

BOOK REVIEW: TRANSLATION CRITICISM ON THE INDONESIAN VERSION OF *THE ALCHEMIST* BY PAULO COELHO

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ABSTRAK

The Alchemist is one of Paulo Coelho's works. This novel has a different story from other fiction novels. The story is very inspiring about a shepherd who tries to realize the dream he believes in Egypt. *The Alchemist* has also many wise and meaningful words.

Book review that will be presented by the writer in this time is different from the other book reviews. The writer will criticize the translation process that has been done by the translator, Tanti Lemana, in the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*. The criticism discusses about the strengths and weaknesses of the translation process, such as; the translation method, the translation errors, the translator awareness of cultural context, and the unfamiliar terms. However, although this book review contains about the writer criticism, but the purpose is not to judge that the translation process done by the translator is good or even bad. The main purpose of this book is simply to know the influence of the translation process toward the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*.

Keywords: *The Indonesian version, The strength and weakness points, The translation process*

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

After I have read The Indonesian version novel of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, I am felt in love with this novel instantly and very amazed with the life of the characters in this book, especially Santiago, the main character. I think that there are many messages we can take from the story of this book. I decided to use this book as a material of making this review because this book has been translated into many other languages, such as English,

Arabic, French, etc. And then, I downloaded the English version of novel *The Alchemist* because this novel will be a reference of making book review. In this review, I will compare between the Indonesian version and the English version novel to see if there are translation errors made by the translator of this book.

1.2. The Objectives of Study

The purposes in writing this final project are to find the translation errors and to explain the strength and weakness

points contained in the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

1.3. The Author and the Book

Paulo Coelho was born on August 24, 1947, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Coelho attended Jesuit schools and was raised by devout Catholic parents. He determined early on that he wanted to be a writer but was discouraged by his parents, who saw no future in that profession in Brazil. In 1987, Coelho wrote a new book, *The Alchemist*, over the course of one two-week spurt of creativity. The allegorical novel was about an Andalusian shepherd boy who follows a mystical trek in which he learns to speak the "Language of the World" and thus receives his heart's desire. New translations followed, and soon *The Alchemist* became a worldwide phenomenon. The book had been sold out, by Coelho's count, roughly 35 million copies, and now it becomes the most translated book in the world by any living author. Since the publication of *The Alchemist*, Coelho has produced a new book at a rate of about one every two years. His 26 books have been sold out in more than 65 million copies in at least 59 languages (Bailey:2012:1)

CHAPTER 2 : SUMMARY OF *THE ALCHEMIST* BY PAULO COELHO

The Alchemist novel was begun by the story of a boy, Santiago, who decided to become a shepherd in Andalusia. When Santiago arrived at an abandoned church with an enormous sycamore, he fell asleep and had the same dream twice. However, he became curious and decided to go to a gypsy woman to interpret his dream. The gypsy woman told that Santiago's dream meant that he would get the hidden treasure in the Pyramids. After that, Santiago met an old man, he was the King of Salem. The old man also told that he would let Santiago know how to go to Egypt and gave Santiago two stones, Urim and Tumim.

However, it was a very long journey to Egypt. Santiago had lost all his money and just by chance he met a crystal merchant who was willing to employ him there until Santiago could get a lot of money to continue his journey to Egypt. When he continued his journey, he also met an English man who looked for The Alchemist, someone who could change stone to be gold.

One day, Santiago arrived at an Oasis and met a girl, Fatima, who finally became his true love. In the Oasis he also had an ability to read an *omen* (the sign) and then met The Alchemist, a man who the English man looked for. The Alchemist

promised to help Santiago if he would continue his journey to the Pyramid. In the journey to the Pyramid, *The Alchemist* taught Santiago many things and he had showed his ability to turn lead into gold.

Finally, Santiago arrived in the Pyramid and he knew that his treasure was not there. When some people who robbed his gold said that they also had a dream about treasure in under the sycamore tree, he realized that the treasure was there, the place where he used to rest as he became a shepherd and dreamed about his own treasure. Santiago thinks that actually he was close to his treasure, but he did not regret about his journey to the Pyramid because his journey had brought him to Fatima, the woman of the desert.

CHAPTER 3 : REVIEW AND TRANSLATION CRITICISM ON THE INDONESIAN VERSION OF *THE ALCHEMIST*

In making this review, I use the Indonesian and the English versions of *The Alchemist* and I will explain the strength and the weakness points of the translation process in the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. This novel tells about the story of a shepherd in his journey to search the treasure in the Pyramids of Egypt. Both in the Indonesian version and the English

versions equally consist of 1058 paragraphs, two chapters, and an epilogue.

Not only have similarities, but the English and Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* also have differences. The thicknesses of both books are different. The Indonesian version has 216 pages, but the English version has 88 pages. Then, there is difference in the title of the novel. In the English version is written "*The Alchemist*", but in the Indonesian version is written in two languages: "*The Alchemist*" and "*Sang Alkemis*". The other difference is also shown by the cover. On the back cover of the Indonesian version, there is a brief article that explains how special that novel is, but there is no article on the English version.

From the plot of those two novels, I think that the translator of Indonesian version used Communicative Translation method. It is because I have found some differences in the sentences of those two novels. However, it does not become a problem because the plot and the story are still similar.

3.1 The Strength points of The Indonesian Version of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

In the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho there is

information that the translator of the book is Tanti Lesmana. Although in this case I did not find complete profile of Tanti Lesmana, but I know that Tanti Lesmana also has translated the others *Paulo Coelho's* novels such as ; *Eleven Minutes* and *Seperti Sungai Yang Mengalir*, even Tanti Lesmana has also become the aditor of Paulo Coelho's work, *Brida*. I think that the result of the translation process by Tanti Lesmana is very interesting. The translator can translate from English into Indonesian version to be more interesting and easier to understand by the reader, but it does not change the content of story. It is because the translator, Tanti Lesmana already has had experience in translating the other famous novels.

3.1.1 Cover and Title of The Book

The first strength of the Indonesian version is shown by the cover of the book. Actually the cover of both books, Indonesia and English versions, have the same theme. The cover of those books are equally describe about the peaks of mountains and the roof of building looks like an ancient castle that can be seen from the above of the clouds. However, the interesting difference is the title written on the front cover of the Indonesian version. Perhaps some readers often do not pay attention to the importance of the novel title. However, when we look at the

Alchemist Paulo Coelho's work, the title in the English version is "The Alchemist". It is of course cannot be translated directly into Indonesian without considering the content of the novel.

I thinks that the title of this novel becomes one of the strength points of The Indonesian version because the translator had taken a very exact decision in choosing the word "*Sang Alkemist*" to be The Indonesian translation of "The Alchemist".

According to "*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*", the word "*Sang*" means the word that is used in front of the person name, animal, or object that is considered alive or glorified (2008:1220). So, it is of course appropriate to the content of the story because in the story of *The Alchemist* tells about the greatness of the character who can change something ordinary into extraordinary by using his spiritual power.

The translator can likely translate the word "*The Alchemist*" into "*Ahli Kimia*". However, when the reader can be more sensitive to the messages of the Title from the novel, the word "*Ahli Kimia*" describes that the story is about someone who works in the modern laboratory and does experiment with the chemicals. It can possibly make the reader who reads the title in the first time becoming unintersted to the book and thinks that the story of the

book is very boring. That is one of the strength points of the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*.

In addition, the other difference is also shown by the cover. On the back cover of the Indonesian version, there is a brief article that explains how special the novel is, but there is no article in the English version.

3.1.2 The Translation Method

In the previous paragraph, I have discussed that translation process of this novel by Tanti Lesmana is very interesting. It becomes one of the strength points of this novel because the translator herself can make the novel into Indonesian version which is easier to be understood by the reader.

According to Peter Newmark, in *A Textbook Of Translation*, one of the methods that can be performed by the translator in the translation process is *Communicative Translation* that attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such way to both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the reader (1988:45-46). Then, after I read the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, I think that the method used by the translator is Communicative Translation.

Tanti Lesmana as the translator of the book *The Alchemist*, had tried to

translate the book into Indonesian according with their original content and language. Moreover, she also has tried to alter the language slightly to make the Indonesian version does not look stiff to be read and can be accepted by readers.

The first example that can be shown is on page 5 (paragraph 43) of The English version while it is on page 18 (paragraph 43) of The Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

The English Version :

“People said that Gypsies spent their lives tricking other. It was also said that they had a pact with the devil, ...” (page 5)

The Indonesian Version :

“Kata orang, orang-orang Gipsi suka menipu. Konon mereka juga punya perjanjian dengan setan, ...”. (page 18)

The second example is in the paragraph 78 of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

The English Version :

“Meanwhile, the old man persisted in his attempt to strike up a conversation. He said that he was tired and thirsty, and asked if he might have a sip of the boy's wine. The boy offered his bottle, hoping that the old man would leave him alone” (page 8).

The Indonesian Version :

“Sementara itu si lelaki tua masih juga berusaha mengajak mengobrol. Katanya dia lelah dan haus, jadi bolehkan dia mencicipi sedikit anggur dari anak itu. Si anak menyodorkan botolnya, dan berharap laki-laki tua itu tidak mengusiknya lagi”. (page 25)

We should give attention to the underlined words. In the underlined words,

it does not become one of the errors in the translation process. I also understand that it does not mean that the translator did not interpret the words in line with the original context of the novel, but I consider that the translator did this translation process to make the reader becomes easier to understand the point of the sentence.

3.1.3 The Translator Awareness About Cultural Context

We, as the readers, are frequently not aware about the cultural context of the terms contained in the story of the book. The cultural context usually aims to show about culture and lifestyle from the place that is shown in the story.

One example of the cultural contexts in “*The Alchemist*” is “*Hookah*”. For the Arabian, a water pipe used to smoke tobacco through cold water is called “*Hookah*”. In the Indonesian culture, “*Hookah*” is more familiar as “*Shisha*” (Endah:2012:2). The translator awareness about the cultural context makes the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* becomes more special. I think that the translator did not translate the word “*Hookah*” as “*Shisha*” (of course more familiar to the Indonesian people) because the translator wants to keep the reader imagination about where the background of the story occurred.

The other example is the word “*Maktub*”. Actually, in the story of the novel has been explained that the word “*Maktub*” means “*Telah Tertulis*” (Coelho, 2012:77). For the Indonesian people, the phrase “*Telah Tertulis*” usually is often interpreted by the word “*Takdir*”. I think that Tanti Lesmana’s option to keep using the word “*Maktub*” for the Indonesian version book is very appropriate. It is because in the story of *The Alchemist*, the word “*Maktub*” is uttered by the Arabian character, he is the crystal merchant. Once again, I think that the translator purpose keeping using those two words is the translator wants the readers still feel their own imagination about the background of where the story was taken place.

3.2 Weakness Points of the Translation Process of *The Alchemist*

In the process of reading a book, of course we will find the strengths and weaknesses from that book. One of them exists in the translation process of the book that has been done by a translator. And Then, in this discussion I want to explain about the weakness points of the translation process of The Indonesian version.

3.2.1 The Difference in the Thickness of the Books

At the first time, we, as the readers sometimes are not aware that a

book which is translated into another language can be thicker because of additional pages. That also happened in The Indonesian version of Paulo Coelho's book, *The Alchemist*. I have compared between The Indonesian version and The English versions of *The Alchemist*. In the Indonesian version consists of 216 pages, but in the English version consists of 88 pages. There are several differences that cause the different numbers of the books' pages. The first difference is the font size that is used in those two books. In the English version is used *Times New Roman* (kind of font) and the font size is 9, but in the Indonesia version the font size is 12. The difference is also caused by the line spacing. The line spacing of the Indonesian version is 1, but the English version is 2.

In addition, the other reason that makes the different thickness is the word structure. The structure of the Indonesian words is sometimes longer than the structure of the English words. For example, we can see from the word "but", which is translated into Indonesian word as "Tapi" (or "Tetapi"). The second example is the word "Awaken" (consists of 6 letters) which is translated as "Membangunkan" (consists of 12 letters). There is also the word "Then" (consists of 4 letters) which is translated as

"Kemudian" (consists of 8 letters). Those examples above make us sometimes not aware about the thickness of the translated book that we have read.

3.2.2 Translation Error

I have read the novels, both Indonesian and English versions. I not only have read from the beginning until the end of the story, but I have also compared the two novels and found two translation errors that have been made by the translator. The first translation error can be seen on the page 3 in English version and page 13 in Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*.

In the English version, the sentence is written :

"... , after two years of walking the Andhalusian terrain, ...",

However, in Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* is written :

"setelah satu tahun menjelajahi kawasan Andhalusia, ...".

The word, "two years", when are translated into Bahasa Indonesian should be, "dua tahun", but the translator has translated it into, "satu tahun". Hence, it become one of *The Alchemist's* translation errors.

The second translation error that I found is on the page 19 (paragraph 48) of Indonesian version.

In the English version the sentence is written:

"You came so that you could learn about your dreams," said the old woman. "And dreams are the language of God. When he speaks in our language, I can interpret what he has said. But if he speaks in the language of the soul, it is only you who can understand. But, whichever it is, I'm going to charge you for the consultation." (page 6)

In the Indonesian version is written:

"Kau datang kemari karena ingin tahu arti mimpi – mimpimu itu," kata si perempuan tua. "mimpi-mimpi adalah bahasa Tuhan. Kalau Tuhan berbicara dalam bahasa kita, aku dapat menafsirkan apa yang dikatakan-Nya. Tapi bahasa apa pun yang Dia gunakan, aku akan minta bayaran untuk jasanya ini" (page 19)

From the last example above, the underlined sentence in English version is not translated and eliminated from the paragraph 48 of The Indonesian version . The sentence should not be eliminated because the sentence is one of the paragraphs arrangements.

3.2.3 The Absence of footnote

Besides, the two weaknesses above, there is one more weakness that the writer will explain. The third weakness is the absence of footnote as one way to explain the unfamiliar terms in the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*. The unfamiliar words are:

a. "Pohon Sycamore" (page 7)

"Pohon sycamore" is a kind of fig tree (from South Africa) that is similar to the leaves of mulberry plants and usually used as a shade

plant. For Christians, the sycamore tree is very popular of the Zacchaeus story, the midget tax officer who tried to climb the tree order to meet Jesus (Bayu Probo:2013:1-2).

b. "Sakristi" (page 7)

According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, the word "Sakristi" means the room in a church were Holly Mass held (2008:1205)

c. "Kumbang Scarab" (page 206).

"Kumbang Scarab" (eng: Scarab Beetle) is animal crawls around anywhere in Egypt. They are big and black with smooth shells and spiky legs. The scarab beetle is believed having magic powers. The beetle symbolizes creation, life, and rebirth (EgyptAbout:2012:1,4).

d. "Biara Coptic" (page 197)

"Biara Coptic" is the oldest monastery located in Mount Sinai that has a lot of ancient manuscripts. This monastery is also one valuable building in the Christian history that still stands for 1400 years under Muslim protection (Hendarin:2010:1-2).

There is also the name of the city that (also as the reader) still unfamiliar. The name of the city is "Salem". Salem city not only make me becomes curious,

but also *Santiago*, the main character of the story, who did not know where Salem was. According to Jewish tradition, Jerusalem was originally called Salem (Peace), and the King is Melchisedech. This tradition is confirmed by the cuneiform tablets discovered in 1888 at Tell Amarna, in Egypt (Catholic Encyclopedia:2013:1)

Besides explaining the unfamiliar terms in the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*, the footnote is one of the strategies that useful for few people who do not understand the meaning of the unfamiliar terms above. It is because that unfamiliar terms are the symbol of the religion, whereas in Indonesia itself consists of various tribes and religions that not all of them know about the meaning of the terms.

CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION

The Alchemist is one of the best Paulo Coelho's works. The novel told how difficult to realize the dream that someone believes. The story of the book has also a lot of wisdom that have full of meaning. Another strength of this book is about the translation method. The translator could make the novel into Indonesian version which is easier to be understand by the reader. The translator awareness of cultural context contained in this book is

also one of the strength of Paulo Coelho's work.

Besides the strength a point, this book also has weakness points that shown from the thickness difference in the book, the errors translation process, and the absence of footnote in the book. According my opinion I think that the thickness of the book is the one of the weakness point because sometimes the thicker book has a boring story. Translation errors in the translation process – should not happen because could make the contents of the story to be changed. The last weakness that also important is the absence of footnote as one way to explain or describe the unfamiliar terms contained in the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist*.

However, the main purpose of this review is to find out translation errors made by the translator. I also have tried to criticize about the translation process but not to judge that the translation process done by the writer is bad. Although there are some errors in the translation process, but the Indonesian version of *The Alchemist* is still interesting. It is because the translator, Tanti Lesmana, has used the appropriate methods in her translation process.

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