The Translation of Similes in Andrea Hirata’s 
*The Rainbow Troops*

Wieka Barathayomi, M.Hum.
Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Serang, Banten
wieka.barathayomi@yahoo.com

Abstract

The aim of this research is to find out the translation strategies used by the translator to translate similes in Andre Hirata’s novel *Laskar Pelangi* from Indonesian into English. This research is descriptive qualitative. The data were taken from Andrea Hirata’s novel *Laskar Pelangi* and its translation *The Rainbow Troops*. The result of this research shows that there are several strategies used by the translator to translate similes which include: using simile of similar form and meaning, using simile of dissimilar form but similar meaning, and translate directly without using a simile.

**Keywords**: Translation Strategies, Simile, The Rainbow Troops

INTRODUCTION

Similes are common figures of speech found in many languages. These figures of speech are comparisons. For example, He ran *like* the wind, The moon is *as* heavy *as* an elephant, and I washed my clothes *white* *as* snow. In English, a simile always has the word *like* or *as*. In Indonesian, a simile always has the word *seperti*, *bagaikan*, *umpama*, *laksana*, etc (Zaimar, 2002: 48).

Not all similes are easily understood. If they translated literally, word-for-word, into a target language, they will often be completely misunderstood. Larson (1984: 250) stated that there are a number of reasons why similes are not easily to understand and cannot always be translated literally. First, the image used in the simile may be unknown in the target language. Second, sometimes it is a point of similarity that is implicit and hard to identify. When the point of similarity is not stated, it is often hard to interpret the simile. This makes it very difficult to interpret the simile in order to translate it. Third, the point of similarity may be understood differently in one culture than another. The same image may be used with different meanings. Translating literally a simile into a target language could lead to a very wrong meaning if the point of similarity is not made clear. Fourth, there is also the possibility that the target language does not make comparison of the type which occur in the source text simile.

To overcome the problem in translating similes, especially to avoid wrong, zero, or ambiguous meaning, the translator can apply translation strategies.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Similes

Simile is a figure of speech that expresses a resemblance between things of different kinds (usually formed with *like* or *as*). Knowles (2002: 8) stated that similes are very like metaphors, but there is one important difference: the comparison is explicit. That is, similes are introduced or signaled by words such as *like*, *as*, *compare*, *resemble*, and so on. To say that someone is a fox; to say that there are *like* a fox is to use a simile. There may appear to be little difference between the metaphor and the simile. A metaphor is literally impossible or untrue, and on the surface, metaphors are paradoxes or falsifications: after all, a person is a person and not a fox, however they behave. In contrast, a simile is literally possible or true, even if it is not especially appropriate or clear.

Larson (1984: 248) stated that not every comparison is a figure of speech. For example *John eats like his overweight brother* is a real comparison and is not figurative, but *John eats like a pig* is a simile. The first means that John overeats in the same way that his brother does. The second is based on some characteristic of a pig which is also a characteristic of John.

How to Analyse Similes

Similes are grammatical forms which represent two propositions in the semantic structure (Larson, 1984: 246). A proposition consists of a topic and the comment about that topic. For example, *John is tall* consists of the topic *John* and the comment *is tall*. When a simile occurs in the text, it can be very helpful to the translator to analyze it and find the two propositions which are the semantic structure behind the figure of speech. The relationship between the two propositions is one of comparison. The comparison comes in the comment part of the propositions. The comments are identical or there is some point of similarity.

A simile then has four parts: 1) **Topic**: the topic of the first proposition (nonfigurative), the thing really being talked about. 2) **Image**: the topic of the second proposition (figurative), what it is being compared with. 3) **Point of similarity**: found the comments of both of the propositions involved or the comment of the EVENT proposition which has the images as topic. And 4) **Nonfigurative equivalent**: when the proposition containing the topic is an EVENT proposition, the COMMENT is the nonfigurative equivalent.

To analyze similes, it is very helpful to write out the propositions which are basic to the comparison. The topic, image, point of similarity (found in the comments about the topic and the image), and the nonfigurative meaning (when the propositions are Event Propositions) should all be included. Only when these have been identified, can an adequate translation be made into a target language. The meaning in the source text must be discovered first.
For example in the sentence *the book is as heavy as an elephant*, the two propositions are: 1. the book is heavy and 2. the elephant is heavy. The topic is book, the image is elephant, and the point of similarity is heavy.

Another example in the sentence *John eats like a pig*, the two propositions are: 1. John eats too much, or fast, or sloppily and 2. a pig eats too much, or fast, or sloppily. The topic is John, the image is pig, and the point of similarity is too much, or fast, or sloppily.

**Translating Similes**

The aim of the translator is to avoid wrong, zero, or ambiguous meaning. A literal translation of a simile often leads to wrong meaning, no meaning at all, or sometimes simply ambiguous. Similes which are translated literally need to be checked out carefully to be sure that the right meaning is being communicated.

According to Larson (1984: 252) there are several strategies to translate similes:

1. The translator can keep the simile image or translate the simile by using simile of similar form and meaning. Similes are more easily understood in most languages and also, when the topic, image, and point of similarity are all included, there is little possibility of misunderstanding.
2. When a simile, as in number 1, is used there is more possibility of a misinterpretation, especially because the point of similarity is still missing. If the point of similarity is also added, there is the least possibility of misunderstanding.
3. The translator can substitute a different simile in the target language, one that carries the same meaning as the simile in the source language or translate the simile by using simile of dissimilar form but similar meaning. As long as the nonfigurative meaning of the simile is not lost, or distorted, a simile from the target language might well be substituted.
4. The translator can keep the simile of the source text, but it will be necessary to include the meaning so as not lose the intended force of the simile.
5. The translator can simply ignore the image in the source text. That is, the translator will simply translate the meaning directly without using a simile.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research is descriptive qualitative, it means that the researcher collected, classified and analyzed the data, and drew conclusion. The data were taken from two sources; source text and target text. The source text is a novel by Andrea Hirata *Laskar Pelangi*, published by Bentang Pustaka in 2005. The target text is the translation of *Laskar Pelangi* entitled The Rainbow Troops, translated by Angie Kilbane, published by Bentang Pustaka in 2009. The decision to take the novel as the source of data was that the novel is one of Indonesian Bestseller Novels that has been translated into several languages.
Laskar Pelangi or The Rainbow Troops is a novel by Andrea Hirata about a group of 10 schoolboys and their two inspirational teachers as they struggle with poverty and develop hopes for the future in Gantong Village on the farming and tin mining island of Belitung off the east coast of Sumatra.

This research was conducted by the following procedure: reading the source text and the target text, identifying the similes in the source text and its translation in the target text, analyzing the translation strategies used by the translator to translate similes, and drawing conclusion.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result of this research shows that there are several strategies used by the translator to translate similes in Andrea Hirata’s novel The Rainbow Troops, as can be explained in the examples below

Using simile of similar form and meaning

This strategy involves using a simile in the target text which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source text and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items.

Example 1

Source Text
Pak Harfan menceritakan … Ada semacam pengaruh yang lembut dan baik terpancar darinya. Ia mengesankan sebagai pria yang kenyang akan pahit getir perjuangan dan kesusahan hidup, berpengetahuan seluas samudra, bijak, berani mengambil risiko, dan menikmati daya tarik dalam mencari-cari bagaimana cara menjelaskan sesuatu agar setiap orang mengerti.

Target Text
Pak Harfan told … There was a gentle influence and goodness about him. His demeanor was that of a wise, brave man who had been through life’s bitter difficulties, had knowledge as vast as the ocean, was willing to take risks, and was genuinely interested in explaining things in ways that others could understand.

The data above shows that the simile in the source text was translated literally into the target text by using simile of similar form and meaning. The simile in the source text berpengetahuan seluas samudra has two propositions: berpengetahuan luas and samudra luas. The topic is pengetahuan (knowledge), the image is samudra (ocean), and the point of similarity is luas (vast). The comparison of knowledge to ocean is being made to emphasize how vast the knowledge is.

In the target text, the translator translated it literally by using simile of similar form and meaning into had knowledge as vast as the ocean. The simile in
the target text has two propositions: the knowledge is vast and the ocean is vast. The topic is knowledge, the image is ocean, and the point of similarity is vast. The comparison of knowledge to the sea is being made to emphasize how vast the knowledge is.

Example 2

Source Text
... timah selalu mengikat material ikutan, yakni harta karun tak ternilai yang melimpah ruah: granit, zirkonium, silika, senotim, monazite, ilmenit, siderit, hematit, clay, emas, galena, tembaga, kaolin, kuarsa, dan topas .... Semuanya berlapis-lapis, meluap-luap, beribu-ribu ton di bawah rumah-rumah panggung kami. ... bahkan kami memiliki sumber tenaga nuklir: uranium yang kaya raya. Semua ini sangat kontradiktif dengan kemiskinan turun temurun penduduk asli Melayu Belitong yang hidup berserakan di atasnya. Kami seperti sekawanan tikus yang paceklik di lumbung padi.

Target Text
... tin is always accompanied by other materials: clay, xenotime, zirconium, gold, silver, topaz, galena, copper, quartz, silica, granite, monazite, ilmenite, siderite, and hematite. We even had uranium. Layers of riches stirred below the stilted houses where we lived our deprived lives. We, the natives of Belitong, were like a pack of starving rats in a barn full of rice.

The data above shows that the simile in the source text was translated literally into the target text by using simile of similar form and meaning. The simile in the source text kami seperti sekawanan tikus yang paceklik di lumbung padi has two propositions: kami paceklik and sekawanan tikus paceklik. The topic is kami (the natives of Belitong), the image is sekawanan tikus (a pack of rats), and the point of similarity is paceklik (poor). The comparison of the natives of Belitong to a pack of rats is being made to emphasize how poor the natives of Belitong are.

In the target text, the translator translated it literally by using simile of similar form and meaning into We, the natives of Belitong, were like a pack of starving rats in a barn full of rice. The simile has two propositions: the native of Belitong is poor and a pack of starving rats in a barn full of rice is poor. The topic is the natives of Belitong, the image is a pack of starving rats in a barn full of rice, and the point of similarity is poor. The comparison of the natives of Belitong to a pack of starving rats in a barn full of rice is being made to emphasize how poor the natives of Belitong are.

Using a simile of dissimilar form but similar meaning

This strategy involves using a different simile or use different lexical items in the target text which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source text.
Example 1

Source Text
Hanya beberapa jengkal di luar lingkaran tembok tersaji pemandangan kontras seperti langit dan bumi. ... Di sana, di luar lingkar tembok Gedong hidup komunitas Melayu Belitong yang jika belum punya enam anak belum berhenti beranak pinak. Mereka menyalahkan pemerintah karena tidak menyediakan hiburan yang memadai sehingga jika malam tiba mereka tak punya kegiatan lain selain membuat anak-anak itu.

Target Text
Just an arm’s length outside of those fortress walls spanned a strikingly contradictory sight, like a village chicken sitting next to a peacock. There lived the native Belitong-Malays, and if they didn’t have eight children, then they weren’t done trying. They blamed the government for not providing them with enough entertainment, so at night, they had nothing to do besides make children.

The data above shows that the simile in the source text was translated by using simile with dissimilar form but similar meaning into the target text. The simile in the source text pemandangan kontras seperti langit dan bumi has two propositions: pemandangan kontras and langit dan bumi kontras. The topic is pemandangan (the sight), the image is langit dan bumi (the sky and the earth), and the point of similarity is kontras (contradictory). The comparison of the sight to the sky and the earth is being made to emphasize how contradictory the sight is.

In the target text, the translator translated it by using simile with dissimilar form but similar meaning into contradictory sight, like a village chicken sitting next to a peacock. The simile in the target text has two propositions: the sight is contradictory and a village chicken sitting next to a peacock is contradictory. The topic is the sight, the image is a village chicken sitting next to a peacock, and the point of similarity is contradictory. The comparison of the sight to a village chicken sitting next to a peacock is being made to emphasize how contradictory the sight is.

Example 2

Source Text
Jika istirahat siang Sahara dan Harun duduk berdua di bawah pohon filicium. Mereka memiliki kaitan emosi yang unik, seperti persahabatan Tupai dan Kura-Kura. Harun dengan bersemangat menceritakan kucingnya yang berbelang tiga baru saja melahirkan tiga ekor anak yang semuanya berbelang tiga pada tanggal tiga kemarin.
Target Text

During afternoon recess, Sahara and Harun always sat together under the *filicium*. The two of them shared a unique emotional connection like the quirky friendship of the Mouse and the Elephant. Harun enthusiastically told a story about his three striped cat giving birth to three kittens, which also had three stripes, on the third day of the month.

The data above shows that the simile in the source text was translated by using simile with dissimilar form but similar meaning into the target text. The simile in the source text *Mereka memiliki kaitan emosi yang unik, seperti persahabatan Tupai dan Kura-Kura* has two propositions: *kaitan emosi unik* and *persahabatan Tupai dan Kura-Kura unik*. The topic is *kaitan emosi* (emotional connection), the image is *persahabatan Tupai dan Kura-Kura* (a friendship of the Squirrel and the Turtle), and the point of similarity is *unik* (unique). The comparison of emotional connection to a friendship of the Squirrel and the Turtle is being made to emphasize how unique the emotional connection is.

In the target text, the translator translated it by using simile with dissimilar form but similar meaning into *The two of them shared a unique emotional connection like the quirky friendship of the Mouse and the Elephant*. The simile in the target text has two propositions: the emotional connection is unique and the friendship of the Mouse and the Elephant is unique. The topic is the emotional connection, the image is the friendship of the Mouse and the Elephant, and the point of similarity is unique. The comparison of the emotional connection to a friendship of the Mouse and the Elephant is being made to emphasize how unique the emotional connection is.

Translate the meaning directly without using a simile

This strategy involves not using a simile in the target text but translate the meaning directly without using a simile. This strategy is used when a match simile cannot be found in the target language or it seems inappropriate to use simile in the target text because of differences in stylistic preference of the source language and the target language.

Example 1

Source Text

*DUDUK di pojok sana adalah Trapani. .... Si rapi jali ini adalah maskot kelas kami. Seorang perfeksisn berwajah seindah rembulan. Ia tipe pria yang langsung disukai wanita melalui sekali pandang.*

Target Text

*SITTING off in the corner was our prince, Trapani. ...., and he was our class mascot. He was a perfectionist with a most handsome face, the type of boy girls fell in love with at first sight.*
The data above shows that the translator translated the meaning directly without using a simile. The simile in the source text berwajah seindah rembulan has two propositions: wajah indah and rembulan indah. The topic is wajah (face), the image is rembulan (moon), and the point of similarity is indah (beautiful/handsome). The comparison of the face to the moon is being made to emphasize how beautiful/handsome the face is. In the target text, the translator translated the meaning directly without using a simile into with a most handsome face.

Example 2

Source Text
Ayahnya, yang seperti orang Bushman itu, sekarang menganggap keputusan menyekolahkan Lintang adalah keputusan yang tepat, paling tidak ia senang melihat semangat anaknya menggelegak. Ia berharap suatu waktu di masa depan nanti Lintang mampu menyekolahkan lima orang adik adiknya yang lahir setahun sekali sehingga berderet-deret rapat seperti pagar, dan lebih dari itu ia berharap Lintang dapat mengeluarkan mereka dari lingkaran kemiskinan yang telah lama mengikat mereka hingga sulit bernapas.

Target Text
His father now thought of the decision to send Lintang to school as the right one. If nothing else, he was happy to see his son’s bubbling enthusiasm. He hoped that one day Lintang could send his five younger siblings—each born one year after the other—to school and also free them from the cycle of poverty. So, as hard as he could, he supported Lintang’s education in his own way, to the best of his ability.

The data above shows that the translator translated the meaning directly without using a simile. The simile in the source text lima orang adik adiknya yang lahir setahun sekali sehingga berderet-deret rapat seperti pagar has two propositions: lima orang adik and pagar rapat. The topic is lima orang adik (five younger siblings), the image is pagar (fence), and the point of similarity is rapat (tight or close). The comparison of five younger siblings to a fence is being made to emphasize how close the birth spacing of the five younger siblings is. In the target text, the translator translated the meaning directly without using a simile into his five younger siblings—each born one year after the other.

CONCLUSION

Similes are common figures of speech found in many languages. These figures of speech are comparisons. Similes are introduced or signaled by words such as like, as, compare, resemble, and so on. Not all similes are easily understood. It is very helpful in analyzing simile to write out the propositions which are basic to the comparison. The topic, image, point of similarity, and the nonfigurative meaning should all be included. Only when these have been identified, can an adequate translation be made into a target language.
If similes translated literally, word-for-word, into a target language, they will often be completely misunderstood. To overcome the problem in translating similes, especially to avoid wrong, zero, or ambiguous meaning, the translator may apply translation strategies. There are three main strategies used by the translator to translate similes in Andrea Hirata’s novel The Rainbow Troops, which are: using simile of similar form and meaning, using simile of dissimilar form but similar meaning, and translate directly without using a simile.

REFERENCES