



## An Error Analysis in Translating Indonesian Text into English by Fourth Semester of the English Education Study Program at Nommensen HKBP University Medan

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### Abstract

*This study examines the translation errors made by fourth-semester English Education students at HKBP Nommensen University Medan when translating expository texts from Indonesian into English. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach and the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), the research classifies errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Data were collected from student translation assignments. The purpose of this study is to identify the types and frequency of errors as well as the translation strategies students used, in order to understand the linguistic and contextual challenges they face. The findings revealed that misformation errors were the most dominant (75.82%), followed by addition and omission (each 10.48%), and misordering (3.22%). All 20 participants relied heavily on literal translation techniques, which often resulted in unnatural sentence structures and incorrect grammatical forms. This study highlights the need for more targeted grammar instruction, sentence restructuring exercises, and contextual vocabulary training. It contributes to the existing literature on translation errors in academic texts and offers practical insights for improving translation pedagogy and curriculum development in English education programs.*

**Keywords:** translation errors, literal translation, expository text, misformation, omission, qualitative analysis.

### INTRODUCTION

Language is the main communication tool that is very important in human life. In this era of globalization, English has become an international language used for various cross-border and cultural communication purposes. According to (Febrianti 2020) as cited in (Wirentake, 2022), students frequently encounter difficulties when translating lexical words or phrases from the source language to the target language.

English language skills particularly translation are essential for English Education students to truly understand the science of language and to prepare themselves for the demands of the professional world. However, in reality, many students still struggle when translating texts from Indonesian to English. These challenges often stem from limited vocabulary, difficulties with grammar, and a lac

of deep understanding of cultural context. This highlights the importance of conducting deeper research into the specific problems students face during the translation process.

Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is:

What are the types of mistakes that students make in translating expository texts from Indonesian to English? And What are the more dominant mistakes made by students in translating? The formulation of this problem is the main focus so that the research can provide a clear picture of the mistakes made by students in text translation activities. By knowing the specifics of the student's mistakes in translating the text, appropriate solution steps can be proposed.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze various problems faced by 4th semester English Education students in translating texts from Indonesian to English. This research also aims to uncover the factors that influence translation errors in order to contribute to the development of effective learning strategies. Thus, this study not only aims to provide an academic overview, but also results that are applicable to improving the quality of translation learning on campus (Purwanto et al, 2022).

This research is useful practically for lecturers as a material for evaluating and improving translation teaching methods that are tailored to the needs and difficulties of students. In addition, its theoretical benefits are to add to the treasure of scientific studies on translation problems among English Education students, especially in the context of Indonesian to English. By understanding these benefits, it is hoped that this research can be an important reference for the development of language education in the future (Anwar et al., 2021) cited from (Purwanto et al., 2022)

To keep the focus of the research more directed and in-depth, this research is limited to 4th semester students of the English Education study program who translate expository texts from Indonesian to English. The focus of the analysis is directed at linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary and grammar. This limitation is important so that research can be carried out systematically and provide valid and reliable results according to the desired academic and practical context.

Translation is a complex process that transfers not only the structure of language but also contextual and cultural meaning from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). In research by Syukrina (2021) as cited in (Shaheri et al., 2017) Translation is defined as the transfer of meaning that considers semantic, structural, and contextual equivalents, rather than just word-for-word replacements. The goal is not only to produce grammatically structured text, but also to trigger the same response in TL readers as SL readers.

In practice, it is common and classified into academically identified categories. Based on a study by Bakri (2023), as cited in (Wirentake, 2022) Students often make various types of errors, particularly in noun phrases. These include mistakes such as choosing the wrong word (mis-selection), spelling errors, incorrect word order (mis-ordering), as well as omission, addition, and misformation. Similarly, research by (Shiddiq et al., 2023), also cited in highlights that students frequently struggle with lexical and grammatical issues, such as using inappropriate vocabulary and constructing sentences incorrectly. These findings point to the urgent need to strengthen students' overall language proficiency.

An effective translation strategy is essential to overcome these errors. Study in Timor Regency (2024) cited from (Wirentake, 2022) It was noted that students used three main strategies: natural borrowing, adaptation, and literal translation, as a way to overcome the limitations of vocabulary and long sentence structure. Natural adaptations and borrowings help maintain the meaning and naturalness of the text, while literal strategies are often used when access to vocabulary is limited. It is important to strike a balance when choosing translation strategies to ensure both accuracy and the intended meaning are preserved. Linguistic and cultural competence also play a key role in achieving accurate translations. As noted by Zhang et al. (2022), cited in (Fujiyanti et al., 2022), students who are familiar with cultural contexts and idiomatic expressions tend to produce more accurate translations. In contrast, those with limited cultural understanding often rely on literal translations that miss the deeper meaning. This highlights that, beyond grammar and vocabulary mastery, cultural awareness is an essential component of effective translation training.

Expository texts, or informational texts, are non-fiction texts that give facts and information about a topic. These academic texts are common in subjects such as science, history and social sciences (Smith, 2022). expository texts usually use logical structures, such as cause-and-effect, chronological order, or comparison, and contain straightforward and formal language. Expository texts are designed to clearly present facts or ideas to readers who may not be familiar with the subject matter (Mackey, 1992). In educational settings, these texts commonly appear in textbooks, scientific articles, and reports, where translators must grasp both the structure of the content and the use of academic language.

Translating expository texts presents unique challenges, such as preserving clarity, logical flow, and the accuracy of technical terms. (Answers, n.d.) emphasize that translating academic texts like expository writing requires a solid understanding of genre conventions and scientific rhetoric to ensure the information remains clear and faithful in the target language. As such, mastering the features of expository texts is essential—especially for students learning to translate informative materials from Indonesian into English.

Based on previous studies, many studies have discussed student translation errors in narrative, descriptive, and literary texts. However, there are still few who specifically examine the mistranslation of expository texts, which are actually widely used in academic and scientific contexts. In fact, expository texts have different structures and purposes, and contain more technical and formal terms. This presents specific challenges that warrant deeper investigation. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by focusing on analyzing students' translation errors when translating expository texts from Indonesian into English.

Astuti and Wardani (2022) conducted a study on student errors in translating English-Indonesian grammatical structures. The findings revealed that the most common mistakes occurred in the use of complex sentence structures, especially in handling conditional sentences and tense-related clauses. The study concluded that students' understanding of complex grammar is still limited, which significantly affects the accuracy of their translations.

Putri and Yuliana (2021), as cited in *Analysis et al.* (2021), examined the lexical difficulties faced by EFL students in translating from Indonesian to English. Their study found that students often chose idiomatic expressions literally without considering cultural appropriateness. It concluded that limited vocabulary knowledge and poor cultural awareness hinder students from conveying the intended meaning accurately in the target language. Rahman et al. (2023), in their study *Cultural Transfer and Semantic Shifts in Student-Produced Translations*, observed that students often fail to capture cultural nuances when translating. As a result, they tend to use foreign terms passively, which leads to semantic distortion. The study concluded that students' lack of sensitivity to cultural elements in translation often results in a shift or loss of meaning.

## METHOD

This study uses the Qualitative Descriptive method, which aims to systematically describe the types of mistakes made by students in translating texts from Indonesian to English. This approach was chosen because the researcher did not focus on the measurement of numbers, but on an in-depth observation of the types of linguistic errors and strategies used by students. The qualitative approach also allows researchers to explore an understanding of the factors that cause errors, both in terms of linguistic competence and cultural understanding (Salsabila et al., 2022). The subject in this study is the 4th semester students of the English Education Study Program at Nommensen HKBP University Medan. They were chosen because at this level, students have received courses in the basics of translation and have experience translating texts directly. The object of the research is the result of student translation from Indonesian expository texts into English. These results were analyzed to identify the types of errors and translation strategies used.

In this qualitative research, the researcher acted as the key instrument who was directly involved in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. The researcher's role included selecting participants, administering the translation tasks, and classifying the errors based on established frameworks. The research was conducted at the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, HKBP Nommensen University, Medan. The data collection took place during the class of the fourth students.

### Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out by analyzing students' written translations of expository texts from Indonesian into English, which is given in the form of structured assignments. Students are required to translate a short hortatory text from Indonesian to English within a certain period of time without using digital translation tools such as Google Translate.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach is used to systematically describe the forms of mistakes made by students in translating expository texts from Indonesian into English. The analysis was carried out using the Error Analysis theory from (Bialystok et al., 1983) which is classified into four types of errors, namely:

1. **Omission** – the omission of elements that should be present in the target sentence.
2. **Addition** – the addition of unnecessary elements.
3. **Formation error** – the use of incorrect shapes or structures.
4. **Misordering** – an error in the order of words or phrases.

In addition to these classifications, this analysis also includes linguistic categories, including:

- **Grammar** (tenses, articles, subject-verb agreements),
- **Vocabulary** (word choice, idiom),
- **Sentence structure**, and
- **Punctuation**.

### Analysis Steps:

#### 1. Translation Data Collection

Data was obtained from the results of 4th semester students' translations of expository texts entitled "*Character Education in the Digital Era*".

2. Identify Errors. The translation results are compared to the source text sentence by sentence. Each error found is recorded and classified according to linguistic type and category.

3. Frequency and Percentage Calculation Each type of error is counted in numbers to find out the most dominant error.

In this study, the formula used to calculate the percentage of each type of translation error was:

$$\text{Number of each error} / \text{Total number of errors} \times 100\%$$

## RESULT/S AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of students' translated texts, several types of translation errors were identified according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). These errors were classified into four categories: addition, misformation, misordering, and omission (noted as negligence in this study). The data were systematically tabulated to show the total number of each error type along with their respective percentages. The following table presents the distribution of translation errors found in the students' work:

**Table 1.** Types of Error

Not	Error Types	Entire	Percentage
1	Addition	13	10,48%
2	Misinformation	94	75,82%
3	Misordering	4	3,22%
4	Negligence	13	10,48%
	<b>Entire</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100%</b>

## DISCUSSION

The findings from the error analysis indicate that the most prevalent type of translation error made by fourth-semester students was misformation, with a total of 94 errors, accounting for 75.82% of all errors identified. This suggests that a significant number of students struggle with selecting the appropriate grammatical or lexical forms when translating sentences from Indonesian to English. Misformation errors typically occur when students select inappropriate lexical items, verb tenses, or sentence structures that do not conform to standard English usage, yet are assumed to be correct. Such errors are often attributed to limited grammatical knowledge or negative transfer from their first language (L1).

The next most frequent error types were addition and omission (loss), with each category contributing 13 errors, representing 10.48% of the total errors. Addition errors involve inserting unnecessary words or elements not present in the source text, which may disrupt the intended meaning. Conversely, omission errors arise when essential words or phrases are left out during translation, leading to incomplete or unclear target sentences.

These findings reinforce the need for targeted instruction in grammar and translation strategies, especially concerning accurate form usage and syntactic structure. Furthermore, the dominance of misformation errors highlights a gap in students' ability to internalize and apply English grammar rules correctly in translation contexts.

Addition errors arise when students insert unnecessary elements into sentences that are not present in the source language. This often results from excessive generalizations or attempts to "sound more English", which actually interferes with the clarity of meaning. An example might be to translate "values" (values) as "some of these types of values" which is redundant and ungrammatical.

On the other hand, the Omission error occurs when a student fails to enter an important element in the target language, such as an article, auxiliary verb, or preposition. On the other hand, **omission errors** occur when students fail to include essential elements in the target language, such as articles, auxiliary verbs, or prepositions. This type of error often results in incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences, which can distort the intended meaning or create ambiguity. For example, consider the Indonesian sentence "*Dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, nilai-nilai moral sangat penting.*" A common omission error would be translating this as "*In everyday life, moral values very important,*" where the auxiliary verb "are" is missing. Without this verb, the sentence becomes grammatically incorrect and unclear. The correct translation should be: "*In everyday life, moral values are very important.*" This example illustrates how omitting even a small grammatical element can significantly affect the clarity and accuracy of a translation.

The rarest error was misordering, found only 4 times or 3.22%. This error occurs when the word order in the English translation does not follow standard syntactic rules. For example, a student may write "*These values should only not be taught*" instead of the correct form "*These values should not only be taught.*" Although less frequent, misordering errors can significantly affect sentence coherence and the clarity of meaning. Overall, the findings show that students face the greatest challenges with grammar and sentence formation, especially in the use of appropriate word forms and sentence structures. The high frequency of misrepresentations indicates the need for instruction that is more focused on English grammatical accuracy and translation techniques. It also suggests that students may overrely on literal translation strategies without understanding the syntactic and semantic demands of the target language.

These findings are consistent with previous research such as Astuti & Wardani (2022) (Penelitian et al., 2025), which found that students often struggle with grammatical structures such as tenses and capitals. Similarly, Putri & Yuliana (2021)(Analysis et al., 2021) emphasizes that lexical difficulties and word-for-word translation approaches often lead to translation errors. The results of this study reinforce the importance of integrating explicit grammar instruction and contrastive analysis in translation teaching to reduce repetitive structural errors.

Based on the analysis of translation techniques employed by fourth-semester students in translating expository texts from Indonesian into English, it was found that the most dominantly used technique was literal translation. All 20 student participants (20/20) applied the literal translation method, indicating a strong tendency to translate word-for-word without adapting the structure or meaning to fit the context of the target language.

The frequent use of literal translation explains why misinformation emerged as the most dominant type of error in this study. Literal translation often results in structurally awkward or grammatically incorrect English sentences due to the rigid transfer of source language patterns. Several examples of student translations that illustrate the use of literal translation are as follows:

**Source Sentence:**

*Di era digital saat ini, tantangan dalam membentuk karakter generasi muda semakin kompleks.*

**Translation:** *In today's digital age, shaping the character of the younger generation is becoming more challenging.*

This translation closely mirrors the original sentence structure without modification or reorganization.

**Source sentence:**

*Tidak hanya menjadi tanggung jawab keluarga, tetapi juga lembaga pendidikan dan masyarakat.*

**Translation:** *Therefore, character education is not only the responsibility of families, but also of educational institutions and society.*

While the meaning is conveyed, the structure follows the source language too literally.

**Source sentence (RG):**

*Pengaruh teknologi, media sosial, dan informasi yang tanpa batas dapat membentuk pola pikir serta perilaku anak-anak dan remaja.*

**Translation:** *The influence of technology, social media, and unlimited information can shape the mindset and behavior of children and adolescents.*

→ The sentence structure, sequence of ideas, and word choice are nearly identical to the source text.

**Source sentence (TS):**

*Tanpa karakter yang kuat, ilmu pengetahuan bisa disalahgunakan dan justru merugikan masyarakat.*

**Translation:** *Without strong character, knowledge can be misused and ultimately harm society.*

→ The student translated the sentence using a word-for-word approach and did not apply any syntactic, semantic, or stylistic adaptations to make the sentence more idiomatic and natural in English.

**Source sentence (CM):**

*Pendidikan karakter adalah tanggung jawab keluarga dan masyarakat.*

**Translation:** *Character education is the responsibility of the family and society.*

The student transferred the sentence directly, word-for-word, from Indonesian into English without adjusting the article usage, word order, or style to better suit English norms.

These examples demonstrate that the majority of students did not adapt the structure or word choice contextually, but instead translated directly following the form and sequence of the source text. This supports the conclusion that students still lack awareness or training in alternative translation strategies. Therefore, there is a clear need to enhance students' literacy in translation approaches in order to produce more natural, grammatically accurate, and contextually appropriate English translations.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify and analyze the types of translation errors made by fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program when translating expository texts from Indonesian into English. Based on the findings, it was revealed that the most dominant error type was misformation, accounting for 75.82% of the total errors. This indicates a significant difficulty among students in using correct grammatical forms, such as verb tenses, modal constructions, and sentence structures.

Other errors identified include addition and omission (each 10.48%), which reflect students' tendencies either to overgeneralize by inserting unnecessary elements or to leave out crucial components, both of which lead to loss of meaning or distortion. The least frequent error was misordering (3.22%), yet it still impacted sentence clarity and fluency. These findings highlight the linguistic challenges that EFL learners face in translation activities, particularly in mastering grammatical accuracy, maintaining sentence structure, and avoiding literal translation. The students' over-reliance on direct translation strategies without considering syntactic and contextual nuances suggests a need for instructional interventions.

It is recommended that translation teaching be enhanced by incorporating:

- Focused grammar instruction,
- Exercises on sentence reformation,
- And contextual vocabulary training.

This research also fills a gap by focusing on translation errors in expository texts, a genre often overlooked in previous studies that mostly examined narrative or descriptive texts. Thus, the results contribute not only to academic insight but also to practical pedagogical strategies for improving translation competence in higher education contexts. Future research may further investigate how integrating contrastive analysis and cultural translation awareness into the curriculum can reduce reliance on literal translation strategies.

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