
An Analysis of the Effect of Translation Techniques on the Quality of Assertive Speech Using Impoliteness Theory in “The Silkworm” and “The Cuckoo's Calling” Novels

*Yoyok Sabar Waluyo*¹

*Ratna Widya Iswara*²

¹ Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia.

² Corresponding author, Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia;

ratna.widya.iswara@tik.pnj.ac.id

Received: 5 June 2024

Accepted: 22 July 2024

Published: 24 July

Abstract

The study of translation has been widely discussed and used as a research topic in the last decade, and this research contributes to that body of work. This study focuses on two detective novels, "The Silkworm" and "The Cuckoo's Calling.". The research focuses on utterances in the form of stating, and mentioning, which are referred to as assertive utterances to express impoliteness. Building on Searle's expansion of Austin's speech act theory, which categorizes speech acts into assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative, this study analyzes assertive speech acts in both English and their translations, using Jonathan Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory. Data were collected by purposive sampling method and analyzed by content analysis. A focus group discussion (FGD) involving translation experts, raters, and supervisors with extensive experience in translation was conducted to identify translation techniques based on Molina & Albir's framework and to evaluate the translation quality of assertive speech acts representing impoliteness, using the assessment model proposed by Nababan et al. (2010) The descriptive-qualitative method was used to explain the research data and describe the analysis. The data found that the translation technique could have a significant effect on the quality of the translation.

Keywords: Assertiveness, communicative interaction, impoliteness, speech act, stored intent



To cite this article: Waluyo, Y. S., & Iswara, R. W. (2024). An analysis of the effect of translation techniques on the quality of assertive speech using impoliteness theory in “The Silkworm” and “The Cuckoo's Calling” novels. *SALEE: Study of Applied Linguistics and English Education*, 5(2), 524-534. <https://doi.org/10.35961/salee.v5i2.1478>

DOI: 10.35961/salee.v5i2.1478

1. Introduction

Linguistics has developed rapidly along with science and technology. In the last few decades, pragmatics, which is a branch of modern linguistics, has become a subject of study that has attracted the attention of scientists and researchers. This is possible because the types and models of the fields studied within the scope of pragmatics are included as part of stylistics (Burke, 2014; Black, 2006). Pragmatics also bridges the gap between language and its users by focusing on the context-dependent aspects of meaning (Huang, 2007). This interdisciplinary nature allows for collaboration with other fields. Even as a separate science, pragmatics can be used as a tool to research the fields of history, ethnography, discourse, philosophy, and methodology (Norrick, 2011). Pragmatics, which focuses more on the science or activity of communication interaction, focuses on the problems of reference and deixis, speech acts, and implicature (Cruse, 2000; Bloomer, 2005), presupposition and definite-indefiniteness (Horn, 2006; Levinson, 1983). This is very understandable because pragmatics is a study of language in context (Black, 2006) which emphasizes the meaning of signs and markers in communication interactions based on the context. Every utterance produced in a communication interaction must be meaningful according to its context.

Due to the context, several different factors, such as differences in cultural, social, and knowledge backgrounds (Hobjila, 2012) a communication interaction does not always run smoothly; it might contain deviations or violations. Whether they realize it or not, interlocutors in a communication interaction may do face threatening acts or words against them (Aydınoglu, 2013). If this is the case, then the activity is in line with what Culpeper calls impoliteness, in which impoliteness is said to be a communication strategy designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony (Culpeper, 2011).

Investigative, interrogative, and even intimidating utterances or speech acts in a communication often occur because the individuals involved have goals or interests that do not align, leading to potential conflicts or confrontations, called as conflicting interests. Due to the nature of its interests, speakers in general will make utterances that are commanding, threatening and the like, referred to as directive speech acts (Liu, 2011; Hiani, 2015), which in Impoliteness Theory is often expressed as impolite speech. "The Silkworm" and "The Cuckoo's Calling" are suitable for studying impolite speech because the novels feature a wide range of characters from different social backgrounds, often engaging in intense and

confrontational dialogues. In addition, as detective novels, they involve interrogations, investigations, and confrontations, which are scenarios where impolite speech is likely to occur.

Thus, this study has the objective to examine different forms of speech, specifically assertiveness, characterized by patterns such as stating and mentioning. It aims to determine whether these assertive patterns can also convey impoliteness. This will be achieved by analyzing the translation of assertive speech acts in the novel, examining the translation techniques used, and assessing the quality of the translation. Some notes on the concepts or theories that underlie the research are presented as follows.

1.1. Impoliteness speech acts

Interest or intent, intention, in communication interaction activities, is not only in the form of delivering messages, but also in the context of establishing social relationships (Jary, 2016). Normatively, common in society, this means establishing harmony between the interlocutors. However, the fact that there are differences in socio-cultural backgrounds and interests, disharmony often occurs, with the emergence of utterances intended to attack the face of the interlocutor. So once again, impoliteness is done to attack the face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony (Culpeper, 2011). Attacking the face is certainly not accidental. Attacking the face is clearly intended to suppress, drop, dominate, so that the speech partner submits to the speaker. Therefore, impoliteness was not merely a failed politeness (Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003); it can be clearly observed in the specific utterances used during communication interactions.

The occurrence of impoliteness in communication interactions (Beqo, 2015) often occurs both in verbal and non-verbal forms (Limberg, 2009). Impoliteness in communication is suspected from two points of view: from the speaker's point of view, it is called giving/causing offence, and from the partner's side it is called taking offense (Haugh, 2015; Ferenčík, 2017). This impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives the behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2) (Culpeper, Haugh, & Kadar, 2017). The interpretation of impoliteness can be seen from both sides: the speaker and the speech partner. As a strategy, Culpeper et al. (2017) divides impoliteness into bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, off record impoliteness, and withhold politeness. And one more strategy, namely sarcasm or mock politeness, is separated into its own part, which is called the impoliteness meta-strategy. Those strategies can be seen from five indicators in the form of linguistic markers called vocatives, personal negative evaluations, dismissals, silencers, and threats (Beqo, 2015; Culpeper, 2011).

Impoliteness as a communication interaction strategy appears in the form of speech. This utterance is then referred to as a speech act. Getting meaning in a speech act activity can be

obtained by paying attention to the meaning of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (Witek, 2015; Herman, 2015). Searle (1976) divided illocutionary acts into 5 (five) types of meaning, namely assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative, while according to Austin (1962) consists of representative, directive, commissive, expressive and performative. There is an opinion that explains that this classification, according to Austin and Searle, has different terms but has the same meaning and purpose, namely assertive with representative, and declarative with performative (Djarmika, 2016). In the five types of utterances, it is suspected that impoliteness can be seen. This study tries to explore the possibility that assertive speech acts can be used for the purpose of impoliteness. Assertive speech acts are statements that convey information, beliefs, or descriptions about the world, expressing the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition. As for example the sentence "The book is on the table". It aims to inform the listener and assert the speaker's perspective or knowledge about a particular situation.

1.2. Techniques and quality of translation

Cross-cultural communication provides such a wide space and place for the study of translation. Through various media and objects, the study of translation has grown rapidly since the 20th century (Cheung, 2013). The fact that the different values, norms, tastes, and intentions in each language are different causes the role of translation as one of the solutions to be unavoidable. What then happened was that understanding cross-cultural and social backgrounds became the main capital in carrying out translation activities. This is recognized in various studies on translation of how culture plays an important role. Culture has such a great influence on the process and results of translation (Akbari, 2013; Wang, 2013). This is in order to maintain the similarity of intent and meaning from the source language to the target language (Washbourne, 2016).

The equivalence of the meaning from the source language into the target language is an important key so that it is said to find the authenticity of a translation (Wilss, 2016). For this reason, finding meaning is based on not only the text, but also the context, and understanding the intent and purpose of the translation is carried out (Xia, 2015). To deliver and make it easier to obtain this, mastery of translation techniques is necessary. Various translation techniques have been proposed by scholars in the field of translation. Among the existing translation techniques, the translation technique proposed by Molina & Albir is the choice to be used due to its comprehensive nature and types, by proposing 18 types of techniques, namely adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalence, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, variation, (Molina & Albir, 2002). The use of translation techniques will lead to the degree of equivalence of the message meaning from the source language into the target language.

In determining the quality of translation requires a theory known as Translation Quality Assessment (TQA). Various kinds of TQA are delivered by experts, but in general the results given are in the form of state or qualitative nature which is difficult to measure in number of degrees. To get an assessment of translation quality by giving or showing a degree of equivalence, the translation quality assessment model offered by (Nababan, 2004; Nababan, 2010) can be used as a reference. This model places three assessment instruments on the quality of the translation results. The three instruments include an instrument for assessing the level of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Each instrument has a weighted value indicated by various points as its parameters. Each instrument consists of three categories with a weighted value from 3 to 1. At the level of accuracy raters, there is accurate with a weighted value of 3, less accurate with a value of 2, and inaccurate with a weighted value of 1. 3, less acceptable with a value of 2, and not acceptable with a value of 1. Finally, on the readability level, there is a high readability level with a weight of 3, a moderate readability level with a value of 2 and a low readability level with a value of 1. By using this model, data will be obtained more measurable assessment results, indicated by numbers, so that a translation result can be categorized or seen by the degree or equivalence level of the translation results to the source text.

2. Methodology

The research was designed to investigate the translation of assertive speech acts expressing impoliteness in two novels: "The Silkworm" and "The Cuckoo's Calling," written by Robert Galbraith and translated by Gramedia Translator Team. The research was conducted by collecting data on purposive sampling, focusing on assertive speech acts that state impoliteness. Specific passages and dialogues from both novels were selected based on their relevance to the study's topic. Furthermore, the collected data underwent content analysis.

After being detected and analysed by the researcher, the identified speech acts were then discussed in a focus group discussion (FGD) which included experienced raters and experts in the field of translation, one professor of translation studies, and two translation practitioners. The FGD identified the translation techniques used to translate assertive speech acts that express impoliteness by referring to translation techniques (Molina & Albir, 2002). The FGD also determined the value of the translation quality by referring to the assessment model offered (Nababan, 2004; 2010). The results of the FGD are assertive speech act data stating impoliteness with the translation technique used and their translation quality results. The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method, presenting the findings in a detailed and descriptive manner. In the analysis, it will be explained about the translation technique and the translation quality as well as the influence of the use of the technique on the quality of the resulting translation. The relationship between translation techniques and translation quality was explored to draw conclusions that aligned with the research objectives.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are in the form of translation techniques used to translate assertive speech acts that state impoliteness and the quality of the translation results. Furthermore, the relationship between the two is described by explaining the effect of the technique on the quality of the translation. Both of these will be presented in this section as follows.

3.1. Translation techniques

In this section, we will explain the translation technique used in both novels. In translation studies, translation techniques are often interpreted as steps or procedures for carrying out translation activities (Molina & Albir, 2002). This procedure is taken by adjusting the data in the form of the source language text to obtain the closest meaning in the target language. The closer the meaning of the translation results, the better the quality of the translation. The assertive speech acts were then categorized into four impoliteness strategies and translation techniques as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Translation techniques in each impoliteness strategy

Types of Speech Acts	Impoliteness Strategy	Translation Technique	Number
Assertive	Bald on Record	Established equivalent	51
		Variation	48
		Modulation	17
	Positive	Established equivalent	7
		Modulation	3
		Implication	2
	Negative	Established equivalent	48
		Variation	41
		Modulation	18
	Off Record	Established equivalent	5
		Variation	5

The table shows the types of assertive speech acts followed by the types of impoliteness strategies and translation techniques used and the number of times the techniques were used. It shows that impoliteness as a communication strategy occurs 245 times in the novels, including Bald on Record, Positive, Negative, and Off Record. The translation technique of established equivalent is the most widely used technique in translating assertive speech acts that are intended to be impolite. The technique is used by using and or choosing words that are found commonly in dictionaries, daily conversations, so that the target language readers do not feel foreign (Molina & Albir, 2002).

The *Silkworm* and *The Cuckoo's Calling* are detective novels about a private investigator named Cormoran Strike. In *The Cuckoo's Calling*, Strike investigates the apparent suicide of a famous model, uncovering dark secrets within the celebrity world. In *The Silkworm*, Strike tries to solve a murder case of a controversial writer. Both novels are rich with intense

interrogations, confrontations, and interactions marked by conflicting interests and social tensions. In Bald on Record for example, characters often use direct and unmitigated speech, especially during high-stakes confrontations. In Positive Impoliteness, characters may attack the listener's need for positive face, using insults or undermining their self-esteem. Meanwhile in Negative Impoliteness, characters impose on others' autonomy, using threats or blunt commands.

3.2. Translation quality

This section provides information about the quality of the translation between the two novels in the data found.

Table 2. Translation quality

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	Translation Quality (Value/Score)		
		Accurate	Accepted	Readable
“That looks heavy.” “ My ball cock’s gone, ” she told him fiercely. (pg.62)	“Sepertinya berat.” “ Bola klosetku rusak, ” jawabnya kasar. (hlm.80)	3	3	3

Those in bold are assertive utterances that express impoliteness. By choosing and using words that are commonly used, the target reader understands the meaning of the message to be conveyed by the speaker in the communication interaction in the story. This causes the quality of the translation results to have a maximum value weight, which is 3. This means that the use of the usual equivalent translation technique in the speech act data which states impoliteness above gives the translation results in the category of accurate, acceptable, and high readability.

Furthermore, variation translation techniques are often used as findings in this study. This variation technique is used by changing or giving choices to the linguistic elements of several variations of words contained in the target language, such as changing by referring to social dialects, styles, and so on (Molina & Albir, 2002). An example of the use of this variation technique can be seen in Table 3.

In the source language text, there is a second person pronoun "you." While in the target language, it has variations to provide equivalent meanings or meanings for the second person pronouns contained in the source language, namely 'kamu,' 'Anda,' or 'Paduka.' In the example in the table above, the second person pronoun 'Anda' is used to express that the interlocutor is a foreigner, or a person who is already known, but due to a problem, the speaker is not accepted, so it is intended to insult or mock the interlocutor. The use of the variation technique for the second person pronoun "you" in the source language text with the

second person pronoun 'Anda' in the target language gives the same implication to the meaning of the message in the utterance. In this technique, it can be seen in the table that the quality of the translation results is in the category of accurate, acceptable and high readability which is indicated by the weight of the value obtained is 3.

Table 3. Translation quality

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	Translation Quality (Value/Score)		
		Accurate	Accepted	Readable
" You're not friendly with anyone at Roper Chard?" (pg.157)	"Anda tidak kenal seorang pun di Roper Chard?" (hlm.190)	3	3	3

The next translation technique that is often used and can be used as an example to explain the relationship between technique and translation quality is the modulation translation technique. Modulation technique is a strategy or technique for translating by changing the point of view, focus, or category of knowledge from the source language into the target language (Molina & Albir, 2002). These changes can be made in the lexical or syntactical specs. To illustrate the use of this translation technique, see the following example:

Table 4. Translation quality

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	Translation Quality (Value/Score)		
		Accurate	Accepted	Readable
Wardle laughed. " You didn't save my fucking life, mate. " "Got some information you might be interested in. Thought we could do an exchange." (pg.37)	Wardle tertawa. " Aku tidak berutang nyawaku, Bung. " "Ada informasi yang mungkin menarik bagimu. Kupikir kita bisa barter." (hlm.59)	3	2	3

Sentences in bold are utterances that are intended to be impolite. The pattern of utterances in the source language uses an active sentence pattern. By using a modulation translation technique which changes the point of view or perspective, the source language active sentence pattern is changed to a passive sentence pattern, which changes the status of the subject and object in the sentence. In the source language the subject of the sentence is "you," the second personal pronoun, while translated using the modulation technique, the subject of the sentence changes to "Aku," the first personal pronoun.

3.3. Effect of technique on translation quality

Taking into what has been described in the previous section, it can be drawn an illustration that translation techniques have a role in delivering good quality translation results, which means they are in the category of accurate, accepted, and high level of readability. So that an understanding of procedures or strategies in translation activities will provide significantly good translation results (Fereydouni & Karimnia, 2016). Understanding the procedure or strategy, which is stated in this study as a technique, including mastery of the smallest linguistic unit, namely words and or phrases, in the source and target language texts, is an important thing that needs to be considered in order to achieve the equivalence of the message meaning (Molina & Albir, 2002). They say that to do this we need translation techniques (2002), when explaining the equivalence of meaning between the source language and the target language in translation activities.

The above can be explained by providing examples of the use of techniques and the quality of the translation results. This can be seen in the example described in the previous section that the source language contains the sentence "You didn't save my fucking life, mate." This sentence is an active sentence. By using the modulation technique, the sentence structure or pattern is changed into passive sentences in the target language, which is 'Aku tidak berutang nyawaku, Bung.' By changing the sentence pattern, from active to active, the translation results provide a better impact. This is not only in the meaning of the message, but also has implications for the meaning of the context which shows impoliteness. Although the acceptability rating instrument is in the less acceptable category, other instruments have quality in the accurate category and high readability level. In the instrument of assessing the level of acceptance, which is in the less acceptable category, it tends to understand unusual meanings in the speech of the target language.

Another thing will be unacceptable and unreadable, the quality of the translation will be worse, if the translation technique used is the established equivalent or something else. For example, with an established equivalent, the result of the translation has an active sentence pattern as well, being 'kamu tidak menyelamatkan nyawaku, Bung.' In the instrument for assessing the level of accuracy, it will have a high value, syntactically, there are no violations or deviations in the target language. However, the instrument for assessing the level of acceptance is in the unacceptable category with the meaning of the message conveyed in the sentence. Likewise, the instrument for assessing the level of readability will be in the unreadable category because the target language reader needs to think about capturing the message in the sentence.

Looking at the case examples above, it becomes evident that the translation techniques employed in translating the text could potentially impact the quality of the resulting translation. The text and the context of the message contained in it are important in translation activities. Understanding the message according to the text and context needs to

be considered in choosing and determining the translation technique to be used. The accuracy of the selection and use of translation techniques will lead to the translation results being of good quality, in other words being in the category of accurate, acceptable, and high readability.

4. Conclusion

This research is a translation study. This study found several translation techniques used in translating assertive speech acts to express or mean impoliteness. The translation quality of assertive speech acts to express impoliteness is in the category of accurate, acceptable, and high level of readability. This result also obtained an understanding that assertive speech acts can be used to express impoliteness or are meant to be impolite. Each translation technique is used to obtain translation results that have the equivalence of the meaning of the message between the source language and the target language. So, it is undeniable that translation techniques have implications for the quality of the resulting translation. Further research can be done by examining the comparison of the use of several types of speech acts intended for impoliteness.

References

- Akbari, M. (2013). The role of culture in translation. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 13 - 21.
- Aydinoğlu, N. (2013). Politeness and impoliteness strategies: an analysis of gender differences in GERALD L. HORTON'S plays. *PROCEDIA: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 473 - 482.
- Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Beqo, A. (2015). Impoliteness in: "A 14-Year-Old Groom" by Andon Z. Çajupi. *Social and Natural Sciences Journal*.
- Black, E. (2006). *Pragmatic Stylistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bloomer, A. P. (2005). *Introducing Language in Use: A Coursebook*. London: Routledge.
- Burke, M. (2014). *Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Cheung, A. (2013). A history of twentieth century translation theory and its application for bible translation. *Journal of Translation*, 1 - 15.
- Cruse, D. A. (2000). *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J., Bousfield, D., & Wichmann, A. (2003). Impoliteness revisited: with special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1545–1579.

- Culpeper, J., Haugh, M., & Kadar, D. Z. (2017). *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistics (Im)politeness*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Djatmika. (2016). *Mengenal Pragmatik Yuk!?* Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Ferenčik, M. (2017). I'm not Charlie: (Im)politeness evaluations of the Charlie Hebdo attack in an internet discussion forum. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 54 - 71.
- Fereydouni, S., & Karimnia, A. (2016). Process-oriented Translation Studies: A Case Study Based on Lorsch's Model. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(1), 102 - 110. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1750.7/tpls.0601.14>
- Haugh, M. (2015). Impoliteness and Taking Offence in Initial Interactions. *Pragmatics*, 36 - 42.
- Herman. (2015). Illocutionary Acts Analysis of Chinese in Pematangsiantar. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 41 - 48.
- Hobjila, A. (2012). Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness in Didactic Communication – Landmarks in Teaching Methodology. *PROCEDIA: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 213 - 221.
- Horn, L. R. (2006). *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Victoria: Blackwell.
- Huang, Y. (2007). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jary, M. (2016). Rethinking explicit utterance content. *Pragmatics*, 24 - 37.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Limberg, H. (2009). Impoliteness and threat responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1376 - 1394.
- Liu, S. (2011). An experimental study of the classification and recognition of Chinese speech acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1801 - 1817.
- Molina, L., & Albir, A. H. (2002). Translation techniques revisited: A dynamic and functionalist approach. *META: Journal Des Traducteurs*, 47(4), 498 - 512.
- Nababan, M. (2004). Strategi Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan. *Jurnal Linguistik Bahasa*.
- Nababan, M. (2010). Pengembangan Model Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan. *Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia*.
- Norrick, W. B. (2011). *Foundations of Pragmatics*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co.
- Wang, L. (2013). Cultural functions in the translation of metaphor. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 530 - 535.
- Washbourne, K. (2016). Nonlinear Narratives: Paths of Indirect and Relay Translation. *Erudite Meta*, 607 - 625.
- Wilss, W. (2016). Translation Studies: The State of the Art. *Erudite Meta*, 777 - 785.
- Witek, M. (2015). An interactional account of illocutionary practice. *Language Science*, 43 - 55.
- Xia, X. (2015). Meaning in context and nature of translation. *Theory and Practices in Language Studies*, 652 - 656.