An Analysis of Translation Error that Occurs among English Foreign Language Students

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Abstract

The quality of translation can affect the quality of information conveyed. Yet, errors are inevitable as evidenced in this present study. The objectives of this study were: 1) To check types of translation errors in Indonesian to English translation. 2) To find the possible explanations for the sources of errors made by the students in translation.The researchers hoped that it can help students to enrich their knowledge about learning translation. A qualitative study in case study design was used as the methodology of this study. The data were obtained from students' tests and interviews to find out the source of the translation errors. The researchers analyzed the data and calculated each error with frequency and percentage. The respondents of this study were English Foreign Language students of Class TBI-E 2016 of UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanudin, Banten. The researchers found that there were more syntax errors (68.13%) than semantic errors (31.87%). Researchers also found that the sources of translation errors were lack of linguistic understanding, translation procedures, unconfidence, and inattention. It is recommended that the students be well-informed about the correct translation procedure. Moreover, more tasks about vocabulary and structure are encouraged to increase their English translation skills.

Keywords: Analysis, Translation Error, Linguistic, EFL

INTRODUCTION

Translation is often used when people with different languages and cultures are sharing information or communicating, or when there is knowledge transfer in a form of a book, either as the writers who would like to have their book translated to different languages or as the readers who hope to understand a book written in a different language. Translation is conducted to replicate various kinds of content, including religious, scholarly, scientific, and philosophical content in another language, and then make them accessible to more readers (Ordudari, 2010). Translation has been a part of human life for a long time. Yet, the translation products may contain errors that hamper the actual messages communicated

correctly. There may be a misunderstanding due to a mistake in translation because, according to Newmark, the perfect translation is nothing(Newmark, 1993, p. 38).

Errors may come due to judgment errors and miscalculations, yet,they are essential aspects of learning and obtaining information (Brown, 2000, p. 216). Such errorsasgrammatical mistakes, inappropriate word choices, and mistakes in conveying messages are among the common mistakes.According to Pym (1992), translation errors are divided into two: binary errors and non-binary errors. Binary errors refer to any errorsthat are considered as wrong translations; thus, sentence reformulation is needed to straighten out the intended messages.These errors may be caused by limited language competence in translating. On the other hand,non-binary errors refer to any incorrect translation whichis not totally wrong but is still considered inappropriate to the context, and can still be corrected (Pym, 1992). People making this kind of mistake have the translation competence but they might fail in choosing the best translation.

There are no sources of errors that can be categorized in translation because errors can come not only from a single source but also from multiple sources. The factor causing the errors in translation are linguistics knowledge limitation (Popescu, 2013)and lack of understanding of the syntactic system of the target language, such as structures, vocabulary, and punctuation (Yousofi, 2014).The mother tongue language system can also influence translating failure, for example when an Indonesian student translates English sentences with the Indonesian language system, which in some contexts is not compatible.

Studying translation skills formally at the university level is one of the best options for those who want to be a translator, besides practicing regularly on their own and joining an extra lesson or short course. However, in the context of the English Foreign Language Students in UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanudin, Banten, mistakes in translatingoften happen because they have not mastered linguistics knowledge from both the target language and the source language very well. It is necessary to carry out further studies to identify the cause of this problem. This study was conducted to find out the types and sources of students' mistakes in translation. The results of this study hopefully can give a clearer pictureon how to resolve the translation problems for better translation learning so that students can produce correct, effective, efficient translations, and not far deviate from the original text or the source language.

RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative approach was used in this study. This study focused on the syntax and semantic error of language. It tried to explain those mistakes reasonably to provide more benefits for English teachers to improve their students' English skills.The participants of the study were 17 English Foreign Language Students, Department of English Education and Teacher Training, State Islamic University, Sultan Maulana Hasanudin, Indonesia. To measure students' initialtranslation ability,the study provided a translation test in which each student had to translate 30 short texts. The students were not allowed to use any mobile dictionary during the practice, but the paper dictionary was still allowed. To add, an interview was conducted individuallywith 5 students to get more information about the sources of the students' translation errors. The interview participantswere selected based on their performance in the translation practice, they werestudents who had low, medium, and high errors. The interview took about 10 minutes. The questions were about their preparation before translation, the translation procedures they underwent, and difficulties in facing the test. Frequency and percentage were used to calculate the number of errors made by students in one type of error.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Types of Error

First, this study analyzed the types of errors. It found two types of errors in this study: syntactic and semantic. In short, syntactic errors are students' translation errors related to English grammar, while semantic errors are related to the meaning in English.

No.	Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Syntactic	404	68.13%
2	Semantic	189	31.87%
Total		**593**	**100%**

Table 1. Percentage of Each Type of Error

The table above shows that each type of error has a different percentage. The table above shows that each type of error has a different percentage. The syntactic error has the highest percentage, 68.13%, followed by a semantic error of 31.87%. One of the causes of the highest percentage of syntactic errors is because syntactic has more sub-categories than semantic error. It has twelve sub-categories.

A.1. Syntactic Error

Syntax error implies that students typically make grammatical errors when doing the translation. The syntactic errors are divided into twelve sub-categories, as presented in Table 2.

No.	Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Article	89	22.03%
2	Preposition	50	12.37%
3	Typographical	45	11.14%
4	Tenses	41	10.15%
5	Capitalization	41	10.15%
6	Word Order	34	8.41%
7	Punctuation	31	7.67%
8	Relative Clause	23	5.7%
9	Countability	21	5.21%
10	S-V Agreement	12	2.97%
11	Demonstrative	10	2.47%
12	Quantifier	7	1.73%
Total		**404**	**100%**

Table 2. Percentage of Syntactic Error

The table illustrates that the article and preposition have the highest percentage with 22.03% and 12.37%. Then, there is typography with 11.14%. Tense and capitalization have the same percentage with 10.15%. Word order and punctuation have 8.41% and 7.67%. Relative clause and countability have a near percentage with 5.7% and 5.21%. Also, subject-verb agreement and demonstrative have 2.97% and 2.47%. The lowest is the quantifier with 1.73%.

As can be seen in the table above, articles are the most common errors. The reason is, *first*, in every sentence of the test, almost all of them contain nouns. There are more than fifteen nouns that must use the article in their translation. *Second*, they are not used to using articles in their daily conversation. It causes them to forget to use the articles in the English text.

1) *Article*
   Source text   : Saya membelipemutar MP3 tadimalam
   Student's translation : I bought ***Mp3*** Player last night.
   It should be   : I bought ***anMP3*** player last night

   Articles are becoming a most frequent error. It often causes problems for students. Regardless of the apparent simplicity with only three choices, "*a*", "*an*", and "*the*", the students discovered this one of the most complicated grammatical aspects of English. First, students are often confused with definite and indefinite nouns. Then, they are often unsure whether to use "*a/an*" or "*the*". The students do not put the article "*an*" before the nouns "*MP3*".

2) *Preposition*

   Source text   : ……. di lantaiempat
   Student's translation : ……..***at*** fourth floor
   It should be   : ……… ***on*** the fourth floor

   Prepositions are one of the most common types of errors made by students in their translations. Each preposition has a different function and usage. However, many students are wrong in using it. The preposition error involves using the wrong preposition

3) *Typography*
   Source text   : …… banyakpertandingan
   Student's translation : …… a lot of ***competitons***
   It should be   : …… a lot of ***competition***

   Typography is one of the syntax categories that causes quite a lot of translation errors. Most of the students do their translation using mobile phones. It does not contain text correction features such as Computer Devices. This error can be a problem in writing for students who are not careful in writing texts.

4) *Tense*
   Source text   : Saya membelipemutar MP3 tadimalam
   Student's translation : I ***buy*** mp3 last night
   It should be   : I ***bought*** an MP3 player last night

   Tense is one of the problems with student syntax—the concept of time matters in English. In English, the form of the verb changes according to the time of the action. Thus, students can easily make a mistake if they ignore or are not aware of this difference. On the other hand, time does not affect Indonesian grammar, which always uses the same verb.

5) *Capitalization*
   Source Text   : sayapastiberada di dalamkabinmobil
   Student's translation : ***i*** must be in the car cabin
   It should be   :**I** must be inside the cabin of the car

   The pronoun "*I*" should always be capitalized. Therefore, the letter "*i*" means nothing. Different writing systems in other languages have different conventions for capitalization rules. The rules for using capital letters in English and Indonesian are simple. Their practices are almost the same.

Students may know when to use uppercase and lowercase letters. But they sometimes capitalize the first letter of a text that should be lowercase or vice versa.

6) *Word order*

Source text   : Payungsiapakahini?
Student's translation : ***Whohavethisumbrella****?*
It should be   : ***Whose*** umbrella is this?

    The students make mistakes in arranging interrogative sentences. In addition, students also use the wrong auxiliary verb. It is caused they forgot the interrogative sentence formula. In English grammar, word order is used to arrange words into correct sentences and avoid ambiguity in the meaning of words or arranged sentences. However, different word orders in English can have different meanings. If the wrong word is in a sentence, then the transfer of purpose is not following the intent you want to convey. Word order becomes more complicated when it involves the position of certain adverbs and additions(Pojprasat, 2007, p. 10). Three of the seventeen students made mistakes in word order.

7) *Punctuation*

Source text   : Saya tidak punya banyakwaktulagi
Student translation   : I ***dont*** have much time
It should be   : I ***don't*** have much time left

    It would be best if you always used the correct punctuation in writing to avoid misunderstanding. Writing, in the field of education, should use the correct punctuation. It aims to make the writing easily understood by the reader. However, in this case, the students wrote without using the standard language. They also did not use the correct punctuation. Most of them write in as a daily conversation.

8) *Relative clause*

Source text   : Diamemilikibeberapatemandekat yang seringbertemu
Student's's translation   : She got a few close friends ***which*** meet *sometimes*
It should be   : She got a few close friends ***that*** see meet regularly

    A relative clause sentence has a subject and a verb but cannot stand alone as a sentence. A relative clause always begins with a relative pronoun that replaces a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun when several sentences are combined.

9) *Countability*

Source text   : Kami mencetakbanyakpoin
Student's translation : We scored a lot of ***point***.
It should be   : We scored a lot of ***points***.

    Countability refers to errors involving countable and uncountable nouns. This concept does not exist in the Indonesian language. Indonesian nouns always take the same form regardless of the number and whether we can count the noun is not essential. However, English uses countable and uncountable nouns in its grammar. Also, countable nouns can be singular or plural, depending on the countability. Therefore, students often make mistakes and ignore this aspect.

10) *Subject-verb agreement*

Source text   : Saya barusajaselesaimakansiang
Student's translation : ***I has*** finished lunch
It should be   : I ***have*** just finished my lunch

    Traditionally, subject-verb agreement can be defined as an agreement between subject and verb. Subject and verb must agree to make good sentences. In this type, some students make an error when they translate the text. In the students' translation, they made a mistake in using the verb. The word

that should be used is "*have*" because the auxiliary verb of the pronoun "*I*" is "*have*". However, the student uses the word "*has*" in this case, which should be used for the third person.

11) Demonstrative

Source language   : Buku-bukuiniakupinjamdariperpustakaan
Student's translation : I borrow ***this*** books from library
It should be   :I borrow ***these*** books from the library

The correct sentence uses "these" to modify the plural noun "people" in the first example. While "*this*" is a demonstrative word used for singular nouns Demonstrative is a word that serves to designate or mark specifically a person or thing. In the context of the English language, the demonstrative is a word that follows a noun. Therefore, in its use, the singular and plural nouns will have different demonstrative. Unfortunately, this context does not exist in Indonesia. Consequently, it causes some of the students to make an error in translating the text.

12) Quantifier

Source text   : Tidakbanyakwaktutersisa
Student's translation : There is no time left
It should be   : There isn't ***much*** time left

In the text above, the student forgot the quantifier that should be used. There is the word "*banyakwaktu*" in the source text, which should be translated into "*much time*". However, the student did not use any quantifier to translate the source text. A quantifier is usually placed before the noun and to tell the number and size of the noun. Thus, the use of quantifiers can adjust how many nouns there are. However, in some cases in translation, students misuse the quantifier.

A.2. Semantic

Semantic errors are the second type of error. Despite using a dictionary, many students make mistakes in choosing words to translate. The errors are in word choice, misinterpretation, phrasal verb, and incomplete translation

No.	Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Word Choice	112	59.26%
2	Misinterpretation	30	15.87%
3	Phrasal Verb	30	15.87%
4	Incomplete	17	9%
	Total	**189**	**100%**

Table3. Percentage of Semantic Error

The semantic error only has a few subcategories sub-categories. Instead, there are word choice, misinterpretation, phrasal verb, and incomplete translation. The percentage in the semantic error is pretty surprising. More than half of the total semantic errors are word choice with 59.26%. The next subcategory is misinterpretation and phrasal verbs have the same percentage, with 15.87%. The least is the incomplete translation with 9%. Word choice becomes the most error in the type of semantic error. It is because there are many new vocabularies that they encounter in the translation text sheet. It affects them to replace the new vocabulary with other words that have a similar meaning. But still, that is not the right word.

1) Word choice

Source text : Kami mencetakbanyakpoin
Student's translation : we ***print*** many *point*
It should be : We ***scored*** many points

 In the text above, students choose the terrible word in translating. The word that should be used is "*score*", but the student uses "*print*". The two words in Indonesian have the same meaning. Even so, the meaning is definitely different. Most students who lack vocabulary make an error in translating phrases. Choosing the wrong word causes differences in meaning, and the message is not conveyed. The accuracy of word choice is influenced by the ability of language users related to the ability to know, understand, master, and use several vocabularies actively.

2) *Misinterpretation*
Source text : di lantaiempat
Student's translation : ***in a four land***
It should be :***on the fourth floor***

 Translating is a task that requires hands-on practical skills. There are many rules and grammar that must be understood to do a correct translation. It is pretty tricky for the students so that they misunderstand the source text a lot. In the text above, students make mistakes in translating, choosing words, and choosing prepositions. It's likely caused by inattention that makes them cautious in interpreting the text. The meaning of the source text and the target text is much different. Then causes an error in the delivery of the substance.

3) *Phrasal verb*
Source text : diamendekatisayadengansebilahpisau
Student's translation : he ***came on*** me with a knife
It should be : he ***came at*** me with a knife

 Phrasal verb error is an error in combining verbs and particles into the appropriate lexical. Most students make an error in this type. It is probably caused they feel that phrasal verb is something new; they have never studied it before.

4) *Incomplete*
Source text : Ada sesorangpriasedangmemakanapel
Student's translation :***There is a man***
It should be : ***There was a man*** who was eating an apple

 The most common errors in the semantic type is an incomplete sentence. Students forget some words they should have written in their translation. The example above shows that there is a missing translation on the student's translation. They translate incompletely. They should solve "*There was a man who was eating an apple*", but they translate "*there is a man*". Both sentences have different meanings.

B. *Source of Error*
1. *Lack of understanding in linguistic of the target language*
It follows the statement of Popescu(2013) and Yousofi(2014). They say that the cause of the translation error is the lack of linguistic knowledge of the target language. It can be seen from the many translation errors they made, both syntactic and semantic errors.

2. *Translation Procedures*
The student translation procedure refers to the procedure students use to translate the source text. Most of the students read the source text, translate it in their mind, and write it in the target text. The study found that students' translation error comes from the fact that they are trying to translate the text word for word. However, they did not realize that Indonesian and English have different

structures. In addition, the ability to choose the proper translation technique is a skill that translators need(Zainudin & Awal, 2012). The word for word translation refers to the source text, making the students forget the appropriate context of the sentence. Some students tried to adapt their translation after that, yet they still stuck to the source text. As a result, they make grammatical errors.

3. *Inattention*

Inattention is another source of error. This study identified the type of careless error: do not learn the dictionary thoroughly or revise the translation. Students are too hasty when words are read and do not pay attention, such as "*tidak*" (not / do not). Students translate it as "*haven't*". The students said that they thought it was the correct answer. It gives rise to the assumption that they usually use the wrong word in translating "no". As a result, the actual meaning of the source text will have a different sense when translated into English.

4. *Unconfident*

Low confidence is the last source of a translation error. The students, during the interview, admitted that their translation ability was shallow. They do not mastery the vocabulary. Therefore, they are not confident in their abilities. Also, they consider that translation is a difficult task. Because of it, they do not do their coursework and nothing enough effort to do it. In their mind is only about completing the task, not on the quality of the translation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As previously explained, translating skills are indeed quite complex. But translators deserve to improve their translation skills through translation analysis. The purpose of this study is to produce good translations with as few errors as possible. It is necessary to know the source to do a good translation. From this study, two types of translation errors were found made by English foreign language in the university: syntactic and semantic errors.

Another purpose of this study is to find out the source of the translation errors made by the students. When we know that, we can improve the course. From this study, the sources of students' translation errors were due to mistakes in using translation procedures, lack of linguistic understanding, inattention, and unconfident. This study is quite essential to be studied by students and lecturers. Then, they will both realize what mistakes to emphasize when practicing translation. However, further studies on translation analysis of various topics can be carried out to make this study better.

The findings show that the use of incorrect procedures is the leading cause of translation errors. This source causes inattention in their translation. In addition, this also makes them low in self-confidence. Therefore, translation teaching and courses should be adapted to solve these problems.*First*, inform the correct procedures of translation to students before giving assignments. It aims to allow students to evaluate themselves, whether they use the suitable methods or not. In addition, students are required to have a lot of practice to produce quality translations.*Second*, more group discussions in the classroom can reduce stress and motivate students to evaluate each other. The example of translations can be provided to students, and they can participate in group discussions to analyze problematic structure points or correct word selection.*Third*, lecturers should provide more exercises that can increase students' vocabulary and structure. Most of them have a limited its. It causes them to face difficulty in using the correct words to complete their texts.*Fourth*, pre-tests can be used in the early course to determine student abilities. It aims for the students can get the appropriate coursework later in the class.

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