context into English a translator simply uses *we*. The meaning component of either *inclusive* or *exclusive would* be lost when translating from Indonesian into English

Indonesian dialects of Makassar (South Sulawesi) and of Minahasa (North Sulawesi) use *kita* in a different way from the Indonesian Usage Standard. For Makassar, *kita* means *you* as SECOND PERSON SINGULAR and/or SECOND PERSON PLURAL whereas *kita* in Minahasa means *I* as FIRST PERSON SINGULAR. Thus, when translating an Indonesian sentence like '*Kita harus memenuhi semua persyaratan kerja*', a translator should first ensure that the meaning of *kita* is *we*, *you* or *I*. If the source of this text is from Makassar the translation will be *You have to fulfill all working requirements* and if it is from Minahasa it will be *I have to fulfill all working requirements*. This is also important for an interpreter that when interpreting an oral speech s/he has to find out if the speaker is from Makassar or from Minahasa. So, again, it is necessary for the translator and/or the interpreter to know certain things about the communication situation.

Also, *kami* in the first clause of a sentence in an Indonesian formal letter such as *Bersama ini kami memberitahukan bahwa.....* (Literal: Herewith *we* advise that) is appropriately translated as *Herewith I advise that.....* In this case FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, *I* should be used because *kami* (*we*: exclusive the reader) is always used in each Indonesian formal letter as a formal and polite way of a writer expressing himself/herself. In contrast, an English text like *I am very pleased to advise that....* should be translated as *Kami dengan senang hati memberitahukan bahwa....*

In English, Larson, (1984: 126) mentions that it is not uncommon to hear a speaker begin a talk by saying "Today *we* are going to talk about such and such." The speaker then begins to do all of the talking. This form is called **edi-**

toral “we” in English. The **editorial “we”** is a secondary sense of the pronoun **we** in which the plural form is being used with a singular meaning. English also uses the pronoun **we** when the object being referred to is really **you**: that is, SECOND PERSON. Notice the following examples (data from Eunice Pike):

- (1) Nurse: It’s time for **us** to take **our** medicine now.
- (2) Nurse: Shall **we** take **our** bath now?
- (3) Mother: Let’s be quiet, shall **we**?
- (4) Teacher: **We**’re not going to shout, **we**’ll walk quietly to **our** places.
- (5) If a child is lost, the one who finds him will say to his mother: **We** couldn’t find mother. **We** couldn’t find Daddy and **we** were so frightened.”

If **we** was being used in its primary sense, then the nurse would be taking the medicine, the mother would be quiet, the teacher would not shout, and the person who found the child would be frightened. We know that this is not the case. In each of these examples, **we** is being used in a secondary or extended usage. The component of SYMPHATY is being added by using the FIRST PERSON pronoun rather than the SECOND PERSON. Larson further indicates that an American politician will often use **I**, FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, when addressing an audience even though **you**, SECOND PERSON, would seem more correct. For example, he might say: “If **I** don’t pay my taxes.....” It takes the audience out of focus and is away of being **stern** without being too direct. “If **you** don’t pay your taxes,” would be too direct and impolite.

Second Personal Pronoun

Translating **you** into Indonesian from a formal letters, an announcement, a formal speeches and some other short messages needs careful considerations. An English clause like Herewith I advise **you** on may be translated into Indonesian in some ways:

- (1) *Bersama ini kami memberitahu **kamu/anda** mengenai*
- (2) *Bersama ini kami memberitahu **bapak** mengenai...*
- (3) *Bersama ini kami memberitahu **ibu** mengenai*
- (4) *Bersama ini kami memberitahukan **saudara** mengenai*

If the addressee is either an adult male or an adult female with a higher social status *you* is translated using second person *familiar* form ***bapak*** or ***ibu*** in which they mean *father*, *mother* respectively in kinship terms; and ***saudara*** meaning either *brother* or *sister* in kinship terms for both sexes if the addressee has similar social status with the writer and/or if the writer is in a higher status. ***Kamu/Anda*** is either a second person singular or a second person plural into which *you* should be translated as required by a *formal* form of second person in Indonesian pronominal system but it is considered not very polite to address an adult reader or listener using *kamu/anda*. So, ***bapak, ibu, and saudara*** in a second person *familiar* form are preferably used to replace *kamu/anda* to show politeness in addressing someone. In English there is no component of meaning which distinguishes *familiar* from *formal* in the second person. So, if one is to translate into Indonesian every time the English pronoun *you* occurs, the translator has to decide which Indonesian form s/he should use, ***bapak, ibu, saudara*** or ***kamu/anda*** in singular or ***bapak-bapak, ibu-ibu, saudara-saudara*** in plural. S/he will have to make this decision on the basis of the use in Indonesian (as the receptor language) and not on the basis of the form in English (as the source language).

In contrast, when a translator translates an Indonesian sentence like '*Kami mengundang Bapak/Ibu/Saudara untuk menghadiri pernikahan anak kami*' into English s/he faces a problem if s/he does not know the use of ***bapak, ibu, and saudara*** in this context. He will likely produce a translation such as this 'We invite Father/Mother/Brother/Sister to attend our son's wedding' The accurate, appropriate and natural translation should be *We invite you to attend our son's wedding*. This will be further discussed under the section of *Kinship Terms*.

Third Personal Pronoun

In translating a third personal pronoun from Indonesian into English a translator faces a problem on whether ***ia/dia*** (-nya) is translated as **he** (him) or as **she** (her) because Indonesian only has ***ia/dia*** without distinguishing gender in the pronouns. For example in the sentences like:

- (1) ***Ia*** membayar utangnya.
- (2) Saya mengundang***nya***.

These sentences can be translated into English as follows:

- (1) **He** paid **his** debt (Sentence # 1)
- (2) **He** paid **her** debt (Sentence # 1)
- (3) **She** paid **her** debt (Sentence # 1)
- (4) **She** paid **his** debt (Sentence # 1)
- (5) I invited **her** (Sentence # 2)
- (6) I invited **him** (Sentence # 2)

If the two Indonesian sentences are standing alone, not from a paragraph, either one of the translations above is accepted. But, if they are a part of a paragraph in a discourse then the translator has to discover which version is the accurate and appropriate one.

On the contrary, when translating a third personal pronoun from English into Indonesian the component of meaning, *masculine* or *feminine*, is lost when using Indonesian pronoun *ia/dia*. In English it is clear that **he** (him) refers to a male person and **she** (her) refers to a female person but this is not the case for Indonesian.

Proper Names

An unfamiliar Indonesian person's name may cause an ambiguity for a translator in translating *-nya* as an object or as a possessive of such a name into English. In an Indonesian sentence like '*Ajaibik mengendarai mobilnya ke kantor*' is hard to identify whether *Ajaibik* is a male or a female name. Appropriate translations for such a sentence are: (1) *Ajaibik* drove **his** car to the office; or (2) *Ajaibik* drove **her** car to the office. If the above Indonesian sentence is a part of a text like:

Ajaibik mengendarai mobilnya ke kantor. Mobil tersebut merupakan hadiah ulang tahun dari isterinya (Ajaibik drove his car to the office. The car is a birthday present from his wife),

Then the translator can accurately identify *Ajaibik* as a male name of a husband because the supporting phrase *isterinya* (**his** wife) provides him/her a clue to do the translation as in Sentence 1. A given name to a person in some particular places in Indonesia is usually a local culture-based name. Such a name may bring ambiguity for a translator to decide whether it is a male or a female name.

However, this is not a problem for translating all substitutes' words that re-

fer to the proper names from English into Indonesian because Indonesian has only one word *-nya* as an object or a possessive and *ia/dia* as a subject in a clause or a sentence.

Other ambiguity occurs in Indonesian sentences such as:

- (1) **Bruno** menghabiskan makanan di atas meja karena **ia** lapar.
- (2) **Jakob** menjatuhkan pisang yang diberikan kepadanya
- (3) **Manis** tidak mau makan di piringnya

The names of **Pluto**, **Jakob**, **Manis** are referring to the pet names. These are only three out of hundred names found in different parts of Indonesia. In English there are also pet names which are closely similar to human names. If a translator does a literal translation or word-by-word translation without reading a text thoroughly s/he can translate **ia** in Sentence 1 as **he** or **she**, **-nya** in Sentences 2 as **him** or **her**, and **-nya** in Sentence 3 as **his** or **her**. **Bruno** is a dog's name, **Jakob** is a bird's name, and **Manis** is a cat's name. These pet names are commonly found in Indonesia and they are used to name either male or female pets. **Bruno** and **Jakob** are basically male human name and **Manis** is commonly referring to female human name, but, these names are used to name the pets without distinguishing gender. Thus, a translation for each of the sentences above should be:

- (1) **Bruno** ate up the food on the table *because it was hungry*.
- (2) **Jakob** dropped the banana given to **it**.
- (3) **Manis** did not want to eat on **its** plate

However, if the pets are personified by the writer in a particular text the use of **he**, **she**, **him**, **her** or **his** are acceptable to the translation. And if this is the case a translator should be very careful to study a text in order to avoid ambiguity in using proper names for the pets in Indonesian texts. Therefore, it is important that a translator should be aware of cohesive devices or substitute words, communication situations or cultural contexts, and recognize as such. She will then look for the appropriate devices in English they for use in the translation. If translated one-for-one from Indonesian into English will almost certainly distort the meaning intended by the original author.

Kinship Terms

A translator must carefully study and compare the kinship terminology of Indonesian and English. This will help him/her to analyze and determine the meaning of the kinship terms used in the source language text before reconstructing the same meaning using the kinship terms which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context. The following displays show the differences between Indonesian and English kinship terms and also help the readers to have a clear picture on the further discussion of this topic.

Display 3: English

	lineal		colineal		ablinal
	masculine	feminine	masculine	feminine	
second generation previous	Grandfather	Grandmother			
previous generation	father	mother	uncle	aunt	
same generation		ego	brother	sister	cousin
next generation	son	daughter			
second generation following	grandson	granddaughter	nephew	niece	

Display 4: Indonesian

	lineal		colineal		ablinal
	masculine	feminine	masculine	feminine	
second generation previous	<i>kakek</i>	<i>nenek</i>			<i>sepupu</i>
previous generation	<i>bapak</i>	<i>ibu</i>	<i>paman/om</i>	<i>tante</i>	
same generation	<i>saya/aku</i>		<i>saudara</i>		

next generation	<i>anak</i>	
second generation	<i>cucu</i>	<i>keponakan</i>
following		

Notice that English has two words, brother and sister; son and daughter; grandson and granddaughter; nephew and niece, which in Indonesian is one—*saudara*; *anak*; *cucu* and *keponakan* respectively. Such differences should be carefully studied before translating a text from Indonesian into English.

Look at the following sentences:

- (1) *John tinggal bersama saudaranya di Jayapura*
- (2) *Anak saya lahir di Biak*
- (3) *Rita menemani cucunya ke bank.*
- (4) *Keponakan(-nya) John sedang belajar di Amerika*

If the above sentences are translated into English out of a context or out of a communication situation one of the following translations is accepted.

- (1) John lives with his brother in Jayapura (sentence #1)
- (2) John lives with his sister in Jayapura (sentence #1)
- (3) My son was born in Biak (sentence #2)
- (4) My daughter was born in Biak (sentence #2)
- (5) My child was born in Biak (sentence #2)
- (6) Rita accompanied her grandson to the bank (sentence #3)
- (7) Rita accompanied her granddaughter to the bank (sentence #3)
- (8) John's nephew is studying in America (sentence #4)
- (9) John's niece is studying in America (sentence #4)

However, if they are part of a text the translator should study the whole text to discover the correct translation.

Study the following text:

John tinggal bersama saudaranya di Jayapura. Mereka pergi ke Bank

Papua tadi pagi karena hendak mengirim uang kepada keponakannya. Keponakannya John sedang belajar di Amerika. Dan secara kebetulan John melihat Rita, mantan pacar saudaranya, menemani cucunya ke bank. Cucunya pernah bergabung dengan tim sepak bola Persipura Putra sewaktu bertanding dengan tim sepak bola Malaysia. Ia tidak sempat berbicara dengan mereka karena mereka buru-buru meninggalkan bank. Setelah saudaranya me-ngirim uang untuk Paul, anaknya, yang sedang belajar di Amerika mereka kembali ke rumah. Dalam perjalanan pulang ia bertanya pada saudaranya dimana Paul lahir. Lalu saudaranya menjawab: "Anak saya lahir di Biak". "Dan lainnya?", John bertanya lagi. "Yang terakhir lahir di Jayapura" ia menjawab sambil membelokkan mobilnya ke rumah.

If a translator carefully studies the text above he decides that translation (a) John lives with his brother in Jayapura is the correct one because it is supported by a clause *...ia melihat Rita, mantan pacar saudaranya,...*(.....he saw Rita, the ex-girlfriend of his brother,...) and also the name of Rita refers to a female name. Sentence (c) My son was born in Biak is acceptable because the name of Paul refers to a male name. Sentence (f) Rita accompanied her grandson to the bank is also acceptable because Persipura Putra soccer team is a male players team identified by Putra (Male). And, sentence (h) John's nephew is studying in America is appropriate because the name of Paul refers to a male name.

As described briefly earlier, the kinship terms *bapak*, *ibu*, and *saudara* are used to replace the second person pronoun *you* when translating from English into Indonesian. Another usage of *bapak* and *ibu* is to replace the first personal pronoun **I**, **me**, **my** or **mine** in sentences such as

- (1) ***Bapak** akan pergi ke Biak besok*
- (2) *Tolong belikan **Bapak** sebungkus rokok Gudang Garam!*
- (3) *Telepon(-nya) **Ibu** lagi rusak*

The three sentences above occur in different contexts. Sentence 1 may occur in two different contexts (a) a male university professor or a male school teacher informs his students on his departure plan; (b) an over sixty years old man informs on his departure plan to a younger group of people or to a younger person. Sentence 2 may also occur in two different contexts (a) a male head of an office asks for a help from his secretary to buy a pack of cigarettes; (b) an older man asks for a help from a younger person to buy a pack of cigarettes. Sentence 3 may occur in two different situations (a) a female university profes-

or a female school teacher reported to her students that her telephone was out of order so it was useless to call her; (b) a female head of an office reported the condition of her telephone to a telephone technician. Thus, the correct translation for the above Indonesian sentences are:

- (1) **I** will go to Biak tomorrow.
- (2) Please buy **me** a pack of Gudang Garam cigarette.
- (3) **My** telephone is out of order.

In Papuan-Indonesian Dialect the kinship terms of *anak*, *kaka* (kakak), *ade* (adik) are used to replace English pronoun **you** and **I** in daily communication. The usage can be seen in the following sentences

- (1) *Anak tinggal dimana?*
- (2) *Kaka mau bicara dengan ade sebentar.*
- (3) *Kalau kaka kembali dari Jakarta tolong belikan ade jam tangan merek Seiko*

Men and women above sixty years old in Papua always address a school boy/girl or a college student as *anak* to replace *kamu* (you). This is different from a parent-children relationship where *anak* means either *son* or *daughter*. Thus, a text like in *Sentence 1* should have this translation: *Where do you live?*, but not, *When do son live?*

English has two words, *brother* and *sister*, which in Papuan Indonesian dialect are *kaka laki-laki*, *ade laki-laki*, *kaka perempuan*, dan *ade perempuan*. Which of the four phrases is used depends on who is talking. A male person or a female person calls his or her brother *kaka laki-laki* (big brother) and *ade laki-laki* (small brother); whereas *kaka perempuan* (big sister) and *ade perempuan* (small sister) for their sister. However, in daily communication an older person never addresses a younger person as *ade laki-laki* or *ade perempuan* and also a younger person never calls an older person as *kaka laki-laki* or *kaka perempuan*. They simply address each other *kaka* or *ade* without identifying gender. This causes a problem in translating a text from Indonesian into English because a translator cannot tell if *kaka* refers to a brother or a sister. So, again, in a text like *Selamat sore, kaka!* can be translated into two versions: (a) Good afternoon, brother!; (b) Good afternoon, sister!

Another usage of *kaka* and *ade* which creates problems in translation is that Papuans use *kaka* and *ade* as an intimate way of addressing each other.

Kaka and **ade** in this case mean either *you* or I (me) as Second Person Singular or First Person Singular depending on who is speaking. In Sentence 2 above the translation should be **I** want to talk to **you** for a while whereas in Sentence 3 it should be If **you** return from Jakarta please buy **me** a Seiko brand watch. A translator firstly should make sure that **kaka** or **ade** in a particular context has a meaning referring to a brotherhood/sisterhood relationship or a second person or a first person singular. By doing so his translation will be appropriate, accurate and natural.

CONCLUSION

Translation is a process of transferring the meaning, not the form, of the source language into the receptor language. This process is not easy for a translator to go through because it needs both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge and experience. Both Indonesian and English have the following differences in pronominal system, proper name, and kinship terminology which affect translation.

- (1) In first personal pronoun Indonesian distinguishes between **kita** (inclusive) and **kami** (exclusive) but English has simply one word, **we**. **Kita** and **Kami** do not merely refer to **we**, but **kita** may refer to either **I** or **you** (both singular & plural) and **kami** may refer to **I** when they are used in different communication situations. Similarly, in English first personal pronoun **we** has the meaning of **I** and **you** in different contexts.
- (2) In second personal pronoun Indonesian has two forms, **familiar** (*bapak, ibu, saudara*) and **formal** (you) when translating English pronoun **you** into Indonesian. In English there is no component of meaning which distinguishes familiar from formal.
- (3) In third personal pronoun Indonesian has two exchangeable words with the same meaning **ia/dia** without distinguishing the component of meaning, masculine and feminine, whereas English has two words **he** and **she** which distinguish gender.
- (4) A given name to either a person or a pet in Indonesian is mostly local culture-based name. English also has different way of naming a person or a pet. Such an unfamiliar proper name brings an ambiguity for a translator to decide if a particular proper name is for a male person or a female person and/or a pet, particularly, when translating Indonesian substitute words

such as **ia/dia, -nya** referring to certain proper names into English.

- (5) In kinship terminology English has two words to differentiate the component of meaning, *masculine* and *feminine*, whereas Indonesian has only one word without carrying gender differences (such as **brother** and **sister**=*saudara*; **son** and **daughter**=*anak*; **grandson** and **granddaughter**=*cucu*; **nephew** and **niece**=*keponakan*). The usage of **bapak** (*father*) and **ibu** (*mother*) is to replace first personal pronoun **I** (**me**, **my** or **mine**) whereas in Indonesian-Papuan Dialect **anak** (*son* or *daughter*), **kaka** (*big brother* or *sister*), **ade** (*small brother* or *sister*) are used to replace **you** and **I** (**me**, **my** or **mine**) in different contexts.

Therefore, a translator should compare carefully differences in the nominal system, proper name, and kinship terminology of the source and the receptor languages in order to provide an accurate, appropriate, and natural translation in which each reader does not really realize that s/he is actually reading a translation.

REFERENCES

- Larson, M. L. 1984. *Meaning-Based Translation. A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalent*. Boston: University Press of America, Inc.