

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Statement of Problem

Literary translation is said to be **“a bridge between literature, customs, nations and peoples ”** (Seifert) and if the translator is not equipped with the tools of translation, the text will lose its literary quality as Seifert says that literary translation is recreation in another language and although it is not a primary creation a translator would have to try to be as faithful as the original to produce the effect intended by the writer.

One particular aspect of literary texts that may cause problems in the process of translation is the idiomatic expressions of a particular language and in this case, the *simpulan bahasa* of the Malay language. *Simpulan bahasa* are actually idioms and thus, share, to a certain extent, the same characteristics as English idioms. They consist of certain set of phrases the meaning of which cannot be figure out literally based on the individual words that make up the phrases as **“although they consist of group of words speakers use them as if they were lexical items ”** (Nielsen,1969:144).

In order to understand the uniqueness of the *simpulan bahasa* one has to understand the language and culture of the Malays as **“language is linked with all the other aspects of the human culture and language is not something**

***which can be studied independently of cultural reality***" (Malinowski, 1935 :xix) . Language reflects the culture of the speakers i.e. ***"the way of life they lead as well as their physical and social environment"*** (Asmah, 1987:112) .

The way of life of the Malays can be seen in the *simpulan bahasa* of the Malay language. *Simpulan bahasa* such as '*tidur ayam*' (sleep chicken) and '*kaki ayam*' (feet chicken) indicate that poultry farming was an important source of living for the Malays. '*Setahun padi*' (a year's paddy) and '*bunting padi*' (pregnant paddy) which refer to 'a novice' or somebody young' and 'a nice pair of legs' respectively show that paddy farming was an important source of economy for the traditional Malays. Their perception of animals that can be seen in the use of *simpulan bahasa* '*harimau berantai*' (tiger chained) which means 'a strong and brave person' and '*rezeki harimau*' (food tiger) which means 'to be very lucky' show that the Malays perceive the tiger in a positive manner. However, other animals like the buffalo, dogs and pigs are perceived negatively. This perception is seen in *simpulan bahasa* like '*anjing kurap*' (dog stray), '*kerbau penarik*' (buffalo pulled) and '*lintah darat*' (leech land). These expressions mean 'a poor and lowly person', 'a fool' and 'a person who takes advantage of others' respectively. Hence, the translation of *simpulan bahasa* involves not only the transference of meaning but also the transferring of the cultural patterns of the Malay language to English. Failure in translating the linguistic and cultural patterns of the Malay language may not bring about equivalent effects.

## 1.2 Objective of Study

In the most extreme form, the Sapir Whorf hypothesis leads to the view that communication between two people who do not share the same native language is impossible. Edwards Sapir says that,

***“the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached”***

(in Steiner,1975:91)

Although most linguists nowadays do not share his view completely, it is difficult to deny the language one speaks ***“focuses on elements of the outside world and creates abstract notions that other languages may leave either unnoticed or unconceptualized”*** (Schogt, 1992:194). Thus the question addressed in the present study here is whether the translation of Malay literary texts have succeeded in conveying not just the linguistic aspects, but also the cultural aspects and meaning of the *simpulan bahasa* found in these Malay texts. The main objective of this study is therefore, to analyse :

- i. the process and procedures that are followed in the translation of *simpulan bahasa* ,

- ii. the transfer of meaning in *simpulan bahasa* and
- iii. the form of the translated *simpulan bahasa*

As meaning should be held constant in translation, the study will determine if the intended meaning of the *simpulan bahasa* is conveyed in the Target Language (TL) translation. If meaning is transferred it will then be analyzed whether it is complete or partial transference . However, if meaning is not conveyed in the TL text, this study will identify the reasons for non-transference or untranslatability. At this stage one can assume that one of the reasons could be ambiguity of meaning as some of the concepts in Malay may not have English equivalents.

Finally it is hoped that from the findings of the study, an attempt can be made to highlight the difficulties faced in the translation of the *simpulan bahasa* which arise mainly from differences between the two cultures.

### 1.3 Data

The data for this study are gathered from the *simpulan bahasa* found in two of **A. Samad Said's** novels. They are '*Salina*' and '*Hujan Pagi*' which are translated as '*Salina*' and '*The Morning Post*' respectively. The former tells about the hardship of a Malay woman in the 1960's who was forced into prostitution as a result of the second world war. '*Hujan Pagi*' on the other hand is about a pre-

war journalist who could not accept and adapt to the changes in the world of journalism (newspaper) which had then become the governments channel for propaganda.

These two novels have been chosen as the subject of study, simply because the writer has used many *simpulan bahasa* in them.

The other reason is that most of the *simpulan bahasa* found in these novels are those that are commonly used by the present Malay society. *Simpulan bahasa* like 'makan suap', 'sedap hati' and 'kurang ajar' are used in daily conversations and writings. This is felt necessary as obsolete *simpulan bahasa* like 'kahwin durian' and 'kena emas' do not reflect contemporary Malay culture and worldview. Nowadays most Malays are involved in the commercial and industrial sector and as such do not have to depend on the profits made with each 'durian season' to get married. In fact, now, many Malay couples get married at the end of the year when they get their bonuses from their employers

#### 1.4 Methodology.

This study is based on library research. The focus of this study is on *simpulan bahasa* and this is a comparative study of idiomatic expressions in Malay and English. The processes involved are :

- i. the *simpulan bahasa* will be taken from two novels and the focus of this study is on two word *simpulan bahasa*. The identification of *simpulan bahasa* will be based on special collocations of two words which have a meaning as a whole but different from the meaning of the individual words. Reference will be made to confirm identification. The reference used are 'Abdullah Hussain: 1966. *Kamus Simpulan Bahasa*' and 'Zainal Abidin Saparwan: 1995. *Kamus Besar Utusan*'.
- ii. The *simpulan bahasa* will then be categorized based on Genzel's (1991) **categorization of idioms** and treated to Fraser's transformation of idioms. *Simpulan bahasa* can be categorized based on the associations made with the words in the phrases. For example, '*jauh hati*' (far liver) is categorized under 'anatomy or parts of the body'. The *simpulan bahasa* will then be placed in the '**Frozenness Hierarchy**' proposed by Fraser to determined whether they can be transformed without losing their idiomaticity.
- iii. Finally the *simpulan bahasa* will be treated to the translation procedures based on Newmark's (1981) translation of metaphors. The procedures are observed because *simpulan bahasa* are idioms and

idioms according to Larsen (1984) are '**dead**' metaphors while Newmark (1981) sees idioms as '**fossilized metaphors**'. The analysis will determine the translation procedures that are followed by the *simpulan bahasa* and whether the procedure followed is successful in transferring the meaning from Malay to English.

## 1.5 Definition of Terms

Below are some of the terms used and their explanations:

- i. **Culture** - customs, beliefs, values and all other products of human thought of a particular society at a particular time; a manifestation of everything that a person acquires through learning and socialization.
- ii. **Cultural meaning** - the meaning people of a given culture give to things and concepts from their own perspective e.g. the word '*pig*' has a positive connotation among the Chinese but it has negative associations in Malay culture which is influenced by Islam. Therefore, a person interprets meaning from the perspective of his own culture.
- iii. **Equivalent effect** - variously referred to as the principle of similar or equivalent response; that is to produce as nearly as possible the same effect in the TL readers as is produced in the Source Language (SL)

readers. In this study effect will refer to the meaning intended by the writer which is connotative in nature and is culturally conditioned. For example the word 'dog' has a negative connotation in the Malay culture and a positive connotation in the English culture.

- iv. **Idiom** - Idioms are '**dead metaphors**' which are part of the idiomatic construction of the lexicon of a language. They are special collocations or fixed combinations which have a meaning as a whole but not the same as the meaning of the individual words. For example, 'kick the bucket' has nothing to do with the action of kicking the bucket, but the expression actually means 'to die'.
- v. **Linguistic meaning** - refers to the meaningful relationship which exists within a language which is basically grammatical and lexical. One aspect of the lexical meaning that is significant in this study is the figurative meaning.
- vi. **Malay** - the source language of this study
- vii. **Metaphor** - defined by the '*Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (1994: 2452) as a "trope (phrase) in which one thing is spoken of as if it were some other thing and is a ubiquitous feature of natural language" and Aristotle considers the ability to use metaphors well as a '*mark of genius*'. Metaphor provides expressions for experiences and concepts for which literal language seems insufficient.
- viii. **Meaning** - in this study is the figurative meaning of an expression which is meaning based on associative relations with primary sense



*simpulan bahasa*. *Simpulan bahasa* are fixed expressions with fixed expressions with fixed meanings and they are part of the lexicon of the Malay language.

- ix. *Simpulan bahasa* - refer to idioms in the Malay language e.g. '*ajak-ajak ayam*' or 'invite chicken. This expression literally means 'to invite the chicken' but the metaphorical meaning is 'an insincere invitation'.
- x. SL - source language i.e. the language of the original text which in this study is Malay.
- xi. TL - target language i.e. the language of the translation which in this study is English.
- xii. Translation - '*the replacement of a representation of a text in one language (SL) by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language (TL)*' (Bell, 1991:6).

## 1.6 Limitations of Study

Some of the limitations faced in this study are as follows:

- i. The data collected is based on those found in the translated novels of A. Samad Ismail only, and until the moment this study was undertaken, only two of his novels have been translated.

- ii. Only *simpulan bahasa* will be analysed as it is felt necessary to standardize the items. Thus the study of other idiomatic expressions such as proverbs will not be done.
- iii. As the study is limited to *simpulan bahasa* from two texts, there is a tendency for the same expression to be repeated or mentioned again. For example the *simpulan bahasa* 'makan hati' may be mentioned twelve (12) times in the two texts. However, it will still be analysed as part of the data as each may go through a different procedure.

Although the findings of this study will not necessarily show the current translation patterns or procedure in the translation of literary texts generally or *simpulan bahasa* particularly, it will shed some insights on the issue of equivalence and translatability in the translation of *simpulan bahasa*. As Nida says, **"underlying all the complications of translation is the fundamental fact that languages differ radically one from the other. In fact so different are they that some linguists say that one cannot communicate adequately in one language what has been said originally in another"** (1964 : 2).

Nevertheless most linguists and anthropologists have discovered the concept of **'language universals'**, that is **'some concepts are shared by all languages'** (Wardhaugh,1992:218). What remains of great difficulty is the **'question of levels'**. At what level of the structure of language can **'universals' be accurately located and described"** (Steiner,1975). The common experience of

mankind shows that *“translation is possible because the gospels or parts of the gospels have been translated into more than one thousand languages”* (Wierzbicka, 1992:7). The question then is not whether meaning can be transferred but to what extent it can be so transferred. Thus, it is hoped that the findings of this study will be able to show whether Malay and English share these universal concepts and if the meaning of the universal concepts can be transferred into the TL text. Finally this study will determine what are the concepts that cannot be transferred into the TL text.