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## **Live subtitling at *Wayang Kulit* performances -One of the study cases at translating performing arts -\***

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*Wayang Kulit Theatre is one of the Indonesian performing arts. Javanese Wayang Kulit shadow puppets performance is conducted in Javanese, one of Indonesian regional languages. There was a yearly event called Hari Wayang Dunia (World Wayang Day) at Indonesian Arts Institute Surakarta. In 2016 and 2018, multi-languages-translation was done at those events. The author also joined this multi-languages-translation above as a Japanese language translator. This paper gives a study case of translating performing arts from a view of Anthropology-based researcher. This paper is devoted to the study of translating performing arts as well as suggestions for further studies.*

**Keywords:** live subtitling, performing arts, *Wayang Kulit*

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### **Introduction**

There are various performing arts in the world. Sometimes subtitling is done during a performance. At some *Wayang Kulit* shadow puppetry performances, live subtitling is available as well. Several studies proved some study cases of live subtitling and translation. One such example is Takabe (2013) and Mitsufuji (2002). A pioneer of Javanese *Wayang Kulit* live subtitling is Emerson (2016). However, when it comes to studies cases live subtitling at *Wayang Kulit* performances, little study has been done except Emerson.

*Wayang Puppet* performances are directed by puppeteer called a *dalang*. Sometimes, they are also called as "Integrated performing arts" It consists of (1) performing arts (2) music (3) literature (4) creativity, and (5) philosophy and education (SENAWANGI, 1999, p. 6). These three factors are affecting each other, and can't be divided. There are many sorts of puppets. In ancient times, *Wayang Kulit* performances in Java and Bali are dedicated to the gods. It was performed on occasions of weddings, birthday celebrations, or circumcision in Islamic religion (Sastroamidjojo, 1982, p. 157-163). However, along with modernization, the popularity of *Wayang* became less interested due to other options of leisure like radio, TV, video games, internet. To be preserved, *Wayang Puppet Theatre* was designated as one of the Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of

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Humanity by UNESCO in 2003. Then in 2008, inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In this paper, the author focus on Javanese Wayang Kulit. It is held in Javanese language. Javanese is one of the dialects in Indonesia, but Javanese in Wayang Kulit performances are too old to be understood for most of the local people. They say it's not Javanese but Wayang language (in Indonesian “*bahasa Wayang*” or in Javanese, “*basa pewayangnan*”). Gradually local people became less interested in Wayang Kulit performances. That's why Wayang Kulit is designated as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. To be more attractive to younger generations, translation into the daily Indonesian language can be one of the solutions. Moreover, translation into foreign languages can introduce Wayang all over the world.

**Hari Wayang Dunia at ISI Surakarta**

Wayang Kulit was designated as one of the Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO as one sort of Wayang Puppet Theater on 7th November 2003. However, no memorial event was held until 2015. Thus, Indonesian Art Institute Surakarta (in Indonesian, Institute Seni Indonesia Surakarta, or frequently abbreviated to ISI Solo) decided to settled 7th November as “Hari Wayang Dunia” which means “World Puppet Day”, in English, and hold an event yearly. (Institute Seni Indonesia Surakarta 2015: 3). In 2018, 7th November officially setted as “Hari Wayang Nasional (National Wayang Day)”.

***Live subtitling at HWD***

The first live subtitling was done at HWD in 2016, and the second time was in 2018. In 2018, the live subtitling was done in seven languages such as English, Indonesian, French, Arabic, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Franz Pöchhacker describes some definitions of translation in *Introducing Interpreting Studies* (Pöchhacker., 2016). According to Pöchhacker, the live subtitling at HWD is classified as simultaneous, one way, relay-style, and written translation. Also, Pöchhacker mentions definitions of interpretation, and the word “interpreting” may be suitable for this Wayang Kulit live subtitling. However, Dr. Kathryn Anne Emerson, who has done this kind of live subtitling for the first time, prefers to use the word “translation”. To show my respect to her, the author follows how to describe these activities at HWD as “translation”.

Wayang Kulit performances are held in Special Javanese. Only an English translator and an Indonesian translator can understand narrations spoken by a *dalang* puppeteer. Thus an English and an Indonesian translator listen to what the *dalang* narrated and type the translation with their laptops either in English and Indonesian immediately. The translations are projected on a screen beside a stage. Other language translators type translations in their languages reading English or Indonesian translation. Other language translations are also projected on a screen beside the stage. These translations are live-streamed on YouTube as well as the performances. ISI Surakarta has its own shooting and broadcasting team called ISI TV, and these live streaming were also conducted by ISI TV.

### **Three features of the Japanese language**

Through these live subtitling experiences, the author found threefold differences between English, Javanese, and Japanese : (1) Three Characters in Japanese; (2) word order; (3) honorific expression, or in other words, speech levels of respect.

#### ***Three Characters in Japanese writing system***

Javanese and English are written in alphabet now. On the other hand, the Japanese language is written in three characters, such as *Kanji*, *katakana*, and *hiragana*. The Kanji character sometimes called as Chinese character for they are originally came from China in the third century A.D..The most basic one is hiragana. Foreign words are written in katakana. To make sentences easier to be read, some words should be written in Kanji.

While a Japanese translator types the translation, two kinds of character conversions were done at typing. One conversion is from hiragana to katakana. Names of characters or country should be written in katakana because these are foreign words. Thus, every time a name of character/country is told during a performance, a Japanese translator has to convert the name from hiragana to katakana. The other conversion is from hiragana to Kanji. Some Kanji have the same pronunciation but different meanings, so a translator should be careful not to choose the wrong one.

#### ***Word order***

The sentence structure in English and Indonesian are similar. They both start with a subject, then directly followed by a verb, after that, an object emerges. On the other hand, in Japanese, after a subject emerges, an object follows first, then a verb comes. Furthermore, sometimes subjects or objects are omitted. If a Japanese translator does live subtitling from English or Indonesian, he/she has to wait until an object emerges, or divide it into two sentences. A Japanese translator has to decide immediately whether divide the sentence into two or not because the show must go on.

#### ***Speech levels of respect***

Both Javanese and Japanese have similar speech levels of respect. There are five speech levels depend on the relation between a speaker and a listener. Based on the author's research from 2013 to 2019, *Krama Inggil* is used to show the highest respect to a listener, like a king, a prince, and other royal family members. The second highest speech level is *Krama*. *Krama* is used at conversations between ordinary citizens but to show enough respect. For example, when a speaker and a receiver first met. The third highest one is *Madya*. *Madya* is a more casual speech level and shows not only politeness but friendliness. According to Ishii (1983), *Madya* level has a few words. It is usually used at a market, or between a bicycle taxi driver and a customer. *Ngoko Alus* is more casual than *Madya*. And the lowest level is *Ngoko*. As it is pointed out by Ishii (1983), *Ngoko* is used when parents speak to their child, or from a teacher to a student. By the author's research, *Ngoko* is also used between close friends. Sometimes it is heard even from a child to his/her parents. If speech levels are different, either is words themselves, and higher speech level tends to be a long spell of the word. Japanese language has a similar tendency to Javanese. However, Japanese language also tends to omit the subject and/or object when the speech level becomes higher. Thus, when a Japanese translator

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translates high speech level sentences during a wayang kulit performane, he/she can save energy by omitting the subject and/or object.

**Other resources of live subtitling translation**

Besides the narration by a dalang puppeteer, there are resources of translation. They are not only from visually but also auditory. By visually, translators should distinguish puppets. Every character has a different personality and social position in the story. One can be a member of the royal family and always speaks so polite in the story. The other one can be stupid and always rude. In Japanese, ends of lines depend on their gender. A woman ends her lines in a different form from men's one.

By auditory, translators should be careful to the gamelan music played as background music. Javanese *Gamelan* is the traditional ensemble music in Java and also played at Wayang Kulit performances. Every piece refers to different meaning and atmosphere. Translators can know about the current scene from the music. For example, translators can know that the current scene about to fight, romantic, or full of sorrow.

**Solutions of live subtitling at Wayang Kulit performances**

During the live subtitling into Japanese, so many processes are done. As there are so many processes, the time lag getting longer. To solve these problems, there are some solutions.

***Kanji compounded words***

In Japanese, there are Kanji compounded words. Usually, they are shorter than Japanese origin ones. A Japanese language translator can type less by using Kanji compounded words. For example, if a servant replies to the command from his king, he would reply "I follow your will, Sir." A Japanese translator just types "gyoi". The word *gyoi* is one of Kanji compounded words, and means following the will of a higher status person, like king or queen. Only 6 typing is needed to show the word "gyoi" in Japanese Kanji on a screen –typing "g", "y", "o", "i" to write this word in hiragana, convert key to convert from hiragana to kanji, then enter key to settle the Kanji.

***The skills required to translators***

Of course, translators should keep brushing their skills. The skills required are (1) Javanese language skills, (2) Fast typing skills (3) Knowledge of gamelan background music (4) Knowledge of characters in stories.

**Conclusion**

The paper concludes that uniqueness of Japanese language sometimes causes difficulties on live subtitling process, especially these three points: (1) three characters such as hiragana, katakana, and Kanji; (2) word order; (3) Honorific expression, or in other words, speech levels of respect. To solve these difficulties, a Japanese translator is required these four skills: (1) Javanese language skills, (2) fast typing skills (3) knowledge of gamelan background music (4) knowledge of characters in stories. Of course, other language translators need to learn these four skills above.

As this paper is based on anthropology, a further study based on linguistic or

translation studies would be value to the field of translation of performing arts. One of the limitations of this study is that the author's English, Indonesian and Javanese language skills are not sufficient to achieve high-quality translation. There is no doubt that only two times experiences as a Japanese translator at Wayang Kulit performances are not enough to analyze. It is hoped that the findings that have been presented in this paper will contribute to a better understanding of live subtitling at performing arts, especially Javanese Wayang Kulit.

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