

Difficulties Faced By Eleventh Grade Students In Translating English Narrative Texts Into Indonesian At Sma Swasta Katolik Mariana Medan

Yuni Maria Manullang¹, Kammer Sipayung², Dewi Silalahi³.

^{1,2,3}Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu pendidikan Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

yuni.mariamanullang@student.uhn.ac.id¹, kammer.sipayung@uhn.ac.id², dewi.silalahi@uhn.ac.id³

Info Artikel

Diterima:
Tgl 5 April 2026
Revisi:
Tgl 25 April 2026
Terbit:
Tgl 9 April 2026

Keywords:

Translation difficulties;
English narrative texts, lexical, grammatical, semantic, linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

Kata Kunci:

Kesulitan menerjemahkan, teks naratif Bahasa Inggris, leksikal, gramatikal, semantik, factor linguistik dan non-linguistik.

Corresponding Author :

Yuni Maria Manullang¹,
Kammer Sipayung², Dewi Silalahi³
E-mail:
yuni.mariamanullang@student.uhn.ac.id¹,
kammer.sipayung@uhn.ac.id²,
dewi.silalahi@uhn.ac.id³

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the types of translation difficulties faced by eleventh-grade students in translating English narrative texts into Indonesian and to identify the factors causing these difficulties. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, using translation sheets and interview transcripts as the primary data sources. The findings revealed that students experienced three main types of difficulties: lexical, grammatical, and semantic, with lexical difficulties being the most dominant (42.5%), followed by grammatical (32.5%) and semantic difficulties (25%). The factors causing these difficulties were classified into linguistic factors, including limited vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure problems, lack of contextual understanding, and reliance on literal translation, as well as non-linguistic factors such as fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and lack of practice. The study concluded that both linguistic competence and psychological factors significantly influenced students' translation performance, suggesting that improvement in vocabulary, grammar mastery, contextual understanding, and learning support is essential to enhance students' translation skills.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis kesulitan yang dialami siswa kelas XI dalam menerjemahkan teks naratif bahasa Inggris ke bahasa Indonesia serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesulitan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan lembar terjemahan siswa dan transkrip wawancara sebagai sumber data utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami tiga jenis kesulitan utama, yaitu kesulitan leksikal, gramatikal, dan semantik, dengan kesulitan leksikal sebagai yang paling dominan (42,5%), diikuti kesulitan gramatikal (32,5%) dan semantik (25%). Faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesulitan ini diklasifikasikan menjadi faktor linguistik, seperti keterbatasan kosa kata, kesulitan tata bahasa dan struktur kalimat, kurangnya pemahaman konteks, dan ketergantungan pada penerjemahan harfiah, serta faktor non-linguistik, yaitu rasa takut melakukan kesalahan, rendahnya rasa percaya diri, dan kurangnya latihan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kompetensi linguistik dan faktor psikologis secara signifikan mempengaruhi kinerja siswa dalam menerjemahkan, sehingga peningkatan penguasaan kosa kata, tata bahasa, pemahaman konteks, dan dukungan pembelajaran sangat penting untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menerjemahkan siswa.

Introduction

Language plays an important role as a medium of communication that enables people to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings in daily interaction. In the era of globalization, English has become one of the most widely

used international languages in various fields such as education, culture, science, and technology. Therefore, mastering English is essential, particularly for students who learn it as a foreign language. One important skill in learning English is the ability to understand and interpret texts both orally and in written form. In this context, translation becomes an important skill because it helps students transfer meaning from the source language into the target language while maintaining the intended message. Based on Newmark (1988), translation is the process of transferring meaning from the source language into the target language so that the message can be understood naturally by readers. Similarly, Nida, Eugene & Taber (1982) state that translation involves reproducing the closest natural equivalent of the source language message in the target language, both in terms of meaning and style.

One of the text types commonly taught in English learning at the senior high school level is narrative text. Narrative text presents a sequence of events that aims to entertain readers and usually consists of orientation, complication, and resolution Anderson and Kathy (1997). Through narrative texts, students are expected to improve their reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and understanding of moral values presented in the story. However, translating narrative texts is not an easy task for students. In the process of translation, students often encounter difficulties in understanding vocabulary, grammatical structures, and contextual meanings. These difficulties may lead to inaccurate translations and misunderstanding of the message conveyed in the text.

Based on classroom observations conducted during teaching practice at SMA Swasta Katolik Mariana Medan, many eleventh-grade students still experience difficulties in translating English narrative texts into Indonesian. Students tend to translate texts word by word without considering the overall meaning, which often results in inaccurate or unnatural translations. For example, the sentence *"The fox, who was a conceited creature"* was translated by students as *"Rubah, makhluk hidup yang sombong,"* which sounds unnatural in Indonesian, whereas a more appropriate translation would be *"seekor rubah yang sombong."* Similarly, the sentence *"Our mutual enemies, the dog"* was translated as *"musuh sesama kita, anjing,"* instead of *"musuh kita bersama."* These examples indicate that students still experience difficulties in choosing appropriate lexical equivalents and constructing natural sentences in the target language. Based on Nababan, Sinambela & Pasaribu (2025), translation quality is influenced by several aspects such as accuracy, acceptability, and readability, which require students to understand both linguistic and contextual meanings. In addition, Sipayung

(2018) states that translation shifts and translation methods can significantly influence the accuracy of translation results.

Several previous studies have also discussed students' difficulties in translation. Hastuti and Kardena (2020) found that students experienced difficulties in translating narrative texts due to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguistic factors include vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and understanding of context, while non-linguistic factors are related to cultural background and learning conditions. Similarly, Surayatika (2024) reported that students often encounter difficulties in grammar, coherence, and clarity when translating descriptive texts. Other studies also indicate similar problems. Hanivah & Andika (2023), identified difficulties related to idiomatic expressions, inappropriate word equivalents, and unsystematic sentence construction during the translation process. Meanwhile, Rosyana (2022) found that vocabulary problems and incomplete sentence structures were the most dominant issues faced by students when translating report texts. In addition, Nur Halisa Hasbi (2023) revealed that although students showed relatively good ability in translating narrative texts, they still faced difficulties related to complex sentence structures and limited vocabulary mastery.

Although many studies have investigated translation difficulties, most of them focus on different types of texts or different educational contexts. Some studies examine descriptive or report texts, while others focus on university students rather than high school students. Therefore, further research is needed to explore students' translation difficulties in narrative texts, particularly among senior high school students. This study aims to identify the difficulties faced by eleventh-grade students at SMA Swasta Katolik Mariana Medan in translating English narrative texts into Indonesian and to examine the factors that cause these difficulties. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for teachers and students in improving translation skills and to contribute to the development of translation teaching strategies in English language learning.

Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the difficulties faced by students in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian. A qualitative approach was used because this study aimed to understand the phenomenon in depth based on data obtained from real situations in the field. Based on Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social problems. Through this approach, the researcher was able to systematically

describe the types of difficulties experienced by students and the factors that caused these difficulties when translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian.

The data of this study consisted of words, phrases, and sentences produced from students' translations of English narrative texts. The primary data source was obtained from the translation results of 20 eleventh-grade science students at SMA Swasta Katolik Mariana Medan. In addition, supplementary data were obtained through interviews with ten students selected using purposive sampling, which is a technique of selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives as explained by Sugiyono (2019). Interviews were also conducted with an English teacher to obtain additional information regarding the difficulties experienced by students during the translation process. Therefore, the data were not only derived from students' translation results but also from direct explanations of their experiences and challenges during the translation activities.

The research instruments used in this study were translation sheets and interview sheets. The translation sheets were used to identify the types of difficulties encountered by students when translating English narrative texts into Indonesian. In this activity, students were asked to translate four narrative texts selected by the researcher according to the students' proficiency level. The translation results were then collected and analyzed to identify various translation difficulties experienced by the students. In addition, interview sheets were used to obtain more in-depth information about the factors that caused students' difficulties in translating the texts. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, which allowed the researcher to develop additional questions during the interview process so that more comprehensive and detailed information could be obtained.

The data collection process was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher prepared four English narrative texts with different titles to be given to the students. Second, the texts were distributed to the students along with instructions regarding the translation procedures. The students were then asked to translate the narrative texts into Indonesian within the allotted time. After the translation process was completed, the researcher collected the students' translation results for analysis. The next step involved conducting interviews with the ten selected students as well as the English teacher to obtain deeper information regarding the difficulties encountered during the translation process. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed to ensure that the collected data could be analyzed systematically.

The collected data were analyzed by identifying the types of translation difficulties that appeared in the students' translation results based on the categories proposed by Newmark (1988), which include lexical, grammatical, semantic, and cultural difficulties. In the analysis process, the researcher first identified the errors found in the students' translations and then classified these difficulties into appropriate categories. The results were presented in the form of tables to reveal patterns of translation difficulties experienced by the students. Meanwhile, the interview data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Through these stages, the researcher was able to identify the main factors that caused students to experience difficulties in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of the difficulties experienced by eleventh-grade students of SMA Swasta Katolik Mariana Medan in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian. The analysis is based on the translation theory proposed by Newmark (1988) and the qualitative data analysis procedures introduced by Miles & Huberman (1994). The discussion integrates the findings obtained from students' translation results and interview data in order to explain both the types of translation difficulties and the factors that caused these difficulties.

Types of Translation Difficulties

Based on the analysis of students' translation results, three main types of translation difficulties were identified, namely lexical difficulties, grammatical difficulties, and semantic difficulties. These difficulties occurred because students often translated the source text literally without fully considering the contextual meaning, grammatical structure, and semantic nuances in the target language.

Lexical Difficulties

Lexical difficulties occur when translators fail to select appropriate lexical equivalents due to differences in meaning, collocation, idiomatic expressions, and contextual usage between the source language and the target language. Based on Baker (2018), lexical problems in translation often arise when translators cannot find appropriate equivalence in the target language or when the contextual meaning of a word is not fully understood. Based on Newmark (1988), lexical errors frequently arise when translators rely excessively on dictionary meanings without considering the contextual and stylistic functions of words in the text. Several lexical errors were found in the students' translations. One example can be seen in the following sentence:

ST: A bee and an ant once in the past

TT: Seekor lebah dan semut sekali di masa lalu

In this case, the word *once* was translated literally as *sekali*. However, in narrative texts the expression *once* functions as a temporal marker similar to *once upon a time*, which indicates the beginning of a story. The literal translation changes the narrative function of the expression and results in an unnatural sentence in Indonesian. This error indicates that the student failed to recognize the contextual meaning of the word. Another example can be seen in the following translation:

ST: However I needed to figure out where

TT: Namun saya membutuhkan untuk menyadari dimana

The phrasal verb *figure out* was translated as *menyadari* (to realize). However, in this context the expression means "to find out" or "to determine." This lexical choice causes a shift in meaning because the translated word does not accurately represent the intended meaning of the source text. A similar problem can also be observed in the following translation:

ST: One of them is Eki

TT: Satu dari pada tim adalah Eki

In this example, the pronoun *them* was translated as *tim* (team). This translation changes the referential meaning of the sentence because the source text refers to people rather than a formal group such as a team. The incorrect word choice indicates a difficulty in selecting appropriate lexical equivalents in the target language.

These examples demonstrate that lexical difficulties were mainly caused by literal translation, inappropriate word selection, and limited vocabulary mastery. As a result, the translated sentences often became unnatural or semantically inaccurate.

Grammatical Difficulties

Grammatical difficulties arise when translators fail to adjust the grammatical structure of the source language to the grammatical system of the target language. Catford (1965) states that differences in grammatical systems between languages often cause structural shifts during the translation process. In addition to Peter Newmark, grammatical errors often occur when sentence structures are transferred directly without adapting them to the syntactic norms of the target language. One example of grammatical difficulty can be observed in the following translation:

ST: Until he came to an extensive desert

TT: Hingga dia di padang pasir luas

The translated sentence does not contain a clear predicate, which makes it structurally incomplete. In Indonesian grammar, a sentence requires a verb to form a complete clause. The omission of the verb *came* causes the sentence to lose its grammatical completeness. A more appropriate translation would be *Hingga ia tiba di sebuah padang pasir yang luas*. Another example can be found in the following translation:

ST: After two days they discovered a spot they believe is correct

TT: Setelah dua hari mereka percaya benar disebuah bukit yang lebar

In this case, the main verb *discovered* is omitted and the relative clause *they believe is correct* is not properly reconstructed in Indonesian. As a result, the sentence becomes grammatically incorrect and the intended meaning is not clearly conveyed.

Grammatical problems also appeared in the translation of complex sentence structures and phrase constructions. Many students transferred English structures directly into Indonesian without adjusting them to the grammatical patterns of the target language. These findings indicate that students still experience difficulties in understanding the structural differences between English and Indonesian.

Semantic Difficulties

Semantic difficulties occur when translators fail to interpret the contextual meaning, figurative meaning, or semantic nuances of words and expressions in the source text. As explained by Peter Newmark, meaning in translation is not limited to dictionary definitions but also includes contextual meaning and communicative function.

One example of semantic difficulty can be seen in the following translation:

ST: Amidst the desert Eki feel parched and hungry

TT: Di tengah padang pasir Eki merasa kering dan lapar

The word *parched* was translated as *kering* (dry). Although this translation reflects the literal meaning of the word, it does not represent the intended meaning in the context of the sentence. In narrative texts, the word *parched* refers to a condition of extreme thirst. Therefore, a more appropriate translation would be *kehausan*. Another example can be observed in the following translation:

ST: The news ran fast in the town

TT: Berita itu berlari cepat di kota

The phrase *ran fast* in this sentence is metaphorical and means "spread quickly." However, the student translated the phrase literally as *berlari cepat*, which creates semantic inaccuracy and makes the sentence sound unnatural in Indonesian. A more appropriate translation would be *Berita itu menyebar dengan cepat di kota*.

These examples indicate that semantic difficulties occurred because students relied heavily on literal meanings and did not fully consider figurative expressions and contextual meanings in the narrative texts.

Distribution of Translation Difficulties

The frequency of each type of difficulty was calculated based on the total number of errors identified in the students' translations. The results are presented in the following table.

Tabel 1. Distribution of Translation Difficulties

Types of Difficulties	Total	Percentage
Lexical Difficulties	34	42.5%
Grammatical Difficulties	26	32.5 %
Semantic Difficulties	20	25 %

The table shows that lexical difficulties were the most dominant type of difficulty, accounting for 42.5% of the total errors. This finding indicates that many students still experience difficulties in selecting appropriate word equivalents in the target language. Grammatical difficulties ranked second with a percentage of 32.5%. These errors were mainly related to incorrect sentence structures, omission of predicates, and inaccurate clause formation. Meanwhile, semantic difficulties accounted for 25% of the total errors. These difficulties were mainly caused by students' inability to interpret contextual meanings and figurative expressions in narrative texts.

Factors Causing Students' Translation Difficulties

To identify the factors that caused students' translation difficulties, interviews were conducted with ten students. The interview data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the analysis indicate that the factors causing students' translation difficulties can be classified into two main categories, namely linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors.

Tabel 2. Factors Causing Students' Translation Difficulties

Categories	Identified Factors	Percentage
Linguistic Factors	1. Grammar & sentence	1. 60 %

	structure			
	2. Limited vocabulary	2.	50 %	
	3. lack of contextual understanding	3.	40 %	
	4. Literal translation or dictionary dependence	4.	40 %	
Non-Linguistic Factors	1. Fear of making mistakes	1.	40 %	
	2. Low self-confidence	2.	30 %	
	3. Lack of practice	3.	30 %	

The table indicates that linguistic factors were the most dominant causes of students' translation difficulties. Grammar and sentence structure difficulties were experienced by 60% of the students, indicating that many students still struggle to transfer grammatical structures from English into Indonesian accurately. Limited vocabulary was another important factor influencing students' translation ability. Many students tended to rely on literal translation or dictionary meanings without fully understanding the context of the text. In addition to linguistic factors, several non-linguistic factors were also identified in this study. Fear of making mistakes and low self-confidence affected students' performance during the translation process. Students who lacked confidence tended to use word-for-word translation strategies rather than exploring more appropriate translation alternatives.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that students' translation difficulties are influenced not only by linguistic competence, such as vocabulary mastery and grammatical knowledge, but also by psychological and learning factors, such as confidence and the frequency of practice in translation activities.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the eleventh-grade students of SMA Swasta Katolik Mariana Medan still experienced difficulties in translating English narrative texts into Indonesian. The difficulties were classified into three categories: lexical, grammatical, and semantic, with lexical difficulties being the most dominant. This indicates that students still faced problems in selecting appropriate word equivalents, understanding sentence structures, and comprehending contextual meaning in the source text. The common errors found in the students' translations included literal translation, inappropriate word choice, and the use of unnatural expressions in Indonesian. Therefore, students still need to improve their vocabulary mastery and their understanding of target language structures.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that students' translation difficulties were influenced by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguistic factors included limited vocabulary, problems in grammar and sentence structure, lack of contextual understanding, and reliance on literal translation. Meanwhile, non-linguistic factors consisted of fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and lack of practice in translation activities. These findings indicate that improving students' translation skills requires not only better language competence but also continuous practice and encouragement to increase students' confidence in translation activities. Based on the findings of this study, future researchers are suggested to conduct similar studies using different text types or research methods in order to obtain broader insights into students' translation difficulties. Further research may also explore effective teaching strategies or instructional approaches that can help improve students' translation competence.

References

- Anderson, M. and Kathy, A. (1997). T. T. in E. I. A. M. 49-53. (1997). Text Type in English I.
- Baker, M. (2018). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation Third Edition*. In *Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation Third Edition*.
- Catford, J. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics*. London: Oxford University Press.,
- Creswell, J. W. C. (2014). Creswell, John W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications ,
- Hanivah, N., & Andika, A. (2023). The Analysis of Students ' Difficulties in Translating Text for the English Major Students at Umnu Kebumen, *301*), 1-12.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Nababan, R. G. F., Sinambela, E., & Pasaribu, D. R. (2025). An Analysis of Students ' Difficulties in Translating Students of Private High School, *4778*, 4286-4293. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v13i2.5068>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. In *Textbook of Translation*. Text.
- Nida, Eugene A., & Taber, C. R. (1982). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Rosyana, N., Baihaqi, Y., & Prasasti, I. H. (2022). An analysis of students' problems in translating report text from English into Indonesian. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, *1*(1), 2017-2022.
- Sipayung, K. T. (2018). The Impact of Translation Shift and Method on Translation Accuracy Found at Bilingual History Textbook, *301*), 58-66.
- St Nur Halisa Hasbi. (2023). The students' ability and difficulties in translating narrative text (A case study of the eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Bontonompo Selatan).
- Sugiyono 2019. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Surayatika, D. (2024). Analysis o f Students ' Difficulties in Translating Descriptive Text from Indonesian into English, *31*), 143-148. <https://doi.org/10.37110/jell.v9i1.200>
- Yenita Hastuti, Absharini Kardena, & E. (2020). Students ' difficulties in translating narrative text from english

Difficulties Faced By Eleventh Grade Students In Translating English Materials Texts Into