
Indonesian Literature's Position in World Literature

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Abstract

There are two most inevitable issues on national literature, in this case Indonesian literature. First is the translation and the second is the standard of world literature. Can one speak for the other as a representative? Why is this representation matter? Does translation embody the voice of the represented? Without translation Indonesian literature cannot gain its recognition in world literature, yet, translation conveys the voice of other. In the case of production, publication, or distribution of Indonesian Literature to the world, translation works can be very beneficial. The position of Indonesian literature is as a part of world literature. The concept that the Western world should be the one who represent the subaltern can be overcome as long as the subaltern performs as the active speaker. If the subaltern remains silent then it means it allows the "representation" by the Western.

Key Words: Indonesian literature, standard, translation, world literature

Introduction

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as quoted by Michael Thomas Carroll in *No Small World* (1996: 34) states that "National literature has little meaning today; the time has come for the epoch of world literature to begin, and everyone must now do his share to hasten its realization". Goethe's aim for world literature provokes speculation that the compilation of world literature itself emphasizes inequality among the literary works since there is a tendency of Eurocentrism, in this case Western, and the male-domination writers.

Based on the paradox above, this paper is to reveal the national literature position, in this case Indonesian literature, in world literature. To reveal the position, this paper elaborates two most inevitable issues:

1. The translation, and
2. The standard of world literature.

The concern of these two issues is the identity of national literature, in this case Indonesian literature. Indonesia has various ethnics, cultures, and languages; therefore, it is possible that the English translation of Indonesian literature cannot cover all of the local terms. Meanwhile, identity for a country is a significant matter since identity is the one that distinguishes a country to other countries. Benedict R.O.G Anderson in his essay "Bahasa Tanpa Nama" (Chambert-Loir, 2009: 379-393) elaborates a local story entitled *Indonesia Dalam Api dan Bara* written by someone who uses a pseudonym Tjamboek Berdoeri. In his essay, he explains about the difficulty in translating local languages in the story to English. Words like "lelatoe" from Betawi, but originally from Java, and "njirik" from Java are not easy to be translated into English.

Bahasa Tanpa Nama is a story of Tjamboek experience in interacting with language use in Indonesia by the end of Dutch colonial regime, during the Japanese regime and also the by the beginning of the Dutch invasion which launched in July 1947, only few months before the book was published. In the period, people had contact with many languages used, such as Javanese, Betawi, Dutch, and Hokkien. In addition, people were exposed to the cultures as well. Therefore, if the story by Tjamboek Berdoeri text is translated in English, there is a possibility of the disappearance of social interaction value with the colonialism which was experienced by Tjamboek Berdoeri himself.

The languages used in this book are mostly from "Common Malayan", Betawi, English and Dutch. Malayan language was still used in interpreting the text in order to describe the Malayan culture which was developing at that time. Therefore, the removal of Malayan language in that text would also remove the Malayan culture as well. Malayan language was LINGUA FRANCA for certain groups in Hindia. However, it was not the standard national language practice used in that period. The Dutch language is not translated in order to mock and show that it was a "suppressor language" or language of the colonials.

The presence of Malayan language in this text is a standardized spoken Malayan language which is commonly used in daily conversation at that time, so it is a little bit awkward, but on the other hand, it is also

impossible to translate as well because it has a strong relationship to the social interaction embodied in the society at the era. There is a transition among Malayan language, Dutch, Java and Betawi and to some extent, Hokkien, which is actually his mother tongue. Based on the elaboration of the story, translation works could lead to the losing of cultural identity in a national literature. In other words, the contents of national literature is not originally from the writer, but also from the translator since he or she is responsible in translating the works and it is possible that they input their own “ideas” about a certain word or a certain culture.

For that reason, the case above leads to the standard of world literature anthology. The only language that is possible to be used for World literature anthology is English. Meanwhile, there is a paradox that the use of English affects the identity of the particular national literature. In his article, *Berbahasa* (Siegel, 93-96), Jim Siegel mentioned that it seems awry for Western people whenever they want to adapt their literary work into Indonesian and vice versa. They are aware of whether the adaptation of the language represents the origin text or not. This paper is going to answer the issues related to the position and also the “representation” of national literature in world literature.

Method of Research

This research employs qualitative method. It starts with data collections from the fiction. All data from the fiction (primary source) is classified based on the identity of national literature issue, in this case, the representation of national literature through translation works and the standard of world literature. Data from secondary sources like journals, articles and books are selected and classified based on the cultural background of the fiction and Subaltern as well as Orientalism theories.

Findings and Discussion

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s point of view on this matter is mentioned in her essay *Can Subaltern Speak?* (Spivak, 1988: 271-313). Regarding to postcolonial studies, Spivak’s argumentation is quite inimitable, she elaborates Marx’s passage, using “*vertreten*” where in English use “*represent*”. Spivak quotes Marx:

Marx is discussing a social ‘subject’ whose consciousness and *vertretung* [as much as a substitution as a representation] are dislocated and incoherent.

According to Spivak, as an example, a small peasant proprietors cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Furthermore, the representation appears simultaneously as the master of those who are represented. The representation has the authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above.

The subaltern is clearly described as the ones who cannot possess their own identity without the representation of the higher authority. Regarding to the Goethe’s statement, here, national literature is the ones that cannot represent themselves therefore it needs a “representative” in order to have an apparent position in world literature.

The hardest assignment that third world countries have to encounter is whether or not they are able to gain equality with the first world countries. Western world has become irremovable subject politically, economically, culturally, historically, and so forth.

As one of the third world countries, Indonesia has been influenced by the phenomenon of this inequality. Indonesia struggled against colonialism for more than three hundred and fifty years and obviously affected by the condition. There are many literary works and articles about the issue produced during and after the colonialism including Umar Kayam, Marah Roesli, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and so forth.

Pramoedya received many international awards during his lifetime due to his master pieces, such as 11th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize, Pablo Neruda Award, and Global Intellectuals Poll by the *Prospect*. Moreover, some of his works have also been translated into English, for instances *Bukan Pasar Malam (It's Not an All Night Fair)*, *Bumi Manusia (This Earth of Mankind)*, and *Anak Semua Bangsa (Child of All Nations)*. Pramoedya’s works obviously have gained international recognition. Through Pramoedya’s translated works people from other nations probably will obtain brief depiction about Indonesian history.

However, the translations have raised more questions, regarding to Spivak’s argument about “representation”. Can one speak for the other as a representative? Why is this representation matter? Does translation embody the voice of the represented? All these questions embark as an irony. Without translation Indonesian literature cannot gain its recognition in world literature, yet, translation conveys the voice of other.

Marilyn Gaddis Rose in "The Translator and The Voice of Other: A Case Point" (Carroll, 1996: 34). quoted by Carroll emphasizes the problem of representation and re-representation in translation. That a translator must assume the Other's voice in order to repeat it. In other words, the translation works itself enclose the upbringing of the translator and the reader's interpretation.

From the story of *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara*, Each language used in the story represents its origin and social class of the people. Although, not all the words are originally from Indonesia (some are also taken from Dutch), but it presents the challenge in translating the words.

"Bermoela itoe klerk-serdadoenbikin gerakaj-gerakan boeat lakoekan apa jang di prentahken kepadanja, seperti lajiknya satoe klerk sedjati, jang setahoe berapa taon lamanja dididik dalam sfeer 'Ja, zeker, meneer!'" tegen zoveel hondred per maand. Tjoema ia djadi merandek lagi waktoe saja sikoet ia. Seroe ia sendiri bikin bersi senapannja, kata saja. Di sini boekannja kantoer dan loe boekan disoeroe lakoeken pekerdja'an satoe klerk. Loe, goewa sama ia, kita orang sama serdadoenja!"

In the story, the clerk uses 'Ja, zeker, meneer' as a sign of giving respect toward a higher social class. Tjamboek further communicates with some people by using Dutch language and Bahasa Betawi Tangsi. He observes that the changing of the language shows that the society was divided into some levels of hierarchy. Thus, any reader who observes it meticulously will understand why Tjamboek used different languages to different people. He wanted to emphasize the difference between each ethnic and social class of the people in order to present brief description of what happened in Indonesia at that time.

English cannot be used as a lingua franca because not all words in Indonesia can be translated into English because there are not any suitable words that best replace Indonesian words. The following are some quotations' from Tjamboek's article which are mostly about words said to show social status.

Quotations as the proofs from Tjamboek Berduri's article:

1. "...ex kebon atawa ex djongos boeat hatoerken saja poenya pemberian selamat boeat ia poenja promotie dan bintang jang terang." Djongos here is a very rude word referring to somebody who is asked to do this and that (so this person is like a servant, but this person is considered lower than a servant) and who is paid only with small amount of money. It can be seen there that when I replace djongos with the word 'servant' the meaning is totally different. Servant is usually considered loyal and people who have this job are still respected. Also, the word 'hatoerken' refers to a very polite word used in Javanese when people address somebody who have higher positions and are respected by others. The word 'respect' in English will never ever be able to replace this word as the sense of the meaning is quite far.

2. "...akoe iki pantes dadi Kijahi Djendral." Kijahi also refers to a person who is usually religious and therefore, they are respected for that. They usually also guide some people to solve problems through praying and other religious activities. In the article, it is a satiric word to mock the Dutch. Dutch perhaps are respected, but it's not because they are helpful and religious. It's because people are afraid of them. So, 'Kijahi' here if it is replaced by the word 'priests' or 'monk' it will not make a good sense of the original meaning of the word 'Kijahi'. It is because those two words refer to certain religions leaders and those do not even have close meanings to the word 'Kijahi'

3. Dikenong kempoel. This word is used to show how cruel was the Dutch government at that time. The word refers to how Dutch soldier treated the local people. Tjamboek use this word because kenong and kempoel are parts of Gamelan instruments which should be hit by certain tools which are quite big. So, Tjamboek wants to describe how terrible the injury on people's head because they are hit many times. It is like when people play gamelan they will hit the instruments many times.

4. "Tjino loleng, buntute digoreng" The word "Tjino" refers to certain ethnic namely Chinese. Yet, even the word 'Chinese' cannot replace the word "Tjino". It is because "Tjino" in this context is not used to refer to people coming from China, but it is a kind of an insult given by the local people to the Chinese descendants that they are not parts of the local race.

However, in the case of production, publication, or distribution of Indonesian Literature to the world, translation works can be very beneficial. The existence of world English in the third world countries is a proof that it is a familiar language. Therefore, in order to be accepted by the nations in the world a literary text should be understandable, and that is why English translation matters.

Nevertheless, representation of the original work by the translator and re-representation of the readers is a significant point of translation. Interpretation can be very subjective since the translator and the reader must have certain ideology that can influence the meaning of the works.

The dilemma of representation and re-representation is in a line with Edward Said's "Orientalism" (Said, 1979: 2-6) which is defined as:

"Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on."

In other words, anyone with the understanding of the difference between the Orient and the Occident based on the ground theory of Western and Eastern generated by European who writes, teaches, or conduct research can be considered as an Orientalist. Additionally, Said states that:

"Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied-indeed, made truly productive-the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture."

Therefore, the idea of the Orient has invested in Westerners mind. The orient is the opposite of the West in many ways. As James G. Carrier in "Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside-Down" (Carrier, 1992: 195) that Orientalism purposes to expand knowledge of a set of societies which has large distinction from the Western societies that have been known as the residence of the scholars who have pursued that knowledge. Said mentions that Orientalists have encouraged the distinction between the familiar in this case Europe or the West, and the strange, the Orient or the East. In the meantime, the Occidentalism is the opposite of the Orientalism. If the Orient is the East, then the Occident is the West.

Wang Ning in her journal "Orientalism versus Occidentalism?" (Ning, 2014: 58) quotes that Said has an obvious statement that the logical theorizing point of view in constructing Orientalism is not the "Orient", but the "Occident. Therefore, the "Orient" is only what exists in the mind of certain Western people.

Additionally, J. Maggio in his journal "Can the Subaltern Be Heard? Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak" (Maggio, 2007: 1-2), stated that Spivak and Said shared similar idea concerning the field of postcolonial theory that its impact has spanned across the disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology, literary studies, women studies and cultural studies, amongst others. Furthermore, Spivak questions the notion of colonial (and Western) "subject". She argues that European intellectuals have assumed that they know the "other" and can place it in the context of the narrative of the oppressed. She presents the complicit nature of literature and the intellectual elite which they often appear to be innocent in the political realm of oppression.

It appears to be impossible to discuss the Orient, the East and the Occident, the West without discussing the postcolonial theory. According to Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer in "Orientalism and Postcolonial Predicament" (Breckenridge, 1993: 1) the word "post" means thing behind us, and past indicates periodization. In other words, postcolonial period is a way to characterize the second half of the century. It concentrates to postwar period, the period after World War II. The war is a significant start of decolonization and the world division into first, second, and third, it is used to periodize history much less frequently in the ex-colonial world than in the metropolitan worlds of Europe and America.

The influence of the first world as colonizers has been tremendously large and deep, especially in Indonesian literature. Therefore, the standard of literature in the world mainly refers to the European and American literature, such as Canon literature.

Said in *No Small World* argues that "no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to [Orientalism] called [Occidentalism]" (Carroll, 1996: 34) What should be remembered is every literary work has its own discourse. These discourses are against the generalization of standard.

To make an anthology of world literature an editor must be aware of this paradox. Editors have to think critically about the word "representation" because it tends to be matched with the spirit of Western. For that reason,

Occidentalism could be equal to Orientalism since identity is important. Editors of world literature play a significant role in making the equal standard. They need to generate specific idea and question deal with the representation of their text. The standard of world literature would be based on the meticulousness of the editors in choosing the literary works.

Conclusion

Goethe's statement of national literature at the beginning of this article is relevant with the phenomenon itself. Goethe introduced the term Weltliterature (Carroll, 1996: vii) which is explained by Fritz Strich in *No Small World*, a scholar of German and Swiss Literature, as a link between national literature and the nations around the globe in order to have an ideal exchange of values. In other words, the form of world literature will be a compilation of great classics of various national literatures.

The position of Indonesian literature is as a part of world literature. Although, translation paradox has greatly becomes the major issue, yet the identity of ex-colonial world is irreplaceable. Thus, its significance lies in the contributions of Indonesian in postcolonial literature. The concept that the Western world should be the one who represent the subaltern can be overcome as long as the subaltern performs as the active speaker. If the subaltern remains silent then it means it allows the "representation" by the Western. It is possible for the subaltern to represent themselves by translating their own literature. It can be done properly by having self-consciousness and being sensitive towards its own history and culture.

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