The Grammatical Errors in Translating Indonesian into English of the English Study Program Students

Rudolof J. Isu, Ni Putu Juliani Lestari Dewi

Department of English Education, Universitas Persatuan Guru 1945
*Corresponding Author. E-mail: rudi.isu73@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan berikut: (1) Apa saja kesalahan yang paling sering dilakukan oleh mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris dalam menerjemahkan teks bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris? (2) Bagaimana tingkat kompetensi mahasiswa dalam menerjemahkan teks bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris? Berdasarkan pernyataan masalah yang dikemukakan di atas, maka tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut: (1) Mengidentifikasi kesalahan-kesalahan yang paling sering dilakukan oleh mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris dalam menerjemahkan teks bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris, dan (2) Mendeskripsikan tingkat kompetensi mahasiswa dalam menerjemahkan teks bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 20 orang mahasiswa. Dalam pengumpulan data, penulis menggunakan metode deskriptif. Metode ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kesalahan-kesalahan yang dilakukan oleh siswa. Penulis memberikan sebuah teks bacaan berbahasa Indonesia kepada siswa dan siswa menerjemahkannya ke dalam bahasa Inggris. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) Jenis kesalahan tata bahasa dalam menerjemahkan teks bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris berdasarkan penghilangan, penambahan, kesalahan urutan dan kesalahan pembentukan. Kesalahan tata bahasa yang paling banyak ditemukan dalam menerjemahkan teks bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa adalah penghilangan sebanyak 98 kalimat. (2) Tingkat kompetensi, berada pada tingkat kurang.

Kata kunci: tata bahasa, kesalahan, kesalahan pengurutan, kesalahan pembentukan.

Abstract

The study aimed to address the following research questions: (1) What are the most common errors made by students of the English Study Program when translating Indonesian texts into English? (2) What is the level of competence of these students in translating Indonesian texts into English? Based on these questions, the objectives of the study were: (1) To identify the most common errors made by English Study Program students in translating Indonesian texts into English, and (2) To describe the students' levels of competence in translating Indonesian texts into English. The subjects of this study were 20 students. A qualitative method was used for data collection, focusing on describing the errors made by the students. The students were given Indonesian texts to translate into English. The results of the study are as follows: (1) Types of grammatical errors in translating Indonesian texts into English, made by the students, included omission, addition, mis-ordering, and mis-formation. The most common grammatical error was omission, with 98 sentences exhibiting this issue. (2) The overall level of competence among the students was assessed as poor.

Keywords: grammatical errors, omission, mis-ordering, mis-formation

How to cite: Isu, R.J. & Dewi,. N.P.J.L. (2024). The Grammatical Errors in Translating Indonesian into English of the English Study Program Students. *Journal of Nusantara Education*, 4(1), 29-37.

Introduction

Although research on grammar and grammatical errors has been widely conducted, often the focus of research lies on errors in general or on other languages. In particular, research that explores grammatical errors in the context of translation from Indonesian to English is limited. This gap includes a lack of detailed analysis of the specific types of grammatical errors in these interlanguage translations and how they affect translation quality. Previous research may not have provided deep insights into the patterns of errors that frequently appear in translations and did not evaluate how these errors affect the level of competence of translators. This study fills the gap by offering an in-depth analysis of the types of grammatical errors commonly made by university students when translating texts from Indonesian to English. It identifies and classifies specific grammatical errors such as omission, addition, wrong sequencing, and wrong formation. With a comprehensive descriptive approach, this study not only reveals the most frequent types of errors but also provides an assessment of students' level of competence in translating. The findings contribute significantly to our understanding of the challenges faced by university students in interlanguage translation, as well as offer a basis for the development of more effective and targeted learning strategies to improve translation skills and grammatical competence.

Grammar as one element of a language, has certain systems, rules and patterns that language user and learners should regards. On the other hand, using a language without regard to its grammatical systems, rules, and patterns results in what is known as ill-formed sentences. This concept, which highlights the importance of adhering to linguistic rules for clear communication, is discussed in linguistic theory. According to Chomsky (1965), ill-formed sentences are those that fail to conform to the syntactic rules of a language, which can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications. Chomsky's work on transformational-generative grammar emphasizes that sentences must adhere to specific structural rules to be considered grammatically correct (Chomsky, 1965).

However, learning a language should take into account its grammar as one of the basic competences of understanding a language.

Grammar is the way a language manipulates or combines words (or bit of words) to form a complete meaning, Frank, (1972). English grammar, then, is the way of English word, morphemes, sounds, bit of words, clause, sentence, or utterance combined in order to construct a complete meaning. This, consequently, demands the learner to understand how the systems, rules or patterns operate. In contrast, they will be said fail in learning English if they do not master the English grammar.

Learning English as a second or foreign language often presents several challenges to students. One significant issue is the lack of habitual use in daily communication, which means students may not regularly practice the language in real-life situations, Harper & de Jong, (2004). Another challenge arises from differences in grammatical systems between the students' first language and English. These differences can lead to errors in grammar and syntax, Ellis, (2008). Additionally, cultural differences can create difficulties in understanding and applying English grammar correctly, as cultural contexts can influence language use and comprehension. Kramsch, (1998). These issues can result in students struggling with both written and spoken English, potentially leading to miscommunication with native speakers (Johnson, 2013). Proper understanding and application of English grammar are crucial for effective communication. Schmitt, (2010).

As an international language, English is widely used globally, including in Indonesia, where it appears in various forms of communication such as scientific books, journals, and magazines. Crystal, (2003). Since many Indonesians do not understand English, these texts often need to be translated into Indonesian to ensure accessibility. Hulstijn, (2003). This translation is vital for making academic and scientific knowledge available to a broader audience in Indonesia. Gass, (2013).

Translation involves converting text from one language, known as the source language, into another language, referred to as the target language. A good translation should not only be accurate in conveying the meaning of the original text but also natural and fluent in the target language, Nida & Taber, (1969). Accuracy ensures that the content and intent of the original text are preserved, while naturalness ensures that the translation reads smoothly and is idiomatic in the target language. House, (2015). According to Nida and Taber (1969), effective translation requires balancing these two elements to produce a translation that is both true to the original and appropriate for the target audience.

In practice, achieving this balance can be challenging, as it involves understanding both the linguistic and cultural nuances of both languages. Bassnett, (2002). Good translators must navigate these complexities to ensure that their translations are both faithful and accessible to readers in the target language. Newmark, (1988).

Translating is an exciting and interesting job. Firstly, by doing translation, we are playing with words and sentences. Sometimes a learner faces difficulty creating an appropriate or equivalent translation in target language. Secondly, translating is important for the translator to search the meaning of words and the fact of source language in book (dictionary), a translator is encouraged to seek a parallel of sentences in order to make the translation has similar meaning as that of the original text. Translation is also possible for transmission of culture and value. In translation there is substitution of source language meaning into the target language. The best translation is the one which uses the normal language forms of the receptor language, as much as possible, to express the same meaning that was understood by the speaker of the source language as well as maintain the dynamics of the original source language text (Larson, 1984: 6).

Translation demands linguistic ability of a translator. It is because a translator will only be able to transfer the meaning of what is to be translated, if her or she has a complete acquisition of language structure and vocabularies used in materials to be translated.

In the process of translating from one language to another language, there are some language components that should be considered such as grammar, vocabulary and lexical meaning.

Based on the issues showing Grammatical Errors in Translating Indonesian Text into English text made by the English Study Program Students in the Academic Year 2022/2023. Students must have a mastery of the rules used in languages involved grammatical in the activity of translating a text, in spite of the errors also. Therefore, this study is aimed at analyzing the following questions as follows :1). What are the most common errors committed by English Study Program Students in the Academic Year 2022/2023 in translating Indonesian text into English? (2). What are the English Study Program Students levels of competence in translating Indonesian text into English? The following are the objectives of the study: (1). To identify the most common errors committed by The Grammatical Errors in Translating Indonesian Text into English Made by the English Study Program Students in the Academic Year 2022/2023. in translating Indonesian text into English., (2). To describe the English Study Program Students level of competence in translating Indonesian text into English?

Method

In this research was used descriptive qualitatif method, in conducting grammatical errors in translating the text from Bahasa Indonesia into English. The data population of the study was the fourth semester student of English Education Study Program, which consist of 100 students. Arikunto (1988: 120) asserts that if the subject of the population is less than 100 the population will be taken as a sample. On the other hand if the subject of the population is more than 100 the sample can be taken 10- 15 % or more. Thus, the sample for this study consisted of 20 students. The study utilized an Indonesian text as the instrument for assessing translation skills. Specifically, the text was provided to the students in Indonesian, and they were asked to translate it into English. The text used in this study was titled *Beauty and the Beast*, which was taken from the students' handout materials. Instruments, in this context, refer to the tools or methods used for collecting data Creswell, (2014). Here, the Indonesian text

served as a tool to evaluate the students' translation abilities and to gather data on their performance.

The time allocation was 3x40 minutes. . ,After getting the result of the test, the writer analyzed them. The writer presented the sentences or part of the text in Indonesian which had been translated from English. The failure in translating or the mistake made by the students indicated the problems they faced in translating the text.

Results and Discussion

This part contained the data analysis and discussion based on the result of the test done by English Education Study Program students. There were 20 English Study Program Students who did the test. The result is described below.

Data Analysis

The writer analyzed the errors committed by the students in their translation. Each sentence was analyzed based on the rules of surface strategy taxonomy. There are also some types of errors in surface strategy taxonomy that should be analyzed such as: omission and addition.

Type of Errors

Some examples of error committed by the English Study Program Students in the Academic Year 2022/2023 as follows::

a) Omission
   Student 1
   Number 10
   SL : Semua pelayannya menjadi benda benda hiasan.
   TL : All servant become furniture.
   - The missing of plural marker 's" and the using of possessive pronoun ''his".
   - Correction: it should be "All his **servants** become furniture**"**.

   Student 2
   Number 15
   - SL : Saat itu hujan sangat deras dan ia mampir dalam istana itu.

- TL : The moment rain very hard, he come into the castle.
- The omission of the using proposition "at" and the omission of to be "was" in the sentence.
- Correction: "At the moment the rain was very hard and he came into the castle".

Student 3
Number 6
SL : Setelah pangeran mengusir wanita itu, ia datang lagi sabagai seorang yang sangat cantik.
TL : After the prince sent the woman, she turned into beautiful fairy.
   - The omission of "away".
   - Correction: it should be "After the prince sent the woman away, she turned into beautiful fairy".

Student 4
Number 8
SL : Pangeran di sihir menjadi seorang yang buruk rupa.
Tl : The prince was cursed became ugly man.
   - The omission of article "an".
   - Correction: The prince was cursed become an ugly man.

Student 5
Number 4
SL : ia sudah tua dan jelek.
TL : she old and ugly.
   - The omission to be past "was" in the sentence.
   - Correction "She **was** old and ugly ".

Student 6
Number 17
SL : *Belle sangat gelisah dengan ayahnya, belum juga kembali.*
TL : Belle worried because her father didn't back.
   - The omission word "come".
   - Correction: Belle worried because her father didn't **come** back.

Student 7
Number 22

SL : Kemudian, perlahan lahan perasaannya pada si buruk rupa mulai berubah.

TL : Then slow her feeling began to change.
- The missing of letter "ly".
- Correction: Then **slowly** her feeling began to change.

Student 8
Number 26

SL : Si buruk rupa dan pelayan pelayannya kembali menjadi manusia.

TL : The beast and his servant become human.
- The missing of plural marker "s".
- Correction: The beast and his **servants** become human.

Student 9
Number 9

SL : Ia sangat jelek sekarang.

TL : He very ugly now.
- The missing of to be past "was"
- Correction: "He **was** very ugly now".

b) Addition

Student 10
Number 6

SL : Setelah pangeran mengusir wanita itu, ia datang lagi sebagai seorang yang sangat cantik.

TL : After the prince sent the woman away, she turned into a beautifully fair.
- The addition of letter "ly".
- Correction: After the prince sent the woman away, she turned into a beautiful fairy.

Student 11
Number 2

SL : Ia tinggal dalam sebuah istana di prancis.

TL : He is lived a castle in France.
- The addition to be "is" (the wrong used to be past tense).
- Correction: He lived in a castle in France.

Student 12
Number 10

SL : Semua pelayannya menjadi benda benda hiasan.

TL : All servant became furniture.
- The addition of letter "s".
- Correction : All servants became furniture.

Student 13
Number 8

SL : Pangeran disihir menjadi seorang buruk rupa.

TL : The prince was cursed becames a beast.
- The addition of letter "s"
- Correction : The prince was cursed became a beast.

Student 14
Number 4

SL : Ia sudah tua dan jelek.

TL : She olded and ugly.
- The addition of letter "ed"
- Correction: She old and ugly

a. Misformation

Student 15
Number 3

SL : Suatu hari datanglah seorang wanita ke istananya.

TL : One day a woman come to his castle.
- The uses of verb simple present "comes"
- Correction: One day a woman comes to his castle.

Student 16
Number 14

SL : Suatu hari Maurice lewat depan istana.

TL : One day Maurice pass the castle.
- The wrong use of verb simple past "pass"
- Correction: One day Maurice passed the castle

Student 17
Number 24

SL : Belle mulai menyukainya dan akhirnya ia pun jatuh cinta pada si buruk rupa.

TL : Belle began to like him and finally she feel in love with him.

- The wrong use of simple
- Correction: Belle began to like him and finally she **fell** in love with him.

Student 18

Number 27

SL : *Akhirnya si buruk rupa dan Belle menikah.*

TL : The Beast and Belle get married.

- The wrong use of verb simple past "get"
- Correction: it should be "**got**" in the sentence.

b. Missordering

Student 19

Number 24

SL : *Belle mulai menyukainya dan akhirnya ia pun jatuh cinta pada si buruk rupa.*

TL : Belle began like to him and finally she fell in love with him.

- The wrong position "like to him"
- Correction: Belle began **to like** him and finally she fell in love with him.

Student 20

Number 17

SL : *Merekapun hidup bahagia selamanya*

TL : They live ever happily after

- The wrong position "ever happily".
- Correction: They live happily ever after.

Level of Translation Competence

There are several steps used in order to determine, the levels of students' competence in translation for Indonesian to English. The first step is the recapitulation students' correct answer of each item test. The second step is presenting the score of individual students, and the third step is the classification of score into levels of competence.

To know the level of ability of second year students in translating Indonesian text into English, as was written in chapter three, Arikunto's formulae was considered suitable.

The way to find out the students ability is as follows:

$$\frac{\textit{Total of correct answers}}{\textit{Total answer made}} \times 100\%$$

$$\frac{284}{560} \times 100\% = 51\%$$

284 is the result of adding up the correct answers of the second year students. While 560 is the result of adding up the total answer made by the students. It is obtained by multiplying 28 items with 20 students. 51% is the students' ability in translating Indonesian text into English.

Based on the scores being computed by using Arikunto s formulae above, the students are classified into poor level.

Score of Individual Students

To know the individual score of the students as written in chapter three, especially about their ability in translating the texts containing Indonesian text, the writer still concerned Arikunto's formulate as seen below:

$$\frac{\textit{Correct answer}}{\textit{Total of items}} \times 100\ \%$$

Discussion

In this study, we observed several types of grammatical errors among students: Errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, and errors of misordering. The frequency and nature of these errors provide insights into the students' understanding of grammatical aspects involved in sentence construction.

1. Errors of Omission

Errors of omission, where necessary grammatical elements are left out, were prevalent among students. This finding aligns with research by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), who identified omission as a common error type in second language acquisition, particularly among learners with limited exposure to the target language. Such omissions

often stem from incomplete understanding of grammatical rules or the absence of certain structures in the learner's native language, Ellis, (2008).

2. Errors of Addition

Errors of addition, where unnecessary elements are inserted into sentences, were also frequently observed. This type of error is consistent with findings from Corder (1967), who noted that learners might add elements due to overgeneralizing rules or attempting to apply known rules inappropriately. The tendency to add extra elements may reflect students' attempts to conform to perceived grammatical norms, even when these norms are not applicable, Kleinmann, (1977).

3. Errors of Misinformation

Errors of misformation, where incorrect grammatical forms are used, were noted in our study. This error type is supported by studies such as those by Selinker (1972), who described how learners might use incorrect forms due to the influence of their native language or incorrect rule application. Misformation errors often indicate a partial understanding of target language rules, where learners substitute incorrect forms for correct ones, Brown, (2007).

4. Errors of Misordering

Errors of misordering, where the sequence of elements in a sentence is incorrect, were observed but less frequently. This finding is consistent with research by Gass and Selinker (2008), who indicated that misordering errors occur when learners apply rules from their first language or struggle with complex sentence structures in the target language. Misordering errors often reflect difficulties with syntactic rules and sentence structure in the target language, Hedge (2000).

5. Comparison with Similar Research

The types of errors observed in this study correspond with those identified in previous research on language acquisition. For instance, the prevalence of errors of omission and addition is consistent with findings by James (1998), who reported similar patterns among learners across different language backgrounds. Moreover, the occurrence of misformation and misordering errors is supported by studies such as those by Pienemann (1998), which emphasize the role of developmental stages in language learning and error types associated with these stages.

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well formed utterance. Here the students mostly committed errors in the use of" to be" and plural markers –s/ - es in translating Indonesian text into English. The following are examples made by the students in each form of to be and plural marker –s/ - es in translation:
a.   0mission of to be
SL : Ia sangat jelek sekarang.
TL : He very ugly now.
The omission instead of "He was ugly now"

b.   Omission of plural/marker –s/ -es
SL:Si buruk rupa dan pelayan-pelayannya kembali menjadi manusia.
TL: The beast and his servant became human again.
▪   The missing of plural marker "s".
Instead of "The beast and his servants became human again"

Addition errors are characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well form utterance. Addition errors occur in many forms of grammar and cannot be determined the patterns of occurrence as appear in the student translation. However, some grammatical aspects of unnecessary addition can be presented as follows: the unnecessary addition of to be (e.g.is), indefinite article 'an', the regular preterit form -ed, the adverb of manner -ly, unnecessary cognate's', etc.

Misformation errors are characterized by applying the wrong form of morpheme or structure. In translating Indonesian text into English, the students made errors of verb at the type of tense. The followings are some examples of misformation errors committed by the students.
SL : *Suatu hari, datanglah seorang wanita ke istananya.*

- TL : One day women come to his castle.
- Correction: it should be "One day women **came** to his castle".

○

SL : Belle tiba di istana itu dan menemukan ayahnya di sana.

- TL : She arrive in the castle and she found her father there.
- Correction: it should be "she **arrived** in the castle and she found her father there".

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morpheme in an utterance. The writer found also misordering errors in students' work sheet.

a. SL : Merekapun hidup bahagia selamanya.

TL : They lived ever happily after.
- Correction : **They lived happily ever after.**

b. SL : Suatu hari, datanglah seorang wanita ke istananya.

TL: One day, came a woman in the castle.
- Correction: it should be "one day, **a woman came** in the castle" in the sentence.

Based on the data analysis, the frequency of errors is respectively omission (98), addition (69), misformation (60), and misordering (49). Thus, the most common error that occurred in the translation text made by the students was omission.

Level of competence defines a reference point that someone may have, or may not yet have attained. The level of competence of the students in English Education Study Program in translating the Indonesian text into English was classified into poor level. The percentage of the level of ability was 51%.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the types and frequency of grammatical errors committed by students when translating Indonesian texts into English and to assess their level of translation competence. Based on the surface strategy taxonomy of errors—omission, addition, misformation, and misordering—the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Prevalence of Error Types

The analysis revealed that the most common type of error committed by students was omission, with 98 occurrences. This finding indicates that students frequently left out essential grammatical elements in their translations. This is consistent with previous research, which suggests that omissions often arise from incomplete understanding or difficulty in applying grammatical rules (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 2008). The high frequency of omission errors points to a potential gap in the students' grasp of required grammatical structures.

2. Level of Translation Competence

The level of competence among the students of SMPN 15 Kupang in translating Indonesian texts into English was classified as poor. This assessment was based on the frequency and nature of errors observed, with a significant number of errors suggesting challenges in both grammatical accuracy and overall translation skill. This conclusion aligns with findings from other studies that have identified similar difficulties among learners at comparable educational levels (Kırkgöz, 2008; Pienemann, 1998).

References

Arikunto, S. (2013). *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktik*. Rineka Cipta.

Ary, D., & Jacobs, L. (1979). *Introduction to research in education*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Bassnett, S. (2002). *Translation studies* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.

Catford, J. C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation*. Oxford University Press.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Press.

Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 5*(4), 161-170.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Duff, A. (1989). *Translation: Resource books for teachers*. Oxford University Press.

Dulay, H., & Burt, M. K. (1965). *Language two*. Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Gass, S. M. (2013). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Harper, C. A., & de Jong, E. J. (2004). *Understanding English language learners: A guide for teachers*. Heinemann.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford University Press.

Hulstijn, J. H. (2003). Connecting theories of language acquisition and language processing. In C. J.

Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 711-736). Blackwell.

James, C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. Longman.

Johnson, K. (2013). *Language teaching and skills development*. Routledge.

Kleinmann, H. H. (1977). Avoidance behavior in adult second language acquisition. *Language Learning, 27*(1), 93-107.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. University Press of America.

Martaya, W. (1988). *Seni menerjemahkan*. Kanisius.

Molina, L., & Albir, A. H. (2002). Translation techniques revisited: A dynamic and functionalist approach. *META: Translator's Journal, 47*(2), 498-512.

Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.

Nida, E. A. (1964). *Towards a science of translating*. E. J. Brill.

Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1982). *The theory and practice of translation*. E. J. Brill.

Nida, E. A. (2001). *Language and culture: Contexts in translation*. Foreign Language Education Press.

Pienemann, M. (1998). *Language processing and second language development: Processability theory*. John Benjamins Publishing.

Retnawati, H. (2014). *Teori respon butir dan penerapannya*. Nuha Medika.

Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 10*(3), 209-231.

Shaw, H. (1978). *Language arts and disciplines*. McGraw-Hill.