

TRANSLATION ERRORS: CATEGORIES AND CAUSES

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Abstract

The process of converting words from one language to another is known as translation. It holds a considerable part in almost every element of human life. Considering its increasing importance, the quality of the translated result must be improved. In reality, translation errors are often committed by translators. This research aims to determine the types of errors and the causes. The researchers conducted content analysis research and evaluated various studies on translation errors and their causes to obtain the data. The researchers found that translators' primary types of errors are grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and faithfulness errors. The causes of errors that the researchers found are the translator's lack of understanding of the target language's structure. Besides, culturally-bound words contributed as one of the causes of a translation error.

Keywords: translation, error types, and error causes

Abstrak

Proses konversi kata dari satu bahasa ke bahasa lain dikenal sebagai proses penerjemahan. Proses ini memegang bagian yang cukup besar di hampir setiap elemen kehidupan manusia. Mengingat semakin pentingnya proses penerjemahan, maka kualitas hasil terjemahan harus ditingkatkan. Pada kenyataannya, kesalahan penerjemahan sering dilakukan oleh penerjemah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis kesalahan dan penyebabnya. Peneliti melakukan penelitian analisis isi dan mengevaluasi berbagai penelitian tentang kesalahan terjemahan dan penyebabnya. Peneliti menemukan bahwa jenis kesalahan utama yang dilakukan oleh penerjemah adalah kesalahan tata bahasa, leksikal, sintaksis, dan kesesuaian. Penyebab kesalahan yang peneliti temukan adalah kurangnya pemahaman penerjemah terhadap struktur bahasa sasaran. Selain itu, kata-kata yang terikat budaya berkontribusi sebagai salah satu penyebab kesalahan terjemahan.

Kata kunci: terjemahan, jenis kesalahan, dan penyebab kesalahan

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1. INTRODUCTION

Translation has played an essential role in many aspects of life. Religious, educational, and communication aspects are mere few examples of how translation shows its utility. The rapid advancement of the 21st Century has forced the world into implementing a whole-world concept called globalization. Each nation places its interest in the hands of other nations. Beneficial contribution can only be achieved through good and proper communication. Communication is needed as a means of information exchange. In this point of view, translation is needed to close the gap of a fundamental obstacle, namely the language barrier.

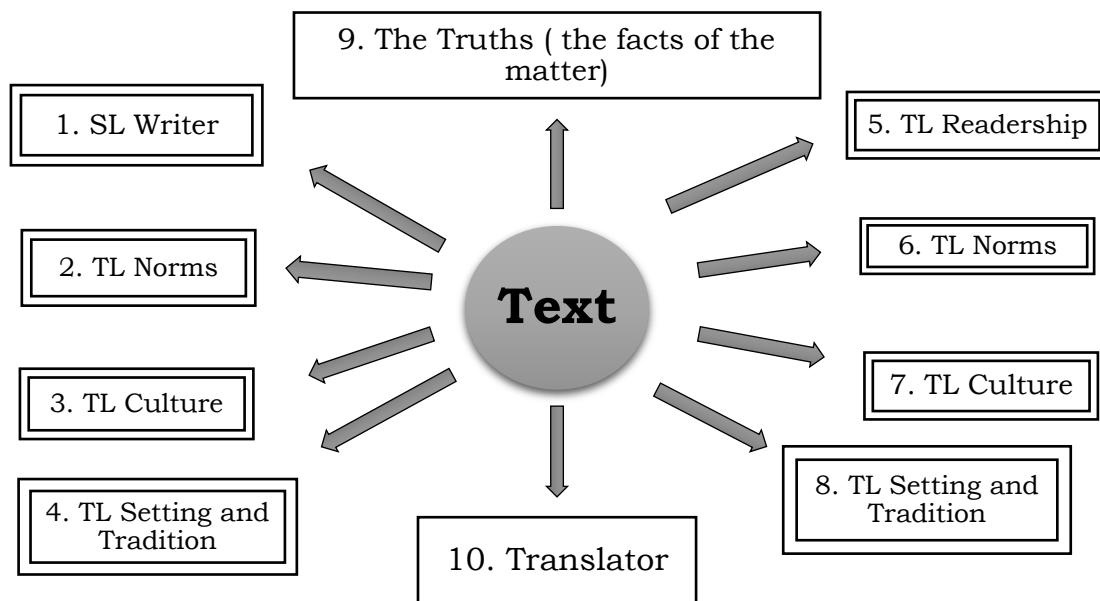
Several factors need to be mastered by a translator. The most basic knowledge needed is the language structure. Besides structure, a translator should also fully grasp the situation and condition of a certain language. Cultural context is surely the biggest challenge that needs to be overcome by a translator considering the world is filled with different customs geographically. This statement is supported by Larson, who believes that structure, lexicon, condition, and culture are the factors that need to be considered by a translator (Larson, 1984).

2. THE DEFINITION OF TRANSLATION

Translating means converting an original text into another language. The definition is the text itself is a group of paragraphs bound together by a specific topic. A complex topic usually constructs a text. Therefore, the content is usually long and written on more than one page (Silalahi et al., 2018).

The translation is the replacement of material in one language (Source Language) by equivalent material in another language (Target Language)(Catford, 1965). Another definition of translation refers to the process of a translator converting an original text in one language into a different language (Munday, 2001). Therefore, it is clear that translation is a process to achieve a translation product.

Figure 1. The Dynamics of Translation



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There are several flows involved in translation (Newmark, 1982). Figure 1 depicts the dynamics of translation. The translator, the main aspect of a translation process, should be well aware of the concepts of the source language and the target language. Furthermore, a translator needs critical literary and non-literary knowledge to assess the quality of a text before deciding the interpretation methods. Therefore, the translator's capability will greatly influence the process and the quality of translation.

Based on the discussed definition of translation, translation aims to recreate the source language into the target language. The final goal that the translator should pursue is the meaning. Meaning is the pinnacle of a translation process to reproduce the messages from the source language to the target language (Silalahi et al., 2018).

3. TYPES OF TRANSLATION ERRORS

Despite his great handling of translation and linguistics theories, a translator might be haunted by a number of difficulties. Errors can still occur in the process of translation. An error means that there is something not right occurring. Unlike mistakes, errors occur unconsciously. An error reflects the knowledge gap, and it is systematic. On the other hand, mistakes are considered performance flaws (Goff-Kfour, 2004). Based on the definition, errors and mistakes are two different things with different characteristics.

Theoretically, there are three common types of errors experienced by translators. Those errors are linguistics, comprehension, and translation errors (Popescu, 2013). Translation errors can be further worsened by the lack of knowledge in the source and target languages, such as the grammar and lexicon (Yousufi, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for translators to further improve their comprehension of the target language.

It is hard to pinpoint the category of translation errors since errors stem from various causes. Some of them are lack of

comprehension and misuse of words (Wonggranu, 2017). Furthermore, some experts have developed some theories regarding the classification of translation errors. First, Moentaha categorizes errors into lexical errors that deal with the meaning system of a language (source language) and grammatical errors that deal with the structural differences between one language to another (Moentaha, 2006). The lexical error might be caused by different lexical items among languages since language function and meaning can differ based on the culture (El-Farahaty, 2016). Furthermore, lexical errors can be grouped into two categories, namely error form and error meaning (Llach, 2011). Form errors can be found in written form, and meaning errors are associated with the usage of inappropriate words.

4. SOURCES OF TRANSLATION ERRORS

Incomplete knowledge about the rules of a target language often causes translation errors. It is caused by the translator's inability to fully comprehend the target language (Maryam & Kafipour, 2015). Therefore, misunderstanding is also considered as the onset of errors.

Another source of translation errors is the gap between languages. Baker states that translation errors are often caused by the non-equivalence between the source and target languages (Baker, 1992). Cultural differences present translators with difficulties in finding the equivalence of words. The translator often misread the source language, which result in errors. For example, when a translator misread the word hop into hope. The differences in meaning between the two words are vast. When a translator misinterprets the source text, he exhibits a source of translation error called misinterpretation. This cause is related to the grammar, denotative meaning of words, or connotative meaning of words. Other sources of errors are derived from the translators' misreading and misinterpretation (Wonggranu, 2017).

This research tries to present the types and causes of errors committed by translators. The researchers analyzed several research

results related to the translation errors and comprehensively presented them. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in the findings that categorize the errors based on the types and causes.

5. METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed the content analysis method with meta-analysis approach. Content analysis is a data collection method that focuses on the contents of documents, such as magazines, books, and newspapers (Kothari, 2004). Besides, it also deals with all verbal contents, either spoken or written. The researchers utilized the secondary data collection technique. Thus, the data is already available for the researchers to use, collect, and analyze. Furthermore, a meta-analysis is a set of techniques for combining evidence from several related studies (Cummings, 2012).

The researchers collected seven research articles dealing with translation errors from several journals. The obtained articles were classified based on the types and sources of errors. Finally, the researchers present the analysis results based on the predetermined categories.

In conducting this research, the researchers analyzed seven research articles that are strongly related to the focus of the research. The list of the analyzed articles can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. The List of the Analyzed Research Articles

No.	Title	Publisher	Year of Publication
1	Translation Errors on Public Signboard: An Error Analysis and Translation Strategy	Universitas Sanata Dharma	2020
2	An Error Analysis on Student's Translation Text	Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra	2019

3	Translation Errors in Students' Indonesian-English Translation Practice	EEJ	2019
4	Translation Errors in "Pooh's Neighborhood" Storybook	English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris	2019
5	The Analysis of Errors in Translation of Scientific Text from English to the Indonesian Language	JETL (Journal Of Education, Teaching and Learning)	2018
6	Errors in translation made by English major students: A study on types and causes.	Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences	2017
7	Describing the Errors in the Translations of Iranian Novice English Translators.	Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences	2014

6. FINDINGS

Errors can be classified into several types, as discussed in the previous section. In her research, Sari found several errors committed by translating Indonesian into English, specifically when translating recipes (Sari, 2019). The students made two types of errors, namely lexical and grammatical errors. The lexical errors are related to finding the equivalent of words from Indonesia into English. One example of a lexical error in this type is when the students are asked to translate *masukkan telur ke dalam mangkok*. In this example, the students changed the word "*masukkan telur*" into "put the egg." However, the choice of words was inappropriate. The word "put the egg" should be changed into "crack the egg." She found that the students often committed errors in terms of prepositions and tenses in grammatical

errors. In terms of the causes of errors, Sari believes that the errors are caused by students' inability to comprehend culturally-bound words.

Another research found that students committed several types of errors. Koman found that students committed 21 types of translation errors in the aspects of grammatical, syntactic, and faithfulness (Koman et al., 2019). As for the cause, the researchers found that the errors are caused by extra-textual factors, such as sender, intention, recipient, medium, time, motive, and text functions. The students do not become aware of structural differences. Therefore, they try to match the source text's structure into the target language structure. That process results in numerous errors.

Yousofi researched Iranian students when translating Persian text into English and English text into Persian (Yousofi, 2014). He found that the errors occurred in linguistics, culture, and style. He believes that the translators did not possess enough understanding of the source and target languages. However, he does not present the cause of the errors since his research was not focused on that matter. Thus, he suggested researchers to specifically focus on that aspect.

Research on Thai students found three main types of translation errors (Wongranu, 2017). The syntactic errors dominated the errors by 65%. This error consists of errors in constructing sentences, such as parallelism, tenses, and preposition. The second type of error is semantic errors (26.5%). This error can be found when the students choose the inappropriate equivalent words. The last type of error is the miscellaneous error (8.5%). One example of a miscellaneous error is a misspelling. The causes of errors mainly come from the procedure, carelessness, low self-confidence, and anxiety.

Besides the types discussed above, the researchers also found several other errors, namely the strategy, lexical, morphological, and syntactic errors (Silalahi et al., 2018). The researchers found that most students employed a semantic strategy called modulation. The students committed formal lexical errors when choosing the desired words in the

lexical error. The morphological errors occurred when the students applied the improper affixation. The last is syntactic errors in translating scientific texts, specifically the phrases, clauses, and sentences.

The cause of translation errors is the students' understanding (Silalahi et al., 2018). Most of the students do not know the equivalent for numerous source-language texts. Students' insufficient understanding resulted in the low quality of translation product, marked by incorrect grammar, vague sentences, incoherence, and punctuation errors.

Students are not the only ones who commit translation errors. In some cases, even professional or amateur translators make translation errors. This claim is supported by research on the translation errors by an amateur translator in translating children's storybooks (Istiqomah et al., 2019). The researchers found several errors in words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Specifically, the errors found were modal, preposition, noun phrase, verb phrase, and dependent and independent clauses. Based on the analysis, the translators faced difficulty translating clauses and phrases. The cause for the translation error is the limited understanding possessed by the translator. In short, the errors occurred due to the translator's low mastery in the particular part of speeches.

Translation errors are not limited to texts or passages. Many errors can be found in various places. One research indicates that translation errors can also be found in signboards (Chandra, 2020). The researcher found 45 cases of translation errors. The errors consisted of omission errors (36.5%) misinformation error (27%), addition error (22%), and misordering errors (15.5%). He concluded that translation errors are mostly in the language structure. Translators' understanding might cause errors; thus, translators should always improve their mastery of language structure.

Based on the analysis mentioned by the research above, the researchers assumed that translation errors could happen in many sources and target languages. Besides, the objects of translation errors are not limited only to written text but also spoken and displayed objects (signboard).

Upon analyzing the research articles, the researchers could summarize that the errors are mainly composed of several types. First, the common translation errors are the grammatical and lexical aspects. Those errors are related to finding a proper equivalent for certain words and grammatical structures. Second, the errors commonly faced by translators are **grammatical, syntactic, and faithfulness** errors.

In terms of the causes of errors, the researchers found that the most common causes of errors are translators' lack of understanding of the source and target language structures. A translator should master the structure of the source and target languages.

Another aspect that often causes translation error is culture. It must be noted that every country has its specific culture, which, in turn, brings about culturally-bound words. Those words cannot be translated by translating each word without considering the origin and proper usage.

The finding of this research is supported by Putri's research (Putri, 2019). She conducted similar research where she analyzed ten research articles. She found that the most common translation errors are semantic, lexical, grammatical, and morphological. She also found that the dominant cause of errors is the translator's lack of knowledge.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Translation can be defined as converting the source language into the target language. However, translation errors can be encountered in many translation products. This research summarizes that the primary types of errors commonly committed by translators are grammatical and lexical errors. Also, the researchers found that translators often

encounter syntactic and faithfulness errors. The causes of errors that the researchers found were the translator's lack of understanding of the target language's structure. Besides, lack of understanding of culturally-bound words contributed as one of the causes of a translation error.

The researchers suggest that translators should always improve themselves by actively studying the target language's structure and vocabulary. Also, they have to enrich their understanding of the target language's culture to avoid producing errors in translation.

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