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The Major and Minor Errors in the Translations of Thesis Abstracts

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Abstract

A thesis abstract is an essential part of a thesis since it represents the content of the thesis. In Indonesia, where the abstracts need to be translated into English, a number of translation errors may occur. This study aims at analysing the translation errors in the thesis abstracts and classify the errors into major and minor errors. The data were collected from the undergraduate theses of the Communication Science Department students, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Airlangga. The results show a total of 128 errors, where 79 of them (61.7%) are major errors. In the major error types, the most frequent error type is the Experientially Inaccurate translation (21.1%), followed by the Logically Inaccurate translation (11.7%), and the Interpersonally Inadequate translation (11.7%). Meanwhile, the minor errors only comprise 38.3% (49 errors) of the total errors. The errors include the Minor Grammatical errors (36.7%) and Spelling errors (1.6%). Considering these numbers of errors, it is necessary to pay more attention to the translation of the thesis abstracts because they reflect the content of the theses.

Keywords: Major Error, Minor Error, Thesis, Translation Error.

1. Introduction

An abstract of an academic text is the first thing that readers refer to when they are seeking particular references for their studies. This is because an abstract provides a summary of the whole text. In the abstract, the author wrote a statement of the problem or issue, research method and design, major findings, and the significance of their study, and the conclusion (Campbell, 2007). All of those elements should be written in less than 400 words. Therefore, the author should consider an efficient way to convey his/her ideas to the readers.

There are some non-English academic papers that provide English translation abstracts found in Indonesian Universities. It may be intended for readers who are not Indonesian speakers. For instance, by presenting an undergraduate thesis abstract in Indonesian and in English, it will be possible to obtain a larger number of readers. Producing abstracts both in Indonesian and English definitely requires the students to perform a translation process. The translation goal is to facilitate people to understand the message that is available in the language that is not understood. Therefore, a translation process is needed to produce a bilingual abstract.

Newmark defined translation as transferring the message or meaning of utterances or other sources into the target language (1988). Meanwhile, Wilss (1982) stated that equivalence from source text should be as close to the target text as possible by giving an understanding of its source text's content and style. In addition, Catford (1965) stated when a text of one language is substituted into another language, there is a translation process. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the message should be carried equivalently in a process of rendering text from Indonesian to English, otherwise some message will not be delivered successfully and contributed to a translation error.

Some studies had been conducted by another scholar regarding translation error. The first related studies produced by an unpublished thesis by Petra Christian University student. Susilowati (2006) analysed translation errors in the English-translated abstracts of the management department in her university. She found that the errors that the content errors and the grammatical errors have the same frequency. A similar study had also been conducted by Sari (2006). She conducted a study of the English translation of Ibis Accor hotel Brochures. She took eight brochures of the Ibis Accor Hotel as the main data and found that most mistakes are grammatical problems, choice of word, and equivalency (Sari, 2006).

Another study related to the writer's study was conducted by Fitriyah (2015). She analyzed the linguistic and translation errors in Indonesian-English Translation of Exhibit Labels Displayed in Mpu Tantular Museum. She took 12 exhibit labels in three different zones in the museum. She found 121 binary errors and 21 non-binary errors. Another study had also been done by Purwandini (2015). She analysed the translation errors of monument inscriptions in Surabaya's old building. She found that the errors most frequently occurred are the missing of periods and commas, and those might be confusing for the readers.

In this study, we are interested in analysing the translation errors in the translation of the Indonesian thesis abstracts into English. This study will provide an analysis of the errors based on their broad classifications into major and minor types of errors. These broad types will then be classified further to obtain more detailed types of errors.

2. The Concept of Translation Errors

A translator should have an adequate understanding of the process of translation. According to Pym (1992), lack of knowledge or reckless action in translation can contribute to the occurrence of translation error. In addition, Nida & Taber (1982) defined a translation error as an 'error in transferring ideas.' Consequently, when a student consciously or unconsciously failed in transferring the message containing the idea, a translation error occurred.

In the translation process, the meaning or idea should be delivered well. In case they are not delivered, well and creates a different situation in the product (translated source language) then it is considered as a translation error. A translation error is a failure to carry out the instructions implied in the translation brief (Nord, 1997, p. 75). Students' failure in transferring the instruction from Indonesian to English is considered as a translation error. Nord divided the errors into pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, and text-specific errors.

An analysis of translation errors is needed to observe the errors occur in the undergraduate thesis' abstracts. The concept of translation errors used in this study is the one developed by Kim based on NAATI (National Authority of Accreditation for Translators and Interpreters) assessment criteria for translation tests. Kim developed the concept by focusing on the meaning-oriented assessment. In Kim's meaning-oriented assessment criteria, translation errors are divided into two, and they are Major Errors and Minor Errors. Both Major Errors and Minor Errors may influence the meaning in the target language of translation.

Kim (2009) categorized the major errors further into seven types. First, the Experientially Inaccurate translation error occurs when the full source text is failed to be delivered accurately to the target text by the translator (Kim, 2009, p. 137). Second, the Experientially Unnatural Translation error is likely understood by the reader. The reader still grabs the meaning regardless of the unacceptable word-to-word translation (Kim, 2009, p. 138). Third, the Logically Inaccurate Translation error occurs when the translator failed in transferring the logical link of a clause in the source text (Indonesian) into the target text (English) (Kim, 2009, p. 139). Fourth, the Logically Justifiable Translation Shift occurs when the translator decides to change a sentence into two sentences in the Target text (Kim, 2009, p. 140). In shifting a sentence into two sentences, the logico-semantic relation with the source text must not be changed in order to keep the sentence understandable and avoid too complicated structure in the target text. Fifth, the Interpersonally Inaccurate Translation error deals with lexical misinterpretation (Kim, 2009, p. 141). A wrong choice of lexical items can cause different perception. Sixth, the Interpersonally Inadequate Translation error occurs when the Target language cannot be back-translated into the Source language, otherwise, the meaning may not be carried the same way (Kim, 2009, p. 142). Seventh, the Textually inaccurate translation deals with the cohesion and coherence issue (Kim, 2009, p. 142). These issues should also be considered so that each sentence will elaborate nicely. In addition, failure in this type of

translation error might be quite confusing, so the reader should re-read the previous section to finally be able to comprehend the text.

For the minor errors, they are only classified into spelling errors and minor grammatical errors (Kim, 2009, p. 136). This type of translation errors has a minor contribution in influencing the meaning. Many occurrences found in the English-translated abstract were minor errors, specifically grammatical errors.

3. Method

This study used a qualitative approach which is suitable for non-numerical data. Dornyei mentioned four main principles of a qualitative study they are language-based analysis, iterative process, using subjective intuition, and employing a formalized analytical procedure to establish data patterns (Dornyei, 2007). Since this study aims to analyze the translation patterns of abstracts, which are in the form of text, the qualitative approach is suitable for this study as the data presented in words rather than numbers.

The data were collected from Airlangga University's Library website that can be accessed from the web address http://fulltext.lib.unair.ac.id/. From this internet address, we chose "skripsi," "Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik," "Ilmu Komunikasi," and batch "2015". The result was fifty-three theses with bilingual abstracts out of sixty abtracts. The other seven abstracts are only available in monolingual (Indonesian).

In order to limit the data, we used a simple random sampling technique and chose 20 abstracts as the representative of the population. Using the simple random sampling technique with a lottery system, each member of the population has the same chance to be chosen as the sample.

In analysing the data, we followed these steps. First, the printed data of bilingual abstracts were highlighted manually to mark the translation errors. Second, the errors found were categorized and then calculated to find the most frequent occurrences. Fourth, the data were tabulated. Fifth, we interpreted the data, and finally, we drew conclusions from the findings.

4. Results

The findings of this study show that there are 128 errors occurred in the thesis abstracts. From this number, 79 of them can be categorized as major errors, and 49 of them are included as minor errors. Table 1 shows the numbers and the percentages.

Table 1. Total of Errors

Types of Errors	Occurrences	Percentages
Major Errors	79	61.7
Minor Errors	49	38.3
Total	**128**	**100**

4.1 Major Errors

As mentioned earlier, the major type of errors can further be classified into seven types. Consequently, to have a clearer picture of the errors, we also classify the errors into these seven types. The tabulation of these major error types is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Major Errors

No	Types of Major Errors	Occurrences	Percentages
1	Experientially Inaccurate	27	21.1%
2	Experientially Unnatural	9	7%
3	Logically Inaccurate	15	11.7%
4	Logically Justifiable Shift	2	1.6%
5	Interpersonally Inaccurate	15	11.7%
6	Interpersonally Inadequate	11	8.6%
7	Textually Inaccurate	0	0%
	Total	**79**	**61.7%**

As shown in Table 2, the Experientially Inaccurate translation error ranked as the most frequent type of major errors. This type of errors mostly occurred due to the lack of knowledge triggering miss-translation and un-translated word or sentence. This may contribute to the different interpretation and meaning of the sentence. This failure in the translation process consequently influences non-Indonesian speaker's understanding; in other words, they might not grab the implied message appropriately.

An Experientially Inaccurate translation error occurs when the full source text is failed to be delivered accurately to the target text by the translator (Kim, 2009, p. 137). In the English translated abstract produced by the students, this study found some inaccuracy translation from the source text into the target text. This study found some missing information in the English translated abstracts because some words were not translated. Thus, it reflects that the English translated abstract failed to carry an accurate message existed in the source text (See Example 1).

Example 1:

        Indonesian (ST)   : *Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi antara perawat terhadap pasien di **IGD RSU Jati Husada Karanganyar***

        English (TT)   : *The results of this study suggest that communication nurses toward patient in **Jati Husada Hospital***

Example 1 shows that an error occurs when "IGD RSU Jati Husada Karanganyar" was not translated accurately. It was translated into "Jati Husada Hospital. However, it was clear that the research done by the student was only focused on a certain place which is the "IGD" or "Emergency Room" not the whole hospital as it is stated in the target text. The idea of a specific place such as the Emergency Room was not successfully rendered into the target text which has become too general, i.e., a "Hospital." Again, the equivalent message of the text was not successfully rendered. Therefore, this sentence is considered having an error as the previous example.

The second highest error type is the Interpersonally Inaccurate translation. The Interpersonally Inaccurate Translation deals with lexical misinterpretation (Kim, 2009). In the English-translated abstracts being analysed, the number of this type of errors is quite big. There are inaccurate lexical choices which contribute to the whole different meaning in the target text. Meanwhile, some others show a misuse of lexical items. This study found 15 errors for in this type of errors. One of the examples is presented in Example 2:

Example 2:

        Indonesian (ST)   : *Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data Focus Group Discussion (FGD) **yang melibatkan** 8 orang informan dari komunitas pecinta Korea yang berbeda di Surabaya.*

        English (TT)   : *Participants were taken **as much as** 8 informants from different affiliations of Korean Lovers Community in Surabaya.*

It shows an error in expressing the quantity of a countable noun (in this case, the informant). The word "yang melibatkan" in the source text was translated into "as much as." Apart from the error of inaccuracy in the translating process due to the unequal meaning, this sentence had chosen the wrong translation to express the quantity of a noun. The lexical choice is also influenced by the grammar as it can be seen here. Informant as a countable noun should also be preceded by the countable expression of quantity. The word "as much as" supposed to explain non-countable noun (Azar, 2010).

Together with the Interpersonally Inaccurate translation, the Logically inaccurate translation ranked as the second highest. This study found that the translator seemed to be confused by their noun phrase or clause sentence in the source text and ended up producing errors. A logical Inaccurate Translation error occurs when the translator failed in transferring the logical link of a clause in the Indonesian text into English. A number of errors occurred in the translated abstract because of failure in delivering the relationship between clauses. This study found 15 errors in this type of errors. Below is the example of Logical Inaccurate Translation:

Example 3:

Indonesian (ST)	: *Penelitian ini fokus pada **program relationship marketing Primagama Magetan untuk mempertahankan loyalitas konsumen**,*
English (TT)	: *This research focuses on **the relationship between the marketing program of Primagama Magetan and its ability to maintain the consumer's loyalty**.*

As it can be seen in the text above, the translator's intention was to explain that Primagama Magetan has built a program, namely the relationship marketing in order to maintain the consumer's loyalty. It can be seen that the translator had failed in relating the clause one another and ended up causing misinterpretion in the target text. The meaning in the source text had shifted into the relationship between the marketing program and consumer's loyalty. Therefore, it is considered an error called Logical Inaccurate Translation.

The third error type is the Interpersonally Inadequate translation. The interpersonally Inadequate translation deals with lexical items. In some cases, the lexical choice is mostly affected by the Indonesian language. We believed that besides the students' own knowledge, the current translation software can help the students to find the appropriate words. Therefore, the number of this type of error is relatively small. The Interpersonally Inadequate Translation occurs when the Target language cannot be back-translated into the Source language, so the meaning may not be carried the same way (Kim, 2009). This study found 11 errors in this type of errors. This is one of the examples:

Example 4:

Indonesian (ST)	: *Mereka memenangkan **penghargaan smart zone dari pusat** atas pemenuhan standart mutu pelayanan.*
English (TT)	: ***They won the "smartzone" award** for the fulfillment of the standard of service quality.*

The information stated in the source text is not delivered successfully. "Penghargaan smart zone dari pusat" should be translated as 'a smart zone award from the head office.' As it is stated in the target text, there is an omitted information. The target text omitted the information of the source of the smart zone award. Consequently, the omitted information in the target text contributes a different result if the target text is translated into the source text as a back-translation process.

Next, for the fourth most frequent type of error is the Experientially Unnatural Translation which can be found in 7% of the abstracts. The Experientially Unnatural Translation occurs when the readers of the translated text still comprehend the idea or meaning regardless of the unacceptable word-to-word translation. In some cases of error found in the translated abstracts, the naturalness of target text has become the point. Some sentences in the target text appear to be preserving the Indonesian's structure which is different from the English language. This study found 9 errors throughout the abstracts. One of the examples is in example 5.

Example 5:

Indonesian (ST)   : ***Hal ini disebabkan karena*** *saat ini media sosial Twitter telah menjadi alat untuk melakukan sosialisasi politik bagi para politisi yang aktif menggunakan Twitter*

English (TT)   : ***It is caused due to*** *the current social media Twitter has been a great tool for political socialization for politicians who actively use social media Twitter*

In this sentence, "hal ini disebabkan karena" which means "this is due to" was translated into "it is caused due to." The reader may still understand this translation, although the translation is rather lengthy. The words "hal ini disebabkan" were translated into "it is caused," while the word "karena" was translated into "due to." However, it seems to be less natural in the English language to have both of those phrases. By keeping the structure of the target text as close as possible to the source text, linguistic interference was unavoidably occurred (Nord, 1997, p. 67). Using the term "by" will let the translator input the agent of the verb's action (Azar, 2010). Therefore, when "by" follows "it is caused", it will be enough to deliver the message of "disebabkan karena", so there is the agent of the action and the translator can discard the word "due to".

The Logically Justifiable Translation Shift occurs when the translator decides to change a sentence into two sentences in the Target text (Kim, 2009, p. 140). This study found two errors in this type of error. Below in one of the examples of logically justifiable translation shift found in the student's abstracts:

Example 6:

Indonesian (ST)   : *Untuk mendeskripsikan representasi identitas gay dalam film "Cinta yang Dirahasiakan," peneliti menggunakan metode semotik John Fiske yang terbagi dalam tiga level analisis yaitu level realitas, representasi dan ideologi.*

English (TT)   : *(1) The focus of this research is gay identity in the "Cinta yang Dirahasiakan" movie as its objective research. (2) The representation of gay identity in this movie is described using a semiotics method by John Fiske, which divide into three levels of analysis; the level of reality, representation, and ideology.*

It can be seen that the source text is a sentence is translated into two sentences in the target language. Kim defined that this is used to lessen the issue of too complicated structure in the target text, yet the meaning should also be carried the same way (Kim, 2009, p. 140). The target text was translated into two sentences to make it less complicated. But in this example, some of the information that did not exist in the source text and some of them exist only in the source text, so it can be considered as an error. Therefore, this sentence disobeyed the translation process which is supposed to carry the message contained in the source text.

The number of Logically Justifiable Translation Shift is reasonably small since the abstracts served several main points represented by some individual sentences. Therefore, the chance of justifying text is rare. Related to the coherence of a text, the textually inaccurate translation error is the only error type that is not found in the data, due to the fact that each sentence in an abstract presents its own message.

4.2 Minor Errors

The minor error type has a minor contribution in influencing the meaning. Many occurrences found in the English-translated abstracts were minor errors, specifically grammatical errors. Few students translated their Indonesian abstract without considering the grammatical rules. However, most of them are still recognizable and deliver the meaning. The recapitulation of these minor errors can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Minor Errors

No	Types of Minor Errors	Occurrences	Percentages
1	Spelling errors	2	1.6%
2	Minor Grammatical errors	47	36.7%
	Total	**49**	**38.3%**

Meanwhile, most of the errors found in the minor error type are minor grammatical errors. As for the most occurrences errors, students performed minor grammatical error due to failure in changing the passive form, plural-singular form, and wrong subject-verb agreement. Regarding the student's most frequent errors which are the minor grammatical errors, it has been mentioned by Nord (1997) that grammatical errors would occur more than the other types of errors. Meanwhile, there are only few spelling errors, because a general computer program, such as Microsoft Word, already provides the spelling checker with a quite good quality.

In the minor grammatical errors, the translation could still be successful in delivering the meaning but failed in customizing the grammatical rules. In our data, the most common grammatical errors are the passive voice patterns. However, readers might still grab the meaning by recognizing the word which uses the past participle form. This study found 47 errors in this type of errors. The following is one of the examples:

Example 7:

| Indonesian (ST) | : *isu RUU PILKADA **dipengaruhi oleh** minat dan arus politik masing-masing informan.* |
| English (TT) | : *the issue of RUU PILKADA informant **influenced** by the interests and political currents* |

The word "dipengaruhi" was translated into "influenced" by the translator, which is basically right in case of word-to-word translation. However, in the translation process, that word should also follow the rules. Passive voice is built from three parts, and the first is the auxiliary (in whatever tenses) + verb in past participle + by (Azar, 2010). In this case, the word "by" is needed to complete the action by explaining the agent. One of the formulas has already been done by the translator which is adding "by" following the word "influence." Therefore, it means that those words were actually aiming at the passive voice. It can be seen that the translator directly translated the words "dipengaruhi oleh" into "influenced by" without considering the target language's grammar. Moreover, it is considered correct in Indonesian to express the passive voice without the use of an auxiliary, but it is unnatural or even ungrammatical to do so in the target text.

The last minor error is spelling. There are only two cases of this type of error which was actually the same error, but the translator did it twice for the whole text. One of the examples in this error is presented in Example 8.

Example 8:

| Indonesian (ST) | : *Kekuatan visual yang ditampilkan melalui **selebriti Instagram** dimanfaatkan untuk menciptakan interaktifitas dengan tujuan promosi.* |
| English (TT) | : *Visual power that showed by **Celebrity-Instagram (Selebgram)** can be used to create an interaction with customer which used to promote the product.* |

Example 8 shows that the abbreviation of celebrity-Instagram was translated into "selebgram." It can be seen that the abbreviation was formulated from "seleb" and "gram" from Indonesian text selebriti and instagram. Since "selebriti instagram" has been translated into "Celebrity-Instagram" which was supposed to be "Instagram- Celebrity, therefore the abbreviation should also be in English form. The pronunciation of celebrity in English is quite similar to Indonesian celebrity, but it has different spelling. The word "seleb" in the target text appeared to be a spelling error.

5. Conclusion

From the 20 abstracts analysed, this study found that both major and minor errors occurred. From the 128 errors, 61.7% of them are major errors, while only 38.3% of them are minor errors. In the major error types, the Experientially Inaccurate translation becomes the most frequent one, i.e., 27 occurrences. On the other hand, for the minor error types, the most frequent one is the grammatical errors. This type is, in fact, contains a big number of errors, i.e., 47 occurrences. This can be due to the fact that English grammar is different in many aspects from the Indonesian grammar. Consequently, there is a big number of grammatical errors found in the thesis abstracts. Considering these findings, the students of these thesis abstracts need to pay closer attention when translating their Indonesian thesis abstracts into the English language, so that the number of errors can be minimized.

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