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Students' Strategies In Translating Narrative Texts From English Into Indonesian at SMK Negeri 11 Medan

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the translation strategies used by students in translating English narrative texts into Indonesian and to identify the reasons behind their choices. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, using translation sheets and interviews as data sources. The findings revealed that students applied all seven strategies proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, namely borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Among these strategies, literal translation was the most dominant (53.75%), followed by modulation (15.00%) and transposition (11.25%), while borrowing (7.50%), calque (5.00%), equivalence (3.75%), and adaptation (3.75%) were used less frequently. The dominance of literal translation indicates that students tend to rely on direct translation due to similarities in sentence structure between English and Indonesian and their preference for simple techniques. The study also found that students' strategy choices were influenced by linguistic factors, such as limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, and lack of contextual understanding, as well as non-linguistic factors, including low confidence and fear of making mistakes. It can be concluded that students still depend on basic translation strategies, suggesting the need for more practice and guidance to improve their translation competence in producing more natural and contextually appropriate translations.grammar mastery, contextual understanding, and learning support is essential to enhance students' translation skills.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi penerjemahan yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa dalam menerjemahkan teks naratif bahasa Inggris ke dalam bahasa Indonesia dan untuk mengidentifikasi alasan di balik pilihan mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, dengan menggunakan lembar terjemahan dan wawancara sebagai sumber data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menerapkan ketujuh strategi yang diusulkan oleh Vinay dan Darbelnet, yaitu peminjaman, kalkulus, terjemahan literal, transposisi, modulasi, kesetaraan, dan adaptasi. Di antara strategi-strategi tersebut, terjemahan literal paling dominan (53,75%), diikuti oleh modulasi (15,00%) dan transposisi (11,25%), sedangkan peminjaman (7,50%), kalkulus (5,00%), kesetaraan (3,75%), dan adaptasi (3,75%) digunakan lebih jarang. Dominasi terjemahan literal menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa cenderung mengandalkan terjemahan langsung karena kesamaan struktur kalimat antara bahasa Inggris dan Indonesia serta preferensi mereka terhadap teknik yang sederhana. Studi ini juga menemukan bahwa pilihan strategi siswa dipengaruhi oleh faktor linguistik, seperti kosakata yang terbatas, kesulitan tata bahasa, dan kurangnya pemahaman kontekstual, serta faktor non-linguistik, termasuk rendahnya kepercayaan diri dan rasa takut membuat kesalahan. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa siswa masih bergantung pada strategi penerjemahan dasar, yang menunjukkan perlunya lebih banyak latihan dan bimbingan untuk meningkatkan kompetensi penerjemahan mereka dalam menghasilkan terjemahan yang lebih alami dan sesuai konteks.

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role as a medium of communication that enables individuals to convey ideas, thoughts, and meanings across different contexts. 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, especially for students who learn it as a foreign language. One important skill in learning English is translation, as it allows students to transfer meaning from the source language into the target language while maintaining the intended message.Translation is not merely a process of replacing words, but a complex activity that involves understanding meaning, context, and cultural nuances. According to Munday (2020), translation requires not only linguistic competence but also the ability to interpret meaning and cultural elements embedded in the source text. Similarly, (Sipayung, 2021) emphasizes that translation involves conveying meaning, message, and nuances rather than simply transferring words. In addition, (Newmark, 1998) .(Catford, 1965) state that translation should prioritize meaning equivalence and naturalness in the target language.

One of the text types commonly taught in English learning is narrative text. Narrative text presents a sequence of events aimed at entertaining readers and typically consists of orientation, complication, and resolution(Anderson Narrative & Membaca, 1998).However, translating narrative texts is not an easy task because students often encounter difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions, contextual meanings, and cultural elements.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at SMK Negeri 11 Medan, it was found that students still experience significant difficulties in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian. Most students tend to apply literal translation (word-for-word translation) without considering the context and naturalness of the target language. As a result, their translations often sound rigid, unnatural, and sometimes distort the original meaning. For example, the expression "once in a blue moon" was translated literally as "sekali di bulan biru," and "a piece of cake" was translated as "sepotong kue," which indicates a lack of understanding of idiomatic expressions. These examples show that students face challenges in selecting appropriate lexical equivalents and constructing natural sentences in the target language. According to (Pasaribu, 2025), the selection of translation techniques greatly influences the accuracy and acceptability of the translated text.

Several previous studies have examined translation strategies and students' difficulties in translation. (Susanto, 2020), found that students commonly use literal translation, free translation, and transfer strategies when translating narrative texts. However, these strategies are often applied without sufficient consideration of contextual appropriateness and naturalness. Other studies also reveal that students face both linguistic and cultural challenges, including limited vocabulary, lack of grammatical mastery, and difficulty in understanding

idiomatic expressions. These findings indicate that students' translation competence still needs improvement, particularly in applying appropriate strategies.Translation strategies and students' difficulties in translating narrative texts. A study conducted by (Suryani, 2022) aimed to identify translation strategies used by senior high school students and the factors influencing their choices. The findings revealed that students predominantly used established equivalence and literal translation, as they tended to maintain the original meaning and follow the structure of the source language.Another study by (Optaria, 2020) analyzed students' translation ability in translating texts from Indonesian into English. The results indicated that students naturally applied several strategies, such as literal translation, transposition, and contextual equivalence, although these strategies were not analyzed within a specific theoretical framework

Although many studies have investigated translation strategies and difficulties, most of them focus on senior high school or university students, while research at the vocational high school (SMK) level remains limited. In addition, previous studies tend to emphasize the types of strategies used rather than evaluating their effectiveness in solving translation problems. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the strategies used by students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian and to examine how these strategies help students overcome linguistic and cultural challenges. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the field of translation studies and provide practical insights for English teachers in designing more effective and contextual translation teaching strategies, particularly in vocational education.

Furthermore, translation is closely related to cultural transfer, where translators are required to bridge differences between the source and target languages. As stated by (Ichsan et al., 2019), a good translation should not only be accurate but also acceptable and natural for the target readers. This means that students need to understand not only linguistic aspects but also cultural context in order to produce meaningful translations.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the translation strategies used by eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 11 Medan in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian. A qualitative descriptive design was chosen because the study aimed to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena found in students' translations in a natural and contextual manner. According to (Creswell, 2018),qualitative

research is used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In line with this perspective, this study focused on understanding how students applied translation strategies and how they constructed meaning during the translation process.

The data of this study consisted of both written and verbal data. The written data were obtained from students' translation products, which included words, phrases, clauses, and sentences produced in the target language. These data were collected from eleventh-grade students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan in the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as suggested by (Creswell, 2018) to ensure that the selected students could provide relevant and meaningful data related to the research objectives. In addition, verbal data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with selected students to gain deeper insights into their reasons for choosing particular translation strategies and the challenges they encountered during the translation process.

The instruments used in this study were translation sheets and interview guides. The translation sheets functioned as the primary instrument for collecting data on students' translation strategies. Students were asked to translate an English narrative text into Indonesian within a specified time. The results were then analyzed to identify the strategies used. Meanwhile, the interview guides were used to collect in-depth information regarding students' thought processes, considerations, and difficulties in applying translation strategies. The semi-structured interview format allowed flexibility for further probing to obtain more comprehensive data.

The data collection process was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher provided an English narrative text suitable for the students' proficiency level. Second, students were asked to translate the text individually within a predetermined time. After the task was completed, the researcher collected all translation results for analysis. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to explore their perspectives on the strategies they used. All interview data were recorded and transcribed to ensure systematic analysis.

The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method. The researcher identified and classified translation units (words, phrases, clauses, and sentences) based on the translation strategies proposed by(Loescher 1991, 1991), which include borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Each identified unit was categorized according to these strategies to determine patterns and dominant strategies used by students. Furthermore, the analysis also considered the contextual meaning of each translation to evaluate how effectively the strategies were applied.

To analyze the interview data, this study adopted the interactive model proposed by (Miles and Huberman, 2011).which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, relevant data were selected and simplified according to the research focus. In the data display stage, the data were organized and presented descriptively to reveal patterns of strategy use. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher interpreted the findings to identify the dominant strategies and explain the factors influencing students' choices. Through this process, the study was able to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' translation strategies and the underlying reasons for their application.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of the translation strategies used by eleventh-grade students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan in translating narrative texts from English into Indonesian. The analysis is based on the translation strategy framework proposed by (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995) and the qualitative data analysis procedures introduced by (Gerot and Wignell (1994), 1994).The discussion integrates the findings obtained from students' translation results and interview data in order to explain both the types of translation strategies employed by the students and the factors that influenced their choice of strategies.

Types of Translation Strategies

Based on the analysis of students' translation results, several types of translation strategies were identified, namely borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. These strategies were used by students in varying frequencies, with literal translation being the most dominant. This tendency indicates that students often translated the source text word-for-word without fully considering contextual meaning, grammatical structure, and cultural nuances in the target language. As a result, while some translations maintained the original form of the source text, they often lacked naturalness and communicative effectiveness in Indonesian.

Literal Translation

Literal translation occurs when students translate the source text word-for-word while maintaining the same grammatical structure and meaning. According to Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995), literal translation is categorized as a direct translation strategy and is considered appropriate when the structures of the source language and target language are similar.

One example can be seen in the following data:

SL: *Years passed and Malin became wealthy.*

TL: *Tahun-tahun berlalu dan Malin menjadi kaya.*

In this case, the student translated the sentence directly without changing the grammatical structure. The phrases *"years passed"* and *"became wealthy"* were rendered as *"tahun-tahun berlalu"* and *"menjadi kaya."* This indicates that the student successfully applied literal translation because the structure and meaning remain equivalent and natural in Indonesian.

These findings show that literal translation is effective when the linguistic structures between English and Indonesian are compatible, resulting in accurate and acceptable translations

Transposition Translation

Transposition refers to a translation strategy that involves a shift in grammatical structure without changing the meaning. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995) state that this strategy is used to achieve naturalness in the target language.

An example can be observed in the following data:

SL: *"She had to do all the housework alone."*

TL: *"Ia harus mengerjakan semua pekerjaan rumah sendiri."*

In this example, the noun phrase *"all the housework"* is translated into *"semua pekerjaan rumah,"* with an adjustment in word order to fit Indonesian grammar. Although the structure is modified, the meaning remains the same.

This indicates that the student was able to adjust grammatical structures appropriately, resulting in a more natural and grammatically acceptable translation in the target language

Modulation Translation

Modulation is a translation strategy that involves a shift in perspective or point of view. According to Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995), modulation is used when a literal translation sounds unnatural in the target language.

An example can be seen in the following data:

SL: *"The villagers were surprised to see his luxurious ship."*

TL: *"Penduduk desa terkejut melihat kapal mewahnya."*

In this case, the passive construction *"were surprised"* is translated into *"terkejut,"* which simplifies the structure and shifts the perspective into a more natural Indonesian expression.

This finding shows that modulation helps students produce translations that are more natural and stylistically appropriate in narrative texts.

Adaptation Translation

Adaptation is an oblique translation strategy used when cultural adjustment is necessary. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995) explain that adaptation is applied to make the translation more culturally relevant to the target audience.

An example can be observed in the following data:

SL: *"He dreamed of becoming a successful merchant."*

TL: *"Ia bermimpi menjadi seorang saudagar yang sukses."*

In this example, the word *"merchant"* is translated into *"saudagar,"* which carries a traditional and cultural nuance suitable for Indonesian folktales.

This indicates that the student successfully adapted the cultural context, making the translation more appropriate and meaningful for Indonesian readers.

Calque Translation

Calque is a direct translation strategy in which the structure of the source language is preserved while translating its components literally. According to Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995), calque maintains the original expression while adapting it into the target language form.

An example can be seen in the following data:

SL: *"They lived happily ever after."*

TL: *"Mereka hidup bahagia selamanya."*

In this case, the phrase *"happily ever after"* is translated directly into *"hidup bahagia selamanya."* The structure mirrors the original expression and is commonly accepted in Indonesian narrative texts.

This shows that calque can produce natural translations when the expression already exists in the target language.

BorrowingTranslation

Borrowing is a translation strategy in which a word from the source language is directly transferred into the target language without modification. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995) state that borrowing is commonly used for proper names or culturally specific terms.

An example can be found in the following data:

SL: *"Cinderella was amazed by the magic."*

TL: *"Cinderella kagum pada sihir itu."*

In this example, the name *"Cinderella"* is retained without translation. This is appropriate because proper nouns are typically preserved to maintain their original identity.

This finding indicates that borrowing is an effective strategy for maintaining consistency and avoiding unnecessary changes in culturally recognized terms.

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. Percentage of Translation Strategies used in Narrative Text

Types of Strategies	Total	Percentage
Borrowing Translation	6	11.54%
Calque Translation	7	13.46%
Literal Translation	11	21.15%
Transposition Translation	9	17.31%
Modulation Translation	7	13.46%
Equivalence Translation	6	11.54%
Adaptationj Translation	6	11.54%

The table shows that Literal Translation was the most dominant strategy, accounting for 21.15% of the total data. This finding indicates that many students still tend to translate texts word-for-word by maintaining the original structure of the source language without significant modification. Transposition ranked second with a percentage of 17.31%, showing that some students were able to adjust grammatical structures to produce more natural translations in the target language.Meanwhile, Calque and Modulation each accounted for 13.46% of the total data. This indicates that students occasionally translated expressions at the phrase level literally or shifted the perspective of meaning to enhance clarity. Furthermore, Borrowing, Equivalence, and Adaptation each

contributed 11.54% of the total data. These strategies reflect that only a small number of students applied cultural adjustment, maintained original terms, or used equivalent expressions appropriately in the target language. Overall, the findings suggest that students predominantly relied on direct translation strategies rather than oblique strategies, indicating limited ability in applying more flexible and context-based translation techniques.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the eleventh-grade students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan applied various translation strategies in translating English narrative texts into Indonesian. The strategies were classified into seven types based on the framework proposed by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995), namely borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Among these strategies, literal translation was found to be the most dominant, indicating that students tended to translate texts word-for-word while maintaining the original structure of the source language.This finding suggests that students still relied heavily on direct translation strategies and had limited ability in applying more flexible and context-based strategies such as modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Although some students were able to adjust grammatical structures through transposition and shift meaning through modulation, the overall use of oblique strategies was relatively low. This indicates that students' translation competence is still influenced by the structure of the source language and limited awareness of cultural and contextual aspects in translation.

Furthermore, the dominance of literal translation reflects students' dependence on lexical equivalence and insufficient consideration of naturalness and communicative meaning in the target language. Therefore, students need to improve their understanding of various translation strategies, particularly those that involve structural adjustment and cultural adaptation, in order to produce more accurate and natural translations.Based on these findings, it is suggested that teachers provide more practice and explicit instruction on the use of diverse translation strategies to enhance students' translation competence. Future researchers are also recommended to conduct similar studies using different text types or research approaches to gain broader insights into students' translation performance and strategy use.

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