

INTERFACE OF LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE, AND CULTURE IN TRANSLATING SINGAPORE AND SRI LANKA POSTCOLONIAL POETRY

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ABSTRACT

The interface of linguistics, literature, and culture was clear in translation. English Studies in Indonesia had undergone revision by the inclusion of postcolonial literature in its curriculum. Literary works from Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, and other Asian countries were introduced and translated. Given that language game was central in postcolonial writing, equitable knowledge and grasps of linguistics, literature, and culture were significant in translation. Through the lens of re-placing language as textual strategies in post-colonial writing, this article explored the application of this reading method and gave practical examples of translating English poems written in, respectively, Singapore and Sri Lankan postcolonial contexts into Indonesian. The discussion showed that in order to preserve the postcolonial strategies of writing back to the colonial ideology, the translation took into account the reconceptualization and reconstruction of people, language, and culture, instead of literal rendering from the source language to the target language. Adoption of postcolonial theory as the translating method shown in this study is important to add to the theory and practice of translation. This trajectory can be used to translate other literary works written in varieties of English into Indonesian, using as they do, different translation strategies to make the translation products accurate, appropriate, and acceptable.

Keywords: cultural turn, postcolonial theory, varieties of English

INTRODUCTION

When promoting literature through translation, each society does not only aim at improving its literary culture but also attempts to satisfy the curiosity of knowing different cultures from different countries, bearing in mind that the main mission is the enrichment of the target culture. Although the translation is, simply put, a matter of knowing any two languages and the art of rendering effectively what is in one language in the other, when applied to such culturally rich texts as literature, this exercise has become even more complex and necessitates quite rigorous selection method. Among the criteria for selection includes the social constitution of the target culture, cultural changes, national as well as international power relations, the position and conditions of source and target culture, to say nothing of the socio-economic-political factors. This is to say that translation is but an interdisciplinary, interlingua, and intercultural activity.

Such complexity is nowhere clearer and more demanding than in the translation of literature from postcolonial culture. It should be noted that the unique context of Asian postcolonial countries with their varied languages, myths, religions and traditions do not easily fit into the contemporary Western culture, in this case, the English language. On the one hand, the different religions, customs, and histories of respective countries in Asia have given birth to distinctive and specific creative productions. On the other hand, globalization and advancement in information technology have made similar impacts on people in the region. Despite this cultural complication, translation is one vehicle to help negotiate between the maintenance of distinct national identities and efforts to keep abreast with the global culture. The inevitable global-local cultural encounter of this kind is at the heart of postcolonial literature.

This article examines the intersection of linguistics, literature, and culture in translating postcolonial texts,

mindful of the fact that translation takes place not only between languages but also between cultures. What the translator needs is, therefore, the interface of knowledge in both language and culture. As it is, it may argue that the task of the translator is then to discern and evaluate the texts. The translator must be aware that the linguistic representation of a literary text is the abstract representation of its phonological structure, lexical structure, and syntactic structure (Fabb, 2004). Besides, the translator has to pay attention also to such linguistic factor as additions, omissions, pronoun referents, evaluative adjectives, etc.

The juxtaposition of linguistics, literature, and culture is clear in the translation of texts that involve “multilingual”, i.e. “refer[ing] is not only to national languages but also to the languages of textual presentation and projection”, as claimed by Scott (2011). Poetry, according to Scott (2011), is a multilingual text with its richness of psycho-physiological, multi-sensory, kinesthetic experiences that requires the phenomenological type of reading during the translation process. In a similar vein, Harmelink (2012) has argued that translation of special texts like holy books that also involves the potential impact of lexical pragmatics in order to reveal the hermeneutical issues in accordance with the principles of representation, dynamic context, and the principle of relevance. Translation strategy of this kind is useful when dealing with the wealth of postcolonial texts. This study is therefore done in the hope that literary works from all postcolonial countries with different varieties of English can be translated into Indonesian in an accurate, appropriate, and acceptable manner.

METHODS

It must be mentioned at the outset that the nature of this article is that of theory application. The research materials, therefore, include theoretical concepts and principles in linguistics, literature, translation studies, focusing as they do on postcolonial trajectory. Various issues on theory and practice of translation postulated by translation scholars, especially of the 1990s onwards, are used as data. Hermeneutic phenomenology becomes the basic philosophy of the translation method as conceived by, among others, Ricouer (2004), Scott (2011), and Harmelink (2012). The other object materials include 2 (two) poems from Singapore and Sri Lanka. Set in postcolonial context, both poems will be used to showcase how the translation thereof can be seen as an example of how linguistics, literature, and culture interface. What follows is the elaboration of the concepts used throughout the discussion.

As an approach, the postcolonial theory can be seen as both limiting and all-encompassing. What is constitutive of postcoloniality? Given that one of the major concerns in postcolonial studies is the search for cultural identity, it is important to define and to continually redefine a specific paradigm of post-coloniality to suit wide-ranging colonial experiences from time to time. Using the term postcolonial to refer to “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day”, like Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (1989) in *The Empire Writes Back*, assert that nearly four-fifths of the globe have been affected by colonialism. Added to this plethora of postcolonial experiences is the fact that identity itself is characteristically political. Thus, it is important to examine the intertwinement of history, theory, and politics in order to grasp power relations that occur between the colonizers and the colonized. In order to determine the precise nature

of postcoloniality, it is necessary to clarify first the complex structure of historical stages and the distinction between the settler and the native. As stated by Mbembe (2001), for example, the postcolonizer-postcolonized oppositionality need not correspond to the binary of settler-native. To illustrate, postcolonialism according to the thesis of Ashcroft and others begins at the point of colonization, whereas postcolonial Indonesia can be interpreted more precisely as the end of colonization. As a note in passing, this model is further complicated by Indonesia’s feasible colonizing aims in several provinces of the country. The annexation of East Timor to the Republic of Indonesia in 1975, for example, is a case in point, until Indonesia finally agreed in 1999 to let the East Timorese voted between independence and local autonomy; and by 2002 this youngest province declared its independence as Timor Leste. Thus, each country’s colonial history has implications for its language and literature alike.

Meanwhile, for Singapore and Malaysia, they have a literary tradition of writing in English (the language of the Colonizer). According to Patke (2006), the use of English for creative purposes in both countries have developed in between the 1940s- 1950s. Such is not true with Indonesian literature which is hardly written in English, not even in Dutch as the language of the ex-Colonial Master. This is to say that no theoretical concept arising from one culture can be transposed unproblematically to different cultures without considering the limits of its applicability.

Despite the limit in the definition offered by Ashcroft and others, however, the theoretical framework thereof is quite useful in the discussion of postcolonial literature that this present paper seeks out to do. Ashcroft et al. (1989) have maintained that postcolonial criticism looks out for “powerfully subversive general accounts of textuality and concepts of ‘literariness’”. Indeed this theoretical concept is built upon the previous works of the poststructuralists from Frantz Fanon to Edward Said in theory (and criticism) and from Chinua Achebe to Ngugi wa Thiong’o in literature and criticism. As shown by Hatim and Munday (2004), the field then has been most strongly sophisticated by later postcolonial critics like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha. It is Bhabha; however, that appears to fit in recent postcolonial literary studies, especially with his view of the key concept of hybridity. The next section is to discuss first, hybridity took to mean cross-cultural exchange and the political implication thereof that characterizes postcolonial literature, and second, the strategy of translating postcolonial literature, mindful of the linguistic, literary, and cultural interface.

In the 1990s, the study in translation has embraced cultural studies in attempts to respond to the process and status of globalization and national identities. As said by Hatim (2001), it was Mary Snell-Hornby who firstly postulated the cultural turn in translation, that is, the shift from seeing translation as linguistic transfer to cultural transfer. But it was not until Susan Bassnett and André Levere who in the 1990s went more progressively in doing “cultural turn” that interdisciplinary method was used for translators to go beyond the text. Hatim (2001) has claimed that Levere particularly insists on the process of re-writing, i.e. interpretation (manipulation, if needed) of the original. With the explosion of and growing interest in postcolonial literature at the turn of the millennium, the cultural turn in translation studies has become intercultural, hence the term “postcolonial turn” to label the paradigm shift.

With no room for argument, literature relies on the sophisticated use of language for which reason excellent

linguistic grasp is helpful. The turn to culture does not mean the neglect of linguistics. Here, even at the paradigm shift in translation from language to culture, linguistics has continued to play an important task because of the postcolonialism's interest in language. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995) have said that "language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language". Salvador (2006) has also reminded us that translating postcolonial writing is usually hybrid in its nature. Therefore, it is not simply translating from one language to another; it is an intersection point (linguistic, cultural, and symbolic) to a system which is often ignorant of the linguistic and cultural specificities inferred in the source text. Mindful of the fact that translation entails the need to respect and encourage cultural pluralism, Salvador further proposes documentation as moral principles in translating postcolonial literature.

Most postcolonial critics like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak as well as translation theorists who call for cultural approaches like Tejaswini Niranjana and earlier on, Lawrence Venuti pay their utmost attention to hybridity. While Venuti advocates foreignizing (vis-à-vis domesticating) translation at all costs, Niranjana's major take, on the other hand, is the re-translation of the existing westernized English translation of works written in Kannada (one group of Canarese Dravidian language). She argues that the local lexical and cultural items should become the highlight in the translation of the local literature. Schäffner and Adab (2001) have argued that a hybrid text is a quite strange, unusual text in the target culture born out of the translator's conscious and deliberate decisions that are made during the translation process. Such oddity is not an evidence of translational incompetence or Spivakian "translationese", but, as maintained by Schäffner and Adab (2001), it is instead the strength of a hybrid text.

Thus, using as theoretical departure from the above critics, differing from one another as they do, it can be concluded that in translating literary texts, sufficient grasps of linguistics also play an important role, since political implications in postcolonial writing can only be comprehended when the translator is also knowledgeable about the language as well as the language play. What follows is the way in which postcolonial writing deal with language use.

Arguing that language –being a medium of power– is crucial in postcolonial writing, Ashcroft *et al.* (1989) have introduced the terms "abrogation" and "appropriation" to show how the language of the center (English) is seized and replaced by the englishes of the ex-colonised people. While abrogation describes the refusal of the postcolonial writers to use the 'correct, standard English of the Queen', appropriation refers to the ways in which English is adopted and adapted to become localized. Here, the imperial language is appropriated, adapted, hybridized and rejected in the decolonizing process, in order to develop the localized versions of englishes. Some examples of the abrogation technique include the rejection of the use of the Standard English among the postcolonial societies in the Caribbean, the use of the language variance in places like Singapore or Malaysia, and the infusion of local allusion in postcolonial texts.

Ashcroft *et al.* (1989) then show that the re-placing of language in the form of appropriation and abrogation can operate through a variety of strategies such as glossing, untranslated words, interlanguage, syntactic fusion and vernacular transcription in the texts. Considering that the

English language has been worked out and made up as such in postcolonial writing, the translator's task is to bring along the very language and its inference anew in the translation. In this eventuality, such conventional requirements as familiarity in the source language, the target language, and the subject matter are at play. Mastery of linguistics is as important of knowledge of literature (read: culture). The next section is to look at two unit examples of the interface of language and literature through selected poems from Singapore and Sri Lanka. The local variety of English used in the poems calls into question of how one can translate them into Indonesian.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is sufficient for now to say that in the postcolonial situation, translation does not merely mean replacing a text in one language to another. Instead, it is a continuous act of intercultural transfer across linguistic and cultural borders which are often seen as being asymmetrical in terms of power-relation by postcolonial critics.

Given the supposed superiority of the language of the colonial (read: Western) culture, translation of the indigenous text has often been appropriated to fit the colonizing ideology. The *Histoire des Berbères*, for example, is the French translation of the work of the North African historian Ibn Khaldūn on Arabs and Berbers in the Maghreb. Set in the 14th century, the translation of the narratives is done to accord to the French colonial hegemony of the 19th century (Hannoum, 2003). However, as argued by Einboden (2009), a translator can also become an effective advocate of cultural difference as in the Muslim interpretation of Washington Irving's perception of "Mahomet" or Prophet Muhammad. Similarly, Xie (2014) contends that, given the ecological crisis, global injustice, human degradation, etc. Redefinition of universality is needed with which translation is to equally represent different ways of being human by creating spaces for dialogues between the local and the global, the West and the Rest, and the hegemonic and the subaltern. This is to say that translation requires re-appropriation so as to be hospitable to the foreign language as well as feeling at ease to dwell in another language (Ricoeur as cited in Dangin *et al.*, 2016).

The following poem written by Chan Wei Meng is taken from the "Anthology of Sample Texts" chapter of *The English Studies Book* by Rob Pope (2002). An explanatory note is provided telling us that the writer is a Singaporean student of English at the University of Otago, New Zealand in 1996. This poem is a sample of her postcolonial strategy of rejecting the formal language of the Ex-Colonial Master. To quote the poem in full:

"I spik English" (1996)

I speak English
To a foreign friend –
'I don't understand what you're trying to say!'
'How come? I spik English what!'

I spik Ingglish
In Home –
'Hungry? You want lice or mee?'
'I eat Can-tucky cheeken, can or not?'
'Listen! Study Ingglish, earn more manee.'

I spik Ingglish
In School –
'Everybody read – sing sang sung,'
'I sing Malay hab a litter lamb.'
'Attention! School close at one.'

I spik Ingglish
In Work –
'You know, the computer cannot open, izzit?'
'I donno, got pay or not?'
'Remember – customer is always light, pease.'

I spik Ingglish
In Shop –
'Hello, can I hepch you?'
'I looksee first'
'Buy now! They is vely cheep and new.'

I spik Ingglish
Everywhere
Understand?

It can be immediately seen that it is the unique use of vocabulary that gives Chan Wei Meng's poem its power. Such hybrid text is strong in postcolonial context as aforementioned by Schäffner and Adab (2001). The poem suggests that the speaker deliberately uses broken English in a way that identifies with her place of origin, i.e. modern capital city Singapore. The "I" in the poem is someone whose second language is English but minimally acquired to get by in the country where the so-called 'Singlish' is widely spoken. Here, although the term Singlish is often regarded in somewhat negative overtones (Brown, 2000). It is the every-day language that can possibly express the poet's feeling to be taken into consideration in any translation efforts.

Readers of the above poem may not hear the poet's resistance to the language of the dominant culture if such postcolonial gestures shown in the poem as abrogation, code-switching, syntactic fusion, and many more are ignored. Ashcroft *et al.* (1989) have argued that through language appropriation, the speaker can reveal his/her identity and the silence as well as the power of becoming a member of the ex-colonized country. The poem reflects the use of the variety of English borrowed from the many different languages spoken in Singapore, especially Hokkien and Malay dialects.

Seen from the lisp in pronouncing "I" and "r" such as "lice" for "rice", "Malay" for "Mary", "litter" for "little", "light" for "right", and "vely" for "very", the speaker is presumably of a Chinese background. The poem also resists the Standard English grammatically and semantically. "I look see first" and "School close at one" are examples of the transgression.

Next, the words "what", "lah", "izzit" are among the most famous Singaporean expressions used at the end of sentences for emphasis. While the common particles "what" and "izzit" are used as question-tags by Chinese Singaporean, the use of the question-tag "lah" is characteristic of Malay-Singaporean speakers. As claimed by Brown (2000), most people in Singapore, however, use "lah" to indicate request or impatience. Therefore, when translated into Indonesian, for example, the translator can attempt similar linguistic appropriation by, for instance, using daily, slangy, young metropolitan people's language instead of the formal, officially used Indonesian.

The following translation does not quite preserve the poet's postcolonial trail, because the Singlish expressions and modes are inevitably lost in translation, although attempts have been made to make it colloquial. The Jakartan youth dialect may be used here despite its drawbacks.

"Gue Pake Bahasa Inggris" (1996)

*Saya berbahasa Inggris
Dengan teman-teman asing –
'Saya tidak mengerti apa yang kau coba katakan!'
'Gimana sih? Gue pake Inggris kan!'*

*Gue pake bahasa Inggris
Di Rumah –
'Laper? Loe mau nasi apa mi?'
'Gue mau makan ayam Kentaki, boleh kagak?'
'Dengerin! Belajar bahasa Inggris, [biar bisa] cari duit lebih banyak.'*

*Gue pake bahasa Inggris
Di Sekolah –
'Murid-murid ngapalin – sing sang sung,'
'Gue nyanyi Malay hab a litter lamb.'
'Perhatian! Sekolah bubar jam satu.'*

*Gue pake bahasa Inggris
Di tempat Kerja –
'Loe tahu, komputernya nggak bisa dibuka, kan?'
'Mana gue tahu, udah bayar belum?'
'Inget – pembeli adalah raja.'*

*Gue pake bahasa Inggris
Di Toko –
'Halo, ada yang bisa dibantu?'
'Mo liat-liat aja'
'Beli sekarang dong! Murah dan masih baru, nih.'*

*Gue pake bahasa Inggris
Di mana aja
Ngerti kagak?*

It would seem here that to achieve equivalence, relevance, and acceptability, the use of annotation is necessary. Annotation, which is comment or explanation added to a text, can be one way to reduce the lack, although it may spoil the text. Here, Shi (2005) is right to say that depending on each respective purpose; the translation is to be done accordingly. If the intention is to preserve the ways in which Chan Wei Ming's poem writes back to the ex-colonial language, some lines are best left as original with annotation given as footnotes. For example, the line 'I sing Malay hab a litter lamb', it cannot be easily translated into Indonesian, especially the incorrect use of the words "Malay" for "Mary"; "hab" for "had"; and "litter" for "little". The speaker erroneously pronounces the lyric of this English language nursery rhyme to show resistance to the weight of colonial education that is still influential even today. As such, translation strategy such as annotation is necessary to use here so that the translation product gives the same powerful effects on readers of both the source and target languages.

In dealing with untranslatability, this paper applies both domestication and foreignization. Hatim (2001) has claimed that Levere particularly insists on the process of re-writing, i.e. interpretation (manipulation, if needed) of

the original. Similarly, in challenging the idea of poetry's untranslatability, Shi (2005) has proposed that translators should be faithful to the well-founded function of poetry, i.e. to deliver a particular message in its beauty, rather than solely and unreasonably pursue to duplicate. Quoting Snell-Hornby, Roozgar (2008) has also argued that familiarity with the target culture is important when dealing with the hybrid text because the new language involves lexical and grammatical innovation. As such, to follow Roozgar, the word "I speak English" is translated into "*Saya berbahasa Inggris*", whereas "I spik Inggris" becomes "*Gue pake Inggris*". It is the translator's decisive choice; Roozgar maintains that the translation is left as hybrid (foreignization) or domesticated. To follow the above strategy still, the informal use of the words "dunno" can be translated into "*mana gue tahu*"; or, some might as well say "*meneketehe*" following the Indonesian pop culture phenomenon of using new argot called *Alay* Language. Meanwhile, the words "*ngapalin*", "*inget*", "*udah*", "*liat-liat*", "*aja*", etc., in the Indonesian translation of the poem are of informal use and spelling. They are all chosen here in an attempt to offset the untranslatability of the Singlish dialects.

Although domestication is according to Roozgar often more marketable, politically it can be argued that such translation is weak. Pham (2011), for example, has claimed that translation in Vietnamese context is a constantly shifting negotiation involving politics and culture of the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized. Given that the Singaporean's use of English is slightly different than that of the Indonesians whereby English is a *lingua franca*, the untranslatability is also dealt in this article by means of foreignization. The title of the nursery rhyme told in the poem, and some English idiomatic expressions are therefore left in their original Singlish in order to retain the poem's postcolonial resistance.

Next, in the case of translating the speaker's rebellion to the gatekeepers of 'standard' BBC English in Singapore, it can be interpreted that similar resistance can be shown to the ways in which Indonesian youths often refuse to use correct Indonesian language. The use of the slangy expression in the Indonesian version of the poem, if imperfect, is one way to achieve translation relevance. However, such grammatical mistakes as "School close at one" cannot be translated by equal use of incorrect Indonesian, for example. Instead, such resistance can be shown by using jargon or informal terminology to carry the message. Hence, "*Sekolah bubar jam satu*" vis-à-vis "*Sekolah selesai pukul satu siang*".

It is clear by now that translation is inextricably linked to politics of identity in postcolonial times. Pivotal attention to culture may provide space for differing arguments about translation, politics, culture, and identity, hence the many strategies to adopt.

Unlike the postcolonially "gymnastic" use of language in "I spik English", the second poem by the late Sri Lankan author Reggie Siriwardena uses plain formal English. The tone of Siriwardena's poem is different from that of the Singapore poem, although both reveal the speakers' attitude towards the English language. In "Colonial Cameo", the hegemony of the English language is condemned. On the contrary, in "I Spik English", the language is, if cynically, condoned as a path to financial success. Patke (2006) is observant when saying that Asian postcolonial poetry in English focus on the multiracial/cultural agenda using (localized) English to keep abreast of modernity and globalization.

As pointed out by Goonetilleke (2005), Siriwardena

depicts the English school and society in Sri Lanka in the poet's time where the English language has the highest status. Here, the speaker is a boy who is ashamed of his mother. The peasant mother communicates in the native language Sinhala to his teacher, much to the surprise and ridicule of his friends at the exclusive Western school. Later in life, the poet realizes that his embarrassment is indeed embarrassing for an ex-colonial subject like him. To quote the poem in full:

"Colonial Cameo" (1989)

My father used to make me read aloud in the evening from Macaulay or Abbots' Napoleon (he was short, and Napoleon his hero; I, his hope for the future).

My mother, born in a village, had never been taught that superior tongue. When I was six, we were moving house; she called at school to take me away.

She spoke to the teacher in Sinhala. I sensed the shock of the class, hearing the servants' language; in dismay followed her out, as she said, "Gihing ennang."

I was glad it was my last day there. But then the bell pealed; a gang of boys rushed out, sniggering, and shouted in chorus, "Gihing vareng!" as my farewell.

My mother pretended not to hear the insult. The snobbish little bastard! But how can I blame them? That day I was deeply ashamed of my mother. Now, whenever I remember, I am ashamed of my shame.

The above poem depicts the linguistic reality in the postcolonial society like Sri Lanka. The poet's own education was at the elite Anglican school, St Thomas' College in Mount Lavinia. According to Vijay and Pandit (2013), Siriwardena was never socially comfortable, as he was reportedly alienated with the school's pro-colonial ethos. Such information is important in translating the poem to convey the postcolonial perspectives. Unlike the earlier poem by the Singaporean, "Colonial Cameo" uses ordinary English. Thus, translation of this Sri Lankan poem can be done almost word for word into Indonesian. Rhyme and rhythm in the poem can be translated in order to maintain its artistic rendering. To give an example of the first and final stanzas only:

Ayah membiasakanku membaca keras-keras di malam hari tentang Napolen karya Macaulay atau Abbots (ayah pendek, dan Napoleon adalah pahlawannya; Aku lah harapannya untuk masa depan).

Ibuku, lahir di sebuah desa, tak pernah belajar Bahasa Inggris. Ketika aku berusia enam tahun, kami pindah rumah; Ibu menjemputku di sekolah untuk membawaku pulang.

Ibuku pura-pura tidak mendengar penghinaan itu. Bajingan kecil sombong! Tapi mana mungkin mereka kusalahkan?

Hari itu aku sangat malu karena ibu.

Tapi sekarang, setiap kali kuingat peristiwa itu, Aku malu karena kelakuanku yang memalukan itu.

As for the Sinhala expressions like "gihing ennang" and "gihing vareng", the annotation can be given. They both roughly mean "good-bye". One can also leave it untranslated and become part of the target language, hence

Ricouer's concept of linguistic hospitality (2004).

To follow the idea that translation is re-writing, the title of the poem can be translated to suit the intended message, i.e. to lampoon the colonial cringe. The principle of relevance can be used herein. Cameo colonial is chosen to emphasize that the colonial subjects such as the speaker of the poem who does not have important roles to play – He is just a cameo, who appears shortly in a show. The title then can be translated into, for example, “*Peran Pembantu Penjajah*” to preserve the alliteration of the letter “c” in English into “p” in the target language.

Unlike the translation of the first poem that seeks equivalence in, for instance, local dialect, the translation of “Colonial Cameo” is best left in its formal, standard rendering. The speaker of the poem is a member of educated, English-speaking society after the country's independence. The poem reveals that the speaker used to be ridiculed when using the “servant language” aka his mother tongue during his school days. As Punchi (2001) has said, colonial education in Sri Lanka had made people look down upon those who did not speak English. But the table is now turned. The note must be taken here that in 1956, Sinhala Only Act was passed by the government of Sri Lanka to make Sinhalese the official language of the country. Now that the speaker of the poem is upwardly mobile, he reflects on his childhood memory that is of the bitter and embarrassing kind. Here, the translator should leave the speaker's postcolonial gesture and identity intact. The poem's use of free-verse style can thus be kept when translated into Indonesian to carry the somewhat sad, nostalgic, story-telling tone of “Colonial Cameo”. This is to say that knowledge of people, language, culture, identity, etc., alongside the new conceptualization and redefinition thereof in postcolonial times is important in translation.

CONCLUSIONS

Colonial culture of Singapore and Sri Lanka. The two poems under discussion have made sufficient literary and linguistic cases to consider when one is to translate them into the target language. Both poems use what Ashcroft et al., (1989) called “re-placing language” as textual strategies in postcolonial theory and practice. As discussed here, the two poets use Singlish and Sinhala-English to write back to the colonial system of education, especially the use of English language.

This article has also shown that any attempts of literal rendering or mere linguistic meaning transference of postcolonial literature in English into Indonesian will likely result in a markedly inferior product. The postcolonial writing draws on political, cultural beliefs, and attitudes rather than on shared or universal notions of culture. As discussed in this article, perception of the importance and supremacy of English is shown differently by the speakers in the respective culture of Singapore and Sri Lanka after the end of British colonialism.

Thus, given the reality of the postcolonial society, translation of any cultural text like poetry requires constant dialogue, reconceptualization, and reconstruction of people, language, and culture. Politics, identity, and language are intertwined in the postcolonial setting with which translation of any literary text has to adjust accordingly. To this end, parallel efforts must be made in improving the translator's grasp of source and target languages as well as their respective culture.

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