

CLIENT'S POINT OF VIEWS AND TRANSLATORS' DECISION MAKING

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to make a critique to a chapter in Samuelsson-Brown's (2010) A Practical Guide for Translators. The focus is on communication with clients for successful translation negotiations and decisions need to be fairly made. Following clients' recommendations may result in intervening translators' professionalism and impartiality. The paper argued that balance should be maintained between considering the needs of the clients and maintaining fidelity and impartiality, including ethics and morality aspects that often intertwined with the text.

Keywords: translation, ethics, clients' viewpoints

ABSTRAK

Artikel bertujuan untuk membuat suatu kritik terhadap bab dalam buku Samuelsson-Brown (2010), A Practical Guide for Translators (2010). Fokus tulisan adalah pada komunikasi dengan klien dalam keberhasilan negosiasi penerjemahan dan keputusan yang harus dibuat. Rekomendasi klien dapat menyebabkan campur tangan profesionalisme dan ketidakberpihakan penerjemah. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa keseimbangan harus dipertahankan antara mempertimbangkan kebutuhan klien dan mempertahankan ketepatan dan ketidakberpihakan termasuk aspek etika dan moralitas yang sering berjalanan dengan teks.

Kata kunci: terjemahan, etika, sudut pandang klien

INTRODUCTION

Samuelsson-Brown (2010) offers a systematic and efficient guideline on translation as a profession. It contains a chapter entitled 'The client's view point', which starts with a broad view that every translator values their profession as respectable and deemed for highly quality (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:35). Whether a translator does their service individually or as part of a translation agency, the service they provide is heartfelt as well as philosophically important. It is because, as Samuelsson-Brown expresses every translator would try "*to add value to an original document*" (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:35). It is from this point that the strategies and issues discussed in this chapter are worth discussing.

This article will arrange the discussions in three parts, following the logic of problem, solution and further implication. Each of the part follows the sections in Samuelsson-Brown's (2010) chapter, which are: 'The service provider and the uninformed buyer', 'Is price any guide to quality' and lastly 'Communication with the translation service provider', following the general section in this paper mentioning the layout of the book chapter. This paper will initiate new issue to discuss ethics and morality, in which arguing Samuelsson-Brown (2010) needs to incorporate in his later edition of this practical guide.

METHOD

This study applies Library research from several literatures as main and supporting references which are consulted to investigate the topic. The steps taken were to examine the main reference by Samuelsson-Brown (2010), focusing on the main question on communication with clients. Then supporting and opposing views were considered to discuss the issue, taken from textbooks and journal articles. Finally, conclusion was made relating to the issue.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Overview

In Samuelsson-Brown's (2010) book, translators have been compared with highly esteemed professions such as medical practitioners and lawyers. In his comparisons, all of these professions have committed only to offer the best solutions for their clients, and the situations are often critical. For translators the critical point would be readers misunderstand the translated text and therefore causing unnecessary loss for the client. Similar to doctors and solicitors, miscommunication causing damaging effects could often be avoided.

In general this book chapter provides information on 'The client's viewpoint', and the discussion is divided into five sub-chapters, namely 'Who should you get to translate?', 'The service provider and the uninformed buyer', 'How to find a translation service provider', 'Is price any guide to quality?' and 'Communication with the translation service provider'. In all of the sub-chapters the writer tries to maintain brief and updated information that would be handy for translators. However, some information may be found irrelevant for Indonesian translators or readers, such as ISO 9001 certification in 'How to find a translation service provider' and the price-guide in 'Is price any guide to quality?' Therefore, it is only relevant to discuss the other three sub-chapters in details.

Some misconceptions: The service provider and the uninformed buyer

I agree with the author of this book's argument that communicating with clients begins as early as when a client contacted a translator for a service (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:41). Samuelsson-Brown (2010) illustrates that the communication may be about the type of the (source) text, the kind of translation service expected as well as other domestic issues (deadline, format, address, fee, etc) (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:40). Following the initial communication, the client and translator would then agree at some point and thus began the translation process. During the translating process communication will still be continued between translator and client, especially when there is the need to clarify some information. It is indicated in the book that when there is problem in finding equivalence or when there is rejecting from the client, further communication should be taken (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:40, *The translation handling process flowchart*).

Meanwhile, Tosi (2013) reveals the most important process in translation, which is to deliver meaning. This involves the creation of meaning, which often may be influenced by "direct line of communication" (Tosi, 2013:11) between the owner of the texts (or the author) and the translator. In most cases, this direct communication would ease the process of "interpretation and negotiation of meaning" (Tosi, 2013:12).

Baker (2011) wonderfully displays and discusses various 'exit strategies' for this kind of problem making her book an important orientation program for any translator who wish to provide consistent high quality translations. It takes an example in her book about a problem with finding the equivalence for the phrase "to go out in the rain" in Indonesian language. This is because Indonesian language has *kehujanan* and *hujan-hujan* (Baker, 2011:7). The former gives the implication of someone being caught in the rain or one who went out without realizing that it was raining outside and then got wet. The latter provides readers with the situation that the person, having fully aware that it was raining outside, went out anyway and got wet. A careful translator may want to be sure which semantic equivalence is intended by the text and with this contacted the client or even the author to have confirmation. It is important because the word *kehujanan* have different implications with *hujan-hujan*, the first creates an unfortunate feeling while the second indicates the person was actually in a state of acquiring childlike pleasure.

Baker (2011) further highlights the importance of communication with client, especially when no morphemes or expressions are available as equivalences. The word *arruação* (Baker, 2011:7) in Brazilian language cannot be translated into another language in English, and therefore needs to be described instead. This decision will be difficult to make if the translator was oriented with specific requirement, such as word-count limitation. The translator will need to communicate this problem to the client and negotiate a solution.

The absence of real examples and problems in Samuelsson-Brown (2010)'s book is one of the limitations found. It can be understood because the book is intended to briefly guide for someone wanting start a translation agency or committing to be professional translation. Therefore, this particular chapter in about the view of the client is written in a more helicopter-view style. However, reading the chapter as a translator in need to sharpen skills, it is found that this chapter lacks in realities, making it dry and abstract.

Interestingly, communication is essential to detect misconceptions held by clients toward translation process. Samuelsson-Brown has listed at least 5 potential assumptions believed by clients, which are: (a) a translator works on his own and needs no support from the client; (b) a translated text if, say, 5000 words can be produced overnight and costs no more than £20; (c) the client has already attempted a translation, or have asked a member of staff to do so; the client then requests that you 'just have a look at the text and tidy it up'; (d) if you have a computer, it can do the translation for you and your charges should be lower; (e) the client makes the bold statement, 'I only need a rough translation,

you needn't spend too much time on it' (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:36). The writer believes assumptions (b)-(e) are more about the economical point of views from the client and therefore believe that when assumption (a) is cleared, (b)-(e) will no longer exist.

In his book, Samuelsson-Brown (2010) does not elaborate more on how the assumption “*a translator works on his own and needs no support from the client*” could arise. This is rather odd since he was comparing the profession with medical or legal profession, arguing that it needs to have ‘the same standing’ as the previous two (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:156). My understanding when reading his list of assumption, having understood that the writer collects the information from real translators’ comments and experiences, is that a client may visualize a translator as a copy-machine or may see translation process as similar to one they find in *Google Translate* which with a click of a button they will get a number of sentences which looks like a translation. I would say that this assumption arise not solely of negligence but also because there is very little communication (perhaps from the translators themselves) about what translation is and how the process is carried out to the public or people in general.

Again, because of the lack of communication from the profession, people create assumption of what a profession is about. It is also because there are still different schools of translation, one who believes that translation is a life-created experience and ones who became translators are simply rare, as mentioned by Baker (2011:3): “*The ability to translate is a gift: you either have it or you do not.*” The second school believes that one can pursue a career as a translator, having right and comprehensive knowledge about the profession, receiving the right orientation and internship opportunities before committing themselves as full-time translators. The arguments continue because the later may look as if being translator is an instant process and you only need a certificate to prove credentials of the translators. The fact is far from this, the course one take will give them the necessary foundation while the credentials will need to be proven with their translation portfolio. It is never simple but it is also not impossible to build a career as translators.

More communication will help to clear this misconception. This is by way of providing constant good translation products and to maintain trust from the clients. Baker (2011) beautifully explains these by thorough discussions on examples in every level of translation difficulties and dilemmas, providing database for similar difficulties faced by translators on-the-job.

These kinds of guideline are not provided by Samuelsson-Brown (2010). On the contrary, Samuelsson-Brown (2010) focuses more on more industrial-corporate point of view. Additionally, the guideline is mainly focusing on business dilemmas rather than translation-related-process issues, and on this I will discuss in the last part of this review.

On the role of a translator, Samuelsson-Brown (2010) moves on to say that although to prove one is a good translator may take time, a translator “... *need to ensure that the potential client understands that translation is a skilled and demanding profession*” (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:36). When a doctor is never suspected as a simple profession or a lawyer an easy job to do, translators may have to explain to their potential clients that the process is serious and will need necessary support from the client. This should not be wrongly judged as translators’ inability or lacking of skills. The communication is needed in order to have a form of agreement from the client for the solutions or prospective equivalence provided by the translator. Therefore, as the client demands the translation’s quality to be nonnegotiable, translators need to make sure that the deliveries are as expected.

When translators and clients are ready to communicate, they need to make sure the communication closes effectively. In order to reach effective communication, translator must be aware that there are potential problems arising from gaps of expectations and other existing issues. And from this point I wish to discuss the possible gaps created by miscommunication and possible ways to overcome them.

Issues and solutions to miscommunication: Is price any guide to quality

This issue is initiated in the sub-chapter ‘Is price any guide to quality’. I want to argue that this sub-chapter does not expect readers to be translators. The catch-phrase is intended to inform a client on how to make a reasonable demand to a translator. I think this is a good way to attract attention but I want to argue that the answer is not that helpful.

In short the answer to the initiated question is “No, price is not a guide to quality”, however translation agency may cost slightly more than an independent one. Swiftly, Samuelsson-Brown (2010:40) moves to discuss the translation handling process, which exemplifies communication between client and translator, from recording details on how the translation needs to be carried out, what the client requests in specific or what the client has instructed, checking the results by means of filling or noting it in the order form, another communication done by project manager (using the record of request from client), and finally communicate the final translation to the client (and get their approval).

What Samuelsson-Brown (2010) intends to say is to direct readers to fully understand the intricacies in a translation process. And by doing this, hopefully, clients will value translation process and translated piece better. I say this is a strong part in this book, where different mentioning and discussion of the careful and heartfelt process done in translation is to be valued fairly by client. Upon reading this book, and particularly this chapter, I believe potential clients or public readers will have new perspective on how valuable translation job is and hopefully are willing to pay with good amount of money.

‘Communication with the translation service provider’

In this sub-chapter, Samuelsson-Brown (2010:40) reminds every translator that “*the essence of communication is clarity of expression and correct understanding of the message*” meaning that communication needs to be kept simple and straightforward, focusing on what to be solved and negotiated, and aiming to get results. He also reminds translators to “*communicate in the right language and people will understand*” (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:40), remembering that the clients may still be occupied with the misconceptions and therefore translators need to speak within the conceptions and the limited knowledge of the hearer. The whole process of communication is aimed at solving the problems arising in the quality delivery, or the quality gaps as follows: (a) the gap between what the client expects and the project manager’s understanding of what the client wants; (b) gap between project manager’s perception and what the client wants and the actual specification for the translation; (c) gap between client specification and how client views the deliveries; (d) gap between client’s experience and external communication to the client (advertisement promise not delivered); (e) Gap between client’s expectation and experience (experience is determined by the product supplied to client) (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:40).

Gap (a), (b) and (d) arise in a translation agency and the context is not really suitable to Indonesia as there are not many, if any, middle-size translation agencies that has operational manager, customer relation officer, and commercials or ads in the news. In fact, these gaps are going to be treated as Management Commitment in ISO 9001 audit and such cases are not gaps worth discussing in this Chapter review paper. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that when translation can be considered as cultural and literary practice, of then these gaps do not arise on independent factors. It has been displayed that five gaps displayed by Samuelsson-Brown are business or administrative-related. In reality, there are more factors, such as culture, linguistic, literary, politics, education as well as other commercial interest that may be intertwined in the text (Venuti, 2004). Many of the problems in communicating these implicit messages often deal with ethical and moral considerations.

Ethics and morality: Beyond office communication

I think the last sub-chapter is the strongest section in Samuelsson-Brown (2010) third chapter. It encompasses the fundamental value of the translation as the communicated piece. Naturally, such strong statement and ought to be elaborated as well as given examples to. For me as a translator a guideline needs to speak to me in ways that steps to take during the hardship of communication. I would appreciate more if Samuelsson-Brown (2010) had shared one of his experiences that inspired him to write these statements.

I also believe that communication needs to consider the needs of both parties: the translator and the client. Samuelsson-Brown (2010) discusses these needs as business related, while Baker (2011) takes a more humanistic and political stance: ethics and morality. Samuelsson-Brown's (2010) third chapter does not discuss this in details or does not provide enough elaboration on this part, which I think he should have done. Below is my argument to that.

In the previous discussion of this critique paper, communication has been discussed as to clarify the client's intentions and the shortcomings of the source texts. Its initial intention was to avoid miscommunication and to mend the diverted perception on translation process. All of these motives give communication as important element in ensuring the success of translation process and mechanics.

In contrast to Samuelsson-Brown's (2010) book, more comprehensive view on the role of translation is proposed by Baker (2011), by saying that ethics and morality are the intricate yet vital roles of translation process. As translators, communicating their service and process may often being undermined and neglected because of the pervasive stereotypes that translation process can be easily replaced by word-processing application or with any available translation tools (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010 and Baker, 2011). However, Baker (2011) implies that through translation new realities can be introduced, believing that any 'reality', referring to any relative state of being or condition, "*cannot be assumed to exist independently of language*" (Baker (2011:7). Therefore, translation may change the course of world- peace by delivering messages that could create negative sentiments. Translated texts may also inform people that there is no future for war, knowing the adversities and casualties it brings. By this communication in translation, or communicating with clients, has very important role in making sure the message delivered is as intended and for a good cause. The latter may need more judgment and this is where the notion of ethics and morality come into the discussion of translation.

In Baker (2011) ethics is being described in two distinctive poles of the argument, one focuses on what is supposedly done and the other on what is good. The first one, what is supposedly done, or from deontological perspective, suggests what is ethical with what a translator, being a professional, should do within their capabilities and areas of duties, saying for example that to be neutral is the professional way of a translator (Baker, 2011:276). The later, focusing more on the good impacts of the ethical decision, takes the teleological perspective, as the book describes to be neutral means that as translators they should not include personal inclination, for example by condemning same-sex marriage when there is no such nuances in the source text.

Ethics and morality become intertwined in this sense, which is to do what is right for the good cause. Therefore to illustrate that point, as much as it is professionally done, a manual for euthanasia should not be translated. And being condoned for rejecting such material, a translator would then communicate this decision with the clients.

With this notion, communication with clients opens a new dimension, from a mechanical process in translation to a social control mechanism. This way translator is expected to keep professionalism in the highest level while participating actively in wider political and social change.

I think it is important for Samuelsson-Brown (2010) to include richer and ‘thicker’ contents such as ethics and morality in his guide book. This will add more values to the guideline, while maintaining its practicality. After all, it is a guidebook and not a checklist.

CONCLUSION

I agree to most part of the third chapter, ‘The client’s viewpoint’, by Samuelsson-Brown (2010) and agree to his single argument that “*the essence of communication is clarity of expression and correct understanding of the message*” (Samuelsson-Brown, 2010:41). I can understand that in general discussions in this particular chapter is kept short and simple, as commonly what a practical guide is. I also enjoy his flow of thinking, which is structured and business-like.

However, some critiques I need to address to this reading, one of which is that this chapter focuses more on information suitable for translation agencies and not translators as professional individuals. There are also issues (such as trouble-shooting to miscommunication and or ethics and morality dilemma in communication) that are either mentioned but not thoroughly discussed and illustrated or not mentioned at all. I also include my personal opinion that this guide is mostly suitable for American and European contexts but not for Indonesian or other Asian contexts.

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