

THIRD-CULTURE : IN TRANSLATION SEMIOTICS

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of "Third Culture" within the context of semiotic translation. The study delves into the intricate process of semiotic translation, which involves the interpretation and communication of meaning across various cultural and linguistic boundaries. Examines how Third Culture navigates this complex terrain. This research sheds light on the role and opportunities of Third culture in semiotic translation, emphasizing their ability to act as cultural mediators and facilitators of cross-cultural exchange. The method of study is qualitative-descriptive and was conducted in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia. This study involved 8 students—5 students from the third culture and 3 students from the non-third culture. The findings reveal the significance of cultural experiences in interpretation to achieve good translation for effective intercultural communication. The conclusion of this study shows that the role of third culture in translating semiotics is very important, and third culture has a great opportunity to produce good translations with clear meaning in translating semiotics.

Keywords: Third culture, translation semiotics, meaning

Introduction

The concept of Third Culture emerged in social science and cultural studies and refers to the results of interactions between two cultures of different origins, which give birth to a new culture that is a combination of the two. Ruth Hill Useem introduced this concept in the 1950s, and since then, it has become a relevant research topic in understanding how individuals and groups adapt to cross-cultural situations (Useem & Useem, 1967). Third Culture includes not only linguistic and communication aspects but also values, norms, and identity. Individuals living in a Third Culture often develop strong adaptation skills and a deep understanding of cultural differences, which can lead to creativity and openness towards cultural diversity. This, in turn, promotes cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly global and connected world (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Translation Semiotics is a scientific discipline that explores how we understand and interpret signs in culture and communication. In an increasingly connected and multicultural world, understanding semiotics is becoming crucial (Sebeok, 1994). Through this approach, we can absorb the meaning contained in language, symbols, gestures, and everyday actions. This introduction explores the basic concepts of semiotic translation, its role in analyzing hidden messages in signs, and how understanding semiotics can enrich our understanding of communication and culture (Eco, 1976).

In the field of social education, students from different cultural backgrounds come together in educational institutions, especially in higher education. These cultural differences often form an additional culture, known as the Third Culture. This creates opportunities for students and society to access various needed information. However, such opportunities do not guarantee success in every life competition they face. Third Culture individuals or groups face their own challenges, where their more tolerant perspectives influence their responses to various situations, sometimes not accepted by their surrounding community. This diversity requires them to be more sensitive to their environment to adapt and be well accepted (Rizvi, 2005).

In social life, language and culture are inseparable. Various studies on language, culture, and society reveal that sufficient awareness is needed to understand them, as they have practical purposes and inherent meanings (Hall, 1976). Communication creates social interaction, forming a culture based on meaning. In language education, students often engage with social and cultural topics, requiring sharp sensitivity to address various issues effectively. At the tertiary level, language education focuses on understanding the meaning of language to create harmony between individuals or groups globally. Translation, a critical subfield in language studies, bridges individuals and groups with different languages, facilitating good communication. Translators must transfer meaning effectively, a skill that Third Culture individuals, accustomed to sensitivity in meaning, excel in.

Language is the soul of life; it is also a sign. The formula for keeping life alive is meaning. Different interpretations of a language or sign can lead to different responses, potentially causing chaos and division, resulting in social disharmony (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, as social creatures, we must continue learning from each other through language to achieve mutual understanding. This understanding requires a bonded relationship, which is culture. Culture is the identity of a social group, built from mutual habits and agreements.

Third Culture individuals have enhanced abilities in analyzing language. They can navigate different social circles and provide deeper understanding due to their adaptive habits. Researchers focusing on Third Culture in semiotic translation aim to explore these opportunities. The research does not test the ability to translate words in poetry or novels but rather examines how Third Culture individuals contribute to semiotic translation and the meaning derived from it.

Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative study conducted from October 22 to 28, 2023. The independent variable of this research is the Third Culture, while the dependent variable is translation. This research involved Padang State University students who lived at Wisma Den Ciko, totaling 21 students in different semesters. The purposive sampling technique was used to determine the sample, and ultimately, 8 students were selected. These students were from various regions of origin, including 5 students from different areas and 3 students from Padang City, West Sumatra, Indonesia, where the research was conducted.

In collecting data, the instrument used by researchers was images as symbols. These symbols are commonly recognized and were taken from portraits of human actions. The symbol chosen by the researcher was a "fist," drawn by the researcher to ensure the instrument was effective, practical, and reliable. Researchers presented three fist symbols to the eight students and asked them to analyze, interpret, and convey the information or messages from the symbols as a part of the translation process. The resulting data was analyzed and narrated to draw conclusions.

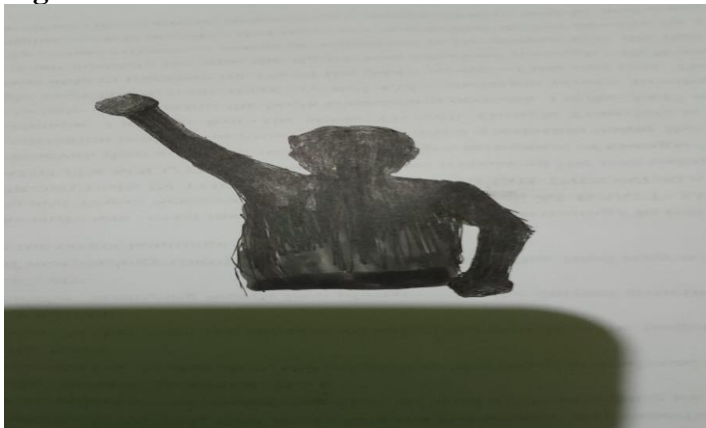
This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on understanding the interpretations and translation skills of Third Culture individuals. The purposive sampling technique ensures that the selected participants possess relevant characteristics that align with the study's objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). The use of images as symbols in data collection aligns with semiotic analysis methods, which are effective in interpreting cultural symbols and meanings (Chandler, 2017).

The choice of the "fist" symbol, a universally recognized gesture, allows for a broad range of interpretations, showcasing the participants' ability to translate and convey meanings across cultural contexts. This approach is grounded in the principles of visual semiotics, which emphasize the importance of visual representations in communication (Eco, 1976).

Data analysis involves thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the participants' interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is well-suited for qualitative research as it provides a systematic approach to analyzing textual data, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1



Translate by Third culture

1. The fist symbol indicates resistance and liberation from pressure or oppression.
2. The fist symbol is an enthusiastic invitation to achieve something agreed upon.
3. The fist symbol is a cry for struggle and enthusiasm for group strength.
4. The fist symbol is joy after achieving an achievement.
5. The symbol of the fist is resistance, freedom, strength, and victory.

Translate by Non-third culture

1. The symbol of the fist is victory.
2. The symbol of the fist is independence.
3. The fist symbol is a call for encouragement.

Figure 2

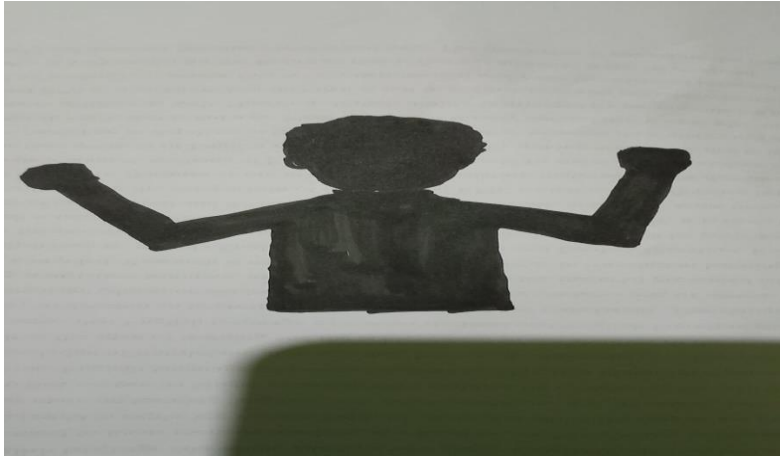
Translate by Third culture

1. The fist symbol represents suppressed anger.
2. The fist symbol is an expression of annoyance or disappointment.
3. The fist symbol is a feeling of defeat that is difficult to accept.
4. The fist symbol is a symbol of regretful self-destruction.
5. The fist symbol is an expression of restraint from anger.

Translate by Non-third culture

1. The symbol of the fist is holding back anger.
2. The symbol of the fist is disappointment and annoyance.
3. The symbol of the fist is holding back anger and annoyance.

Figure 3



Translate by Third culture

1. The symbol of the fist is enthusiasm and joy.
2. The symbol of the fist is joy.
3. The symbol of the fist is victory and freedom.
4. The fist symbol is success.
5. The fist symbol is victory.

Translate by Non-third culture

1. The symbol of the fist is victory.
2. The symbol of the fist is victory.
3. The symbol of the fist is enthusiasm and joy.

Figur 1

From the results above, we can see how Third Culture and non-Third Culture individuals translate the symbols from Figure 1. Translations of symbols by the Third Culture group tend to interpret the first symbol as resistance, struggle, freedom, and enthusiasm, indicating a process under pressure that needs resolution. Other translations include joy and a call to encouragement. In contrast, non-Third Culture individuals interpret the fist symbol as victory, independence, and a cry of enthusiasm.

At first glance, these interpretations are not significantly different from those of the Third Culture group. Both sets of translations relate to a battle or conflict. However, upon closer examination, distinct differences emerge. The Third Culture group emphasizes the "process" of a struggle or issue, as reflected in their translations such as resistance, freedom, strength, and a call to action. Meanwhile, the non-Third Culture group focuses on the "outcome" of a conflict, highlighting victory and independence. This indicates that their translations are dominated by an encouraging meaning, focusing on the resolution of the battle or matter at hand.

Figur 2

In Figure 2, the semiotic translation of the fist by Third Culture individuals is interpreted as an expression of suppressed anger, annoyance, or disappointment. It reflects feelings of defeat that are difficult to accept, regretful self-destruction, and the act of refraining from anger. The symbol in Figure 2 is

translated by Third Culture individuals as indicative of a person's dissatisfaction, leading them to restrain their response to unwanted emotions. Non-Third Culture individuals translate the symbol in Figure 2 similarly, interpreting it as holding back anger, disappointment, and annoyance. This translation also tends towards the meaning of dissatisfaction.

From the analysis of the two groups of translators interpreting the symbols in Figure 2, it appears that their translations convey the same underlying meanings.

Figur 3

Third Culture individuals translate the fist symbol from Figure 3 as representing enthusiasm, joy, victory, freedom, and success. Similarly, non-Third Culture individuals interpret the fist symbol in Figure 3 as victory, enthusiasm, and joy. In this instance, there are no significant differences in the meanings derived by the two groups of translators, with both interpreting the symbol as denoting victory or joy—an expected outcome for both parties.

From the descriptions of the results above, it is evident that general symbols commonly recognized by society, such as fists, are interpreted similarly by both Third Culture and non-Third Culture groups. These symbols convey emotions of valor and hope. However, Third Culture individuals demonstrate cultural differences through their heightened sensitivity in interpreting these symbols.

This distinction is particularly evident in the translation of Figure 1. The words chosen by Third Culture individuals to translate the image reflect a process-oriented perspective, in contrast to non-Third Culture individuals who focus on success. Although the concepts of process and success are related, they are not equivalent. Third Culture individuals use words that emphasize an ongoing process, highlighting their current experiences. This process-oriented perspective enhances their sensitivity in interpreting various symbols, including the fist symbol in Figure 1, which they translate as embodying a process.

In Figures 2 and 3, both Third Culture and non-Third Culture individuals provide translations with similar meanings. This consistency demonstrates that Third Culture individuals can align their interpretations with the culture they encounter, leveraging their knowledge and experiences.

These findings underscore the ability of Third Culture individuals to interpret the meaning of symbols beyond their common definitions. Their diverse experiences, especially across cultures, inform their translations, allowing them to derive deeper meanings. Thus far, Third Culture translators have not shown any failure in interpreting the symbols. Instead, they provide more nuanced meanings, enriched by their cross-cultural sensitivity.

Conclusion

The sensitivity shown by Third Culture translators leads to nuanced meanings, as they draw upon their diverse experiences and knowledge when translating symbols. Third Culture individuals naturally embrace diversity, interpreting it as a source of richness. They ensure their translations carry appropriate emotions, enhancing the meaning conveyed. Third Culture individuals exhibit strong and varied analytical skills in interpreting symbols, producing meanings that transcend cultural boundaries while remaining consistent with commonly understood societal awareness. This ability allows them to translate symbols in a way that incorporates emotions without being hindered by rigidity or excessive emotionality. They provide clear distinctions between processes and outcomes, enriching the recipients' understanding of the translations. Researchers recognize that translation semiotics presents a significant opportunity for Third

Culture individuals to excel in symbol translation. Their extensive experiences enable them to expand and refine meanings in semiotic translation, making them adept at conveying deeper, more nuanced interpretations.

Finally, researchers see that translation semiotics is a great opportunity for third cultures to be asked to translate symbols. Researchers also see that third cultures have a wealth of experience that can make them able to expand and sharpen meaning in translating semiotics.

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