



Translating Indonesian to English: Problems and Solutions Experienced by English Education Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges faced by students in translating Indonesian to English, focusing on students from the English Education Department at IAIN Langsa who had enrolled in the Scientific Translation course. A descriptive qualitative methodology was employed, with five students as the participants. Data were collected through documentation analysis and interviews. The research reveals four key problems in translation, including achieving equivalent meaning, determining particular terminology, dealing with idiomatic expression, and addressing mechanical errors especially punctuation. The study also explored potential solutions and strategies that students could employ to improve their translation skills such as consulting bilingual dictionary, using translation machines (google translate and DeepL), and discussing with friends and lecturer. The findings provide valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by translation students and suggest areas for further improvement in translation training within the English Department.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki tantangan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam menerjemahkan bahasa Indonesia ke bahasa Inggris, dengan fokus pada mahasiswa Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di IAIN Langsa yang telah mengikuti mata kuliah Scientific Translation. Metodologi kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, dengan lima mahasiswa sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumentasi dan wawancara. Penelitian ini menemukan empat masalah utama dalam penerjemahan, yaitu menemukan kesepadanan makna, menentukan istilah yang tepat, ketepatan penerjemahan ekspresi idiomatik, dan kesalahan mekanis yang dilakukan terutama penggunaan tanda baca. Penelitian ini juga mengeksplorasi solusi dan strategi potensial yang dapat digunakan oleh siswa untuk meningkatkan keterampilan penerjemahan mereka seperti penggunaan kamus dwibahasa, mesin penerjemahan (google translate dan DeepL), dan diskusi dengan teman dan dosen. Temuan-temuan ini memberikan wawasan yang berharga

mengenai tantangan-tantangan khusus yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa penerjemahan dan menyarankan area-area yang dapat ditingkatkan lebih lanjut dalam pelatihan penerjemahan di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris.

Introduction

Translation is not just the task of translating words from one language to another; It is knowledge of both languages and awareness of the cultural context of the native language and the target language. Olteanu (2020) said that translation is not just a linguistic operation but a complex act of communication involving cultural mediation. These difficulties are even more significant in translating Indonesian texts into English, as certain linguistic traits and cultural derivatives are a different kind of challenge (Venuti, 2021).

The rich variety of dialects and cultural imprints embedded within the Indonesian language are typical problems for the translator. Differences in grammatical construction, syntactic structures, or idiomatic cultural practices would involve serious charges against the translation. For example, although Indonesian, like English, generally requires a subject-verb-object construction, affixes and contextual meanings within certain languages might render easy literal translation a little more problematic (Indira, A., and Adha, 2022). Such unnoticed cultural nuances implicit in the Indonesian language may simply not have an English counterpart, thereby requiring the translator to navigate these complex terrains with tact and expertise. Some of the common problems that arise in such translations include lexicon-semantics, grammatical discrepancies, and cultural misunderstandings (Bakiu, 2023). In line with this idea, Ahyar, J., Ibrahim, M., & Muzir, (2023) add that producing the translation work requires a thorough understanding and command of linguistic elements in both the source and target languages. The simple structure of language itself can provide meaning, the position and condition of the language user itself can produce meaning, the language's use in specific scientific domains can produce meaning, and the language itself can generate meaning. Existing sociocultural norms might also give rise to meaning. Thus, it is evident that the meaning problem arises in a variety of situations.

Nida famously stated that "translation is both a science and an art," which emphasizes the need for translators to navigate variability in language and to think of a cultural dimension in their work (Nida, 1964). These theories have had a profound impact on translation studies and the profession of translation. Among the many contributions made by Nida, one of his most widely recognized is dynamic equivalence, which he later referred to as functional equivalence. This theory asserts that the intent of translation is to elicit a similar response in the target audience as it does in the original audience (Nida & Taber, 1969). Such equivalence differs from formal equivalence, which centers mainly

around the preservation of the words and structures of the source text. Dynamic equivalence has a far greater interest in achieving the intended meaning and emotional impact. Such an approach is by far most significant for texts in which culturally charged views would significantly fortify the translations, such as religious and literary texts.

In addition, due to these significant linguistic differences, students face the challenge of achieving functional equivalence, leading to possible meanings misconstrued, for example, idiomatic expressions in Indonesia would not be well matched to their English counterparts, obliging students to come up with some other word alternatives to get the notion across without losing cultural implications (Idami et al., 2022). Moreover, Multilingualism is widespread in Indonesia, as people frequently transition between several languages and dialects in their day-to-day interactions. People frequently learn many terms from their second (L2) or third (L3) language in addition to their native tongue (L1) in this multilingual setting (Suhery, D., Meutia, C, I., Raza, M, H., & Idami, 2023). This fact can also lead to the difficulty to translate the source language to the target one.

Translating from Indonesian into English often becomes a demanding task for students due to lexical ambiguities, idiomatic expressions, and mismatches in grammar (Sandra, 2018). Sandra's research shows that such problems are induced by the changing structures of both languages such as affixes and idiomatic phrases in Indonesian that do not have a direct equivalent in English. Thus, to address the above issues, (Sandra, 2018) stresses that such efforts must work together with culture-sensitivity approaches and meaning-oriented strategies which place meaning over a word-for-word translation.

Additionally, EFL students can enhance their capacity to handle linguistic and cultural difficulties by implementing these strategies, especially those preparing to become teachers in the future. According to the functional equivalency principles presented in this study, student instructors get the abilities required for accurate and culturally relevant translations as a result of this attention to issues and techniques.

Based on the experience in a preliminary study, it is known that English education department students from IAIN Langsa face specific challenges in the attempt to translate Indonesian texts into English, which correlate to the theories of Nida. The peculiarities of Indonesian syntactic structures, idioms, and cultural references complicate translation efforts. As (Sandra, 2018) emphasizes, these difficulties are further induced by linguistic traits such as affixes and idiomatic phrases, which often lack direct equivalents in English. To address these challenges, the effective application of Nida's principles, particularly dynamic equivalence, is crucial. A combination of Sandra's culture-sensitivity approach and Nida's meaning-oriented strategies can greatly enhance students' ability to navigate these complexities. Adequate analysis of source texts, understanding their cultural contexts, and concentrating on the intended reader response may significantly improve

the ability of students to translate. When this is cultivated, an awareness of dynamic equivalence becomes both the fruition for and fruit of the teacher, equipping students to produce translations that resonate with the target audience without distorting the original message.

Other studies have also shown that translation strategies used by students greatly affect translation results, especially in the context of online learning. For example, a study by Universitas Terbuka identified that literal, calque, borrowing, and modulation strategies were the most common techniques used by students in translating English paragraphs into Indonesian. Although the literal strategy is often used due to its simplicity, this technique is often inadequate to capture complex cultural nuances and idioms, resulting in translations that are not fully acceptable (Febriyanti, 2022). Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of choosing the right strategy, which not only focuses on lexical equivalence but also pays attention to cultural context and language structure.

In addition, another study discussing the translation of culturally nuanced texts from Indonesian to English highlights the complexity of translation involving cultural elements. Differences in language structure, idioms, and cultural context are major challenges in producing accurate translations. A cultural sensitivity-based approach is essential to create a translation that is not only linguistically functional but also understandable to the target audience (Neil Armstrong et al., 2022). Both studies support the argument that a cultural sensitivity-based approach and an understanding of Nida's dynamic equivalence principle are essential in translation. This provides additional insight for English Language Education students, especially in facing the challenges of translating Indonesian texts into English. Therefore, this study emphasizes how crucial it is to have a thorough awareness of languages and cultures in order to prevent miscommunication and message distortion.

Method

This research employed a descriptive qualitative methodology, conducted at IAIN Langsa, focusing on students from the English Education Department who had enrolled in the Scientific Translation course. A total of five students participated as the research subjects. Qualitative research is deemed appropriate for this study, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the students' translation processes and errors within the context of their educational experience. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research is particularly useful for understanding complex phenomena where the aim is to gain insight into behaviors, thoughts, and interactions. The primary data collection methods included documentation and interviews.

In this study, documentation as the instrument to collect the data. It can be used to figure out the results of translation exams conducted by the course lecturer, which were used to identify and categorize translation errors made by the students from the

documents (Kurniawan, W., Kemal, E., & Suharni, 2020). Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with the students, consisting of 10 open-ended questions designed to elicit descriptive responses regarding their translation experience. As (Patton, 2002) notes, interviews in qualitative research provide valuable insights into participants' perceptions and experiences, allowing the researcher to capture the depth and complexity of the subject matter. By employing this qualitative approach, the study sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' translation challenges and the underlying reasons for their errors.

Considering this is descriptive qualitative research where the researcher is the key tool of the research, then the researcher analyzed and described the phenomena of students' challenges in translating from Indonesian into English. From the documentation data, students' translation works were being checked and categorized to determine the particular problems such as grammatical problem (such as tense misuse or subject-verb agreement mistakes), terminology problems (such as the improper use of technical terms), idiomatic difficulties (such as mistranslated expressions), and the possibility of cohesion or coherence issues (such as awkward sentence structures).

Besides, for the result of the interview analysis, the first stage is to transcribe the recorded interviews in order to assess the data and determine how students resolve their translation issues. This guarantees that students' responses are accurately recorded, including their precise wording, pauses, and hesitations, which may reveal how confident or unsure they are about resolving translation-related issues. Following transcription, the information should be methodically arranged, including translation techniques, difficulties encountered, and solutions used.

Results and Discussion

Results

The analysis of translations from three participants emphasizes several recurring challenges in translating Indonesian texts into English. These include grammatical errors, terminology problems or meaning equivalency, and difficulties with translating idiomatic expressions. Below are the consolidated findings from the translation of the Indonesian to English provided:

Dalam ekosistem yang penuh keseimbangan, setiap makhluk hidup memiliki peran unik yang tak tergantikan. Proses fotosintesis pada tumbuhan hijau menjadi fondasi bagi rantai makanan. Sebuah pohon besar di hutan tropis, misalnya, tidak hanya menghasilkan oksigen tetapi juga menjadi habitat bagi lumut, serangga, dan burung.

Di alam, simbiosis mutualisme sering terlihat, seperti hubungan antara jamur mikoriza dan akar pohon. Fenomena ini mengajarkan kita tentang pentingnya saling memberi untuk mencapai harmoni. Namun, jika keseimbangan terganggu, bisa muncul parasitisme yang merugikan salah satu pihak. Sama halnya dengan kehidupan manusia, jika "akar" persahabatan tidak terawat, maka "buah" kebahagiaan pun sulit dipetik.

Air sebagai sumber kehidupan juga memainkan peran vital. Fenomena air kapilaritas di dalam tanah membantu tumbuhan menyerap nutrisi dari lingkungan sekitarnya. Dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, kita sering mengabaikan bagaimana hal kecil seperti titik embun di pagi hari menyimpan makna besar tentang siklus kehidupan yang terus berputar.

"Dalam hidup, seperti dalam alam, akar yang kuat menumbuhkan pohon yang teduh." Melalui biologi, kita belajar bahwa segala sesuatu saling berhubungan. Jadi, langkah bijaknya jika kita menjaga keanekaragaman hayati dan tidak menjadi pengganggu ekosistem. Sebab, apa yang kita tanam, itulah yang akan kita tuai—baik untuk masa depan bumi maupun generasi mendatang.

Figure 1. Translation Practice Material

Source: Scientific Translation Practice Text from Bahasa Indonesia to English, Scientific Translation Class of TBI FTIK AIN Langsa

1. Grammatical issues

Participants struggled with subject-verb agreement and sentence structure. For instance:

- Participant 1 translated "Every organisms have" instead of "Every organism has."
- Participant 2 produced phrases like "a tree large in forest tropical," which reflects improper word order and agreement.

2. Equivalent Meaning / Specific Terminology Problem

Some participants encountered difficulties selecting precise and contextually appropriate terms, particularly in scientific and technical contexts.

- Participant 2 used "unicode" for "unique role," leading to a loss of intended meaning.
- Participant 3 translated "birds" instead of the more accurate "aves," which is preferable in formal biological contexts.

3. Idiomatic and figurative expressions

Literal translations of idiomatic phrases resulted in awkward and unclear sentences.

- Participant 4 translated "*akar persahabatan tidak terawat*" as "root of friendship not maintained," which lacks the emotional resonance of the source text.
- Participant 5's "happiness is hard to pick" fails to align with natural English idiomatic expressions.

4. Mechanical errors

Minor punctuation, capitalization, and redundancy errors disrupted the flow and clarity of translations.

- Participant 1 inconsistently capitalized terms like "In the Ecosystem."
- Participant 2 redundantly added "Phenomena" after "roots" in the sentence "mushroom *mikoriza* and tree roots phenomena."

Discussion

The discussion section of this study analyzes the key findings on the problems and solutions experienced by English Education students in translating Indonesian to English. The primary issues identified include grammatical errors, terminology problems, and difficulties with idiomatic expressions. The findings underline key areas where participants faced challenges, as well as the strategies required to overcome them:

1. Grammatical accuracy

The recurring errors in subject-verb agreement and word order demonstrate the need for improvement in participants' foundational grammar skills. As Sandra (2018) points out, the structural differences between Indonesian and English can contribute to difficulties, particularly in subject-verb agreement. Participants expressed how these differences hinder their ability to produce grammatically accurate translations. For example, Participant 1 mentioned:

"Tantangan terbesar yang saya hadapi ketika menerjemahkan dari bahasa Indonesia ke bahasa Inggris itu adalah saya sulit menentukan kata yang tepat dalam bahasa Inggris, contohnya saya sudah tahu maknanya dalam bahasa Indonesia tetapi saya bingung menentukan kata dalam bahasa Inggris karena biasanya ada banyak kata yang mirip artinya."

This reflects the challenge of maintaining proper grammar due to the differences in language structures. To address these challenges, focused grammar exercises and a deeper understanding of English syntax are necessary to improve subject-verb agreement and sentence structure.

2. Lexical and terminology challenges

Participants faced significant struggles with terminology, especially when translating technical terms. Mistranslations of terms like "unicode" and "birds" demonstrate how specialized vocabulary can be challenging, especially when there is no direct equivalent in English. This is supported by Idami, et al. (2022). Participant 3 also remarked:

"Tantangan terbesar yang saya hadapi ketika menerjemahkan dari bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris adalah mencari kata yang tepat terutama untuk istilah teknis atau frasa yang tidak ada terjemahannya langsung misalnya dalam teks teknis seringkali ada kata atau konsep yang hanya dikenal dalam konteks budaya atau bidang tertentu di Indonesia sehingga saya perlu mencari cara agar maknanya itu tetap sama meskipun bentuk kata atau kalimatnya itu berbeda."

Meanwhile, participant 2 said;

"Saya pernah menerjemahkan artikel yang penuh dengan istilah teknis dan konsep yang sulit. Langkah pertama yang saya ambil adalah membaca dan memahami isi artikel tersebut, termasuk melakukan riset tambahan tentang istilah-istilah yang tidak saya mengerti. Setelah itu, saya mulai menerjemahkan bagian demi bagian sambil memastikan istilah yang saya gunakan konsisten. Ketika selesai, saya juga bertanya untuk meminta feedback dari teman yang lebih paham bidang tersebut untuk memastikan hasil terjemahannya apakah sudah benar."

This shows the importance of contextual understanding in translating technical terms accurately. According to Sandra (2018), understanding the specific context and meaning of terms, especially in technical translations, is key to ensuring accuracy. Developing a deep understanding of both the source and target language's cultural context is essential in addressing these terminology challenges.

3. Idiomatic translation

Translating idiomatic expressions is another complex challenge that requires careful cultural and linguistic adaptation. Nida's (1964) theory of dynamic equivalence stresses the importance of conveying the same response to the target audience as the original text does. For example, the translation of "*akar persahabatan tidak terawat*" as "If the roots of friendship are not nurtured, the fruits of happiness will not grow" better preserves the figurative meaning and emotional resonance of the original expression. Participant 4 explained:

"Saat menerjemahkan idiom atau ungkapan, saya selalu berusaha mencari idiom dalam bahasa Inggris yang artinya mirip."

In cases where no direct equivalent is available, participants often resorted to explaining the meaning of the idiom rather than attempting a literal translation. This approach, grounded in dynamic equivalence, allows the translation to maintain both cultural relevance and emotional impact for the target audience.

4. Attention to detail

While mechanical errors like inconsistent capitalization and redundancy may seem trivial, they significantly impact the professionalism of the translation. The importance of detail and accuracy in translation, as pointed out by Baker, cannot be overstated. To improve the quality of translations, students should develop proofreading habits and consistency in formatting.

To address these issues, participants employed strategies such as consulting bilingual dictionaries, leveraging translation tools (Google Translate and DeepL), and seeking feedback from peers and lecturers. These findings align with existing literature on second-language translation difficulties. Prior studies have emphasized similar challenges, particularly in the context of linguistic and cultural differences between source and target languages. For instance, the research finding from Varela Salinas, M.-J., & Burbat (2023) regarding the use of those two translation machines in translation work.

However, Students at IAIN Langsa's English education department encounter particular difficulties when attempting to translate Indonesian texts into English. Linguistic features like idioms and affixes, which frequently have no exact English equivalents, increase these problems. Students' translation skills may be greatly enhanced by carefully examining the source materials, comprehending their cultural settings, and focusing on the intended reader's responses. When this is fostered, students develop an understanding of dynamic equivalency that benefits both the teacher and the audience, enabling them to translate texts that effectively communicate ideas without changing the original meaning. This finding is coherence with Chung (2024) found regarding translating English and Vietnamese and explore how linguistic and cultural factors influence the translation process.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the problems and solutions encountered in translating texts from Indonesian to English, using data gathered from interviews and documentation involving five students of the English Department at IAIN Langsa. The findings revealed four primary challenges: achieving equivalent meaning, handling specific terminology, translating idiomatic expressions, and addressing mechanical errors, particularly in punctuation. As the solutions, participants employed strategies like using bilingual dictionaries, leveraging translation tools (google translate and DeepL), and seeking feedback from peers and lecturers. These solutions spot the importance of continuous

practice, exposure to authentic English texts, and targeted training in translation techniques to enhance students' proficiency.

Hence, this research underscores the need for curriculum adjustments within translation courses, emphasizing practical approaches to mastering equivalence, terminology, idioms, and mechanical accuracy. Future studies could expand the scope by involving a larger participant pool or exploring the effectiveness of specific teaching methods in improving translation skills.

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