

Difficulties Faced by Translators in Translating English Texts into Makassarese

Tahir¹, Rahmat Hasan²

¹Universitas Islam Makassar, ²Universitas Sulawesi Raya

Corresponding Author

tahir.staff@uim-makassar.ac.id

Abstract: This research aims to investigate the difficulties faced by translators in translating English text into Makassarese as well as to identify the most frequent difficulties. A qualitative research method was employed, involving ten university students from the fourth and sixth semesters at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. These students translated texts extracted from a handbook used at Junior High School 1 Mamuju. The research revealed that 40% of the students identified issues at the word level as the most significant challenge, while 30% reported difficulties with syntactic translation, and another 30% encountered problems with semantic translation. In response to these difficulties, the majority of students preferred employing either free or literal translation methods, as these approaches facilitated a clearer understanding of the English text and their translation into Makassarese. Furthermore, this research highlights the necessity of developing effective strategies to address various levels of translation difficulties, with the aim of enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of translating English text into Makassarese.

Keywords: English, Makassarese, Translation Difficulties, Translation Method

INTRODUCTION

Translation is an essential activity in the modern world, enabling communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. It plays a crucial role in the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and cultural values, facilitating international understanding and cooperation (Hatim & Munday, 2004). It is understood as the process of transferring meaning from a source language to a target language. Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) with equivalent textual material in another language (target language) (Nida & Taber, 1969).

Translation is not merely the transfer of ideas from a source language; it involves conveying the message of an entire social community. In translating from a source language to a target language, a translator must employ appropriate strategies at the lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels (Molina & Albir, 2002, p. 17). Several scholars have emphasized the importance of translation methods, highlighting that the replacement of textual material in one language with equivalent material in another is crucial in this information age (Catford, 1965, p. 34). This significance is closely tied to the growing need for accessible information. Consequently, translators, who bear the responsibility of transferring information, must be well-prepared for this challenge (Newmark, 1988).



Translation activities play a vital role in enhancing human resource quality by improving individuals' ability to comprehend knowledge and technology. It is undeniable that most books relevant to knowledge and technology are written in English (Baker, 1992). 75% of the books held in Indonesian libraries are in English, yet only 5% of readers can understand them (Sadtono, 1985, p. 85). This indicates that translation serves as an essential solution, acting as a bridge for transferring messages from foreign languages.

It is undoubtedly that translation is not an easy task. It requires serious attention and concentration. The core of translation lies in the transfer of meaning (message) (Newmark, 1957). Translation is not just about rendering words from one language into another; it is fundamentally about transferring meaning and context, enabling communication and understanding across different cultures (Pym & Harvay, 1992). The difficulty faced by translators when translating into a regional language may be higher and more complex than translating into a national language, as it involves an extreme intercultural transfer of meaning and form (Bassnett, 1980).

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the difficulties faced by translators in translating English text into the regional language Makassarese, as well as to identify the most frequent difficulties encountered by the translators. By examining these challenges, the research seeks to clarify the specific difficulties associated with this translation process, including the unique linguistic and cultural factors that may influence translation accuracy and effectiveness, as translating into a local language often requires not just a word-for-word conversion but a deep understanding of cultural context and localized expression to ensure that the translation is both accurate and culturally resonant (House, 2015). Understanding these issues is essential for developing targeted strategies to improve translation practices and ensure that the intended meaning and nuances of the original text are accurately conveyed into Makassarese.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore existing phenomena, aligning with Frankael and Wallen's (1993) definition of qualitative research as the research of relationships, activities, situations, or materials through descriptions and categories, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. The research's population consists of an English lesson book for first-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Parangloe, Gowa Regency. A random sampling method (Fisher, 1935) selected a passage from page 37, text 6, in chapter two for analysis. Data collection involved library research to gather relevant theories, followed by sentence-by-sentence translation of the text into

Makassarese. The original and translated sentences were compared to analyze translation difficulties at the lexical and syntactic levels.

RESULTS

This research involved two models of data gathering, namely the questionnaire and translation test (Herder, 1772). Questionnaire was used to recognize the students’ views about their difficulties in translation, their understanding of Makassarese, their awareness about its meaning, and how they translate it. The second part included a test which is used to know the students’ abilities in understanding English test (Chesterman, 1997) and translating it into Makassarese.

Questionnaire Findings

There were four questions that were asked to students relating to understanding and difficulties faced in translating.

Q1: *how do you asses yourself in translation?*

Table 4.1 Students’ level translation

Level in translation	Number of student	percentage
Very good	1	10%
Good	5	50%
Middle	3	30%
Bad	1	10%
Very bad	-	-
total	10	100%

From the table above, we can see that in response to the question "How do you assess your translation skills?" 50% of students rated their skills as good. Additionally, 10% rated their skills as very good, while a similar percentage rated their skills as poor. Meanwhile, 30% considered their translation skills to be average.

Q2: *do you have difficulties in translating English text into Makassarese?*

Table 4.2 Student who has difficulties

Having difficulties	Number of student	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	80%
No	2	20%
total	10	100%

This question assessed how many students faced difficulties with translation. Most students, including those with graduate degrees and those who previously claimed proficiency, admitted to having difficulties. Specifically, 80% reported challenges due to issues with maintaining meaning across languages and differences in grammatical

structures. However, 20% believed that frequent practice and learning accurate translation methods could alleviate these difficulties.

Q3: *if your answer for question (2) is yes, at what level do you have difficulties?*

Table 4.3. Level of difficulties in translation

Having difficulties	Number of student	Percentage (%)
Word level	4	40%
Syntax level	3	30%
Semantic level	3	30%
total	10	100%

From this table it can be seen that majority of the students (40%) said that they have difficulties in word level. Students said that they have difficulties in syntax and semantic levels were three (30%) each. This data is also supported by the translation test, in which many students faced difficulties in finding an appropriate equivalence for a word.

Q4: *Do you think that translation session is a) very interesting, b) interesting, c) not interesting, d) important, e) very important, f) not important?*

Table 4.4 Opinion about translation session

Opinion about translation	Number of student	Percentage (%)
Very interesting	-	-
Interesting	2	20%
Not interesting	-	-
Important	4	40%
Very important	4	40%
Not importing	-	-
total	10	100%

From this table after the writers ask to answer the question sessions in translation, most students said that their level was average. However few said it was good, and approximately the same number said badly. But no one said it was not important, very interesting or not interesting. They assessed themselves according to their mark or comments of their teacher of translation.

Test Findings

Each student was given a short translation text from Junior High School 1 Mamuju’s English handbook (page 37, chapter two). The text describes a Sunday morning with Mr. Hasan and his family at home. Mr. Hasan is planting banana trees in the garden, Mrs. Hasan is cooking, and Adi is watering flowers while Farid plays with a ball. Dina helps her mother in the kitchen, while Dedi studies in his room for a test on Monday.

The translations of each of the students were presented below sentences by sentence.

a. Sentence 1: "it is Sunday morning"

Students	Translation
1	Ri allonna aha'ka bariba'sana
2	Ri allonna minggu bari'basana
3	Riwattunna allonna mingua
4	Ri allonna minggu bari'basana
5	Allonna minggu ri wattu bari'basana
6	Allonna minggu ri bari'basana
7	Riwantunna liburu ri mingguna
8	Ri allonna aha'ka ri wattu ta'buana allo baribasana
9	Wattunna liburu bariba'sana minggu
10	Ri allonna minggu bari'basana

This table displays the translations of the first sentence ("It is Sunday morning") by each student. It shows that three students translated the sentence exactly the same way, both lexically and syntactically. The remaining seven students provided different translations, with variations in translating the word "Sunday" (e.g., "aha" and "minggua") and the added element "day," which was translated as "allonna wattunna." Some students even added the preposition "ri," meaning "in." Despite these differences, no significant variations in meaning were found.

b. Sentence 2: "Mr Hasan and family do not go out"

Students	Translation
1	Pa' Hasan siagadang keluargana tena nassulu-suluja
2	Pa' Hasan siagadang keluargana tenaja nalampa-lampa
3	Keluargana Pa' Hasan tena na' sulu-sulukan Balla
4	Keluargana Pa' Hasan ia ngasenna tena nasulu-suluja
5	Anjo keluargana pa'Hasan tena nasulu-sulukan ballaiii
6	Keluargana Pa' Hasan tenaja nasulu a jappa-jappa
7	Anjo pa' Hasan sipammanaka tena nalampa-lampa assulu ajappa-jappa
8	Pa' Hasan sipammanakan tena na' lampa-lampa assulu antu a' jappa-jappa
9	Pa' Hasan siagadang pammanakanna tena nalampa-lampa
10	Pa' Hasan si pammanaka tena nassulu a'jappa-jappa

This table shows the translations of second sentence second ("Mr. Hasan and family do not go out") by each student. It reveals that all students translated the sentence differently, both lexically and syntactically. There are variations in translating the word "family" (e.g., "keluargana si pammanakang") and the phrase "go out," which was translated as "lampa-lampa" and "jappa-jappa." Some students also added the preposition "anjo," meaning "that." Despite these differences, no significant variations in meaning were found.

c. Sentence 3: "they stay at home"

Students	Translation
1	Ammantang ngasengji ri balla'na
2	Minka mantanji ri balla'na
3	Ammantang ngasengji ri balla'na
4	Ammantang ngasengji ri balla'na
5	Ammantang ngasengji ri balla'na
6	Kabusu'na ammantanji ri ballana anjamai masing-masing jama-jamanna
7	Iya ngasenna ammantanji ri balla'na
8	Eroji ammantang ngaseng ri balla'na
9	Ammantanji ri balla'na saba eroki mange ri kokonna
10	Ammantang ngasengji ri ballana

This table shows the translations of third sentence ("they stay at home") by each student. It reveals that five students translated the sentence identically, both lexically and syntactically. The other five provided different translations, likely due to the sentence's simplicity. Variations occurred in translating "stay" (e.g., "ngasengji," "ngaseng," "ngasenji," and "ngasenna"), and while "home" was consistently translated as "balla," some students added prepositions like "ri" and "na" (meaning "in"). Despite these variations, no significant differences in meaning were found.

d. Sentence 4: "Mr Hasan is working in the garden"

Students	Translation
1	Pa' Hasan mange anjama ri kokonna
2	Pa' Hasan mange anjama ri kokonna
3	Pa Hasan mange anjama ri kokonna
4	Pa' Hasan eroki mange anjama ri kokonna
5	Na anjo pa' Hasan mange antoaki kokonna
6	Pa' Hasan mange tommi anjama ri kokonna
7	Pa' Hasan mange a' ri kokonna anjama antu antangkasi-tangkasi sollanna nacoppong lamung-lamunna
8	Pa' Hasan mange a' jappa-jappa ri kokonna sekalianmi na tangkasi ruku'na
9	Pa' Hasan mengemi ri kokonna anjama poro angtangkasi
10	Pa' Hasan mange ri kokonna antoa-toaki siagadang anjama tommi

This table shows the translations of fourth sentence ("Mr. Hasan is working in the garden") by each student. It reveals that three students translated the sentence identically, both lexically and syntactically. The other seven students provided different translations, with variations likely added for clarity. Notably, all students used "go" (meaning "mange"), even though it was not in the original sentence. Some students translated "Mr. Hasan" as "bapa'na" (meaning "father") and added the preposition "ri" (meaning "in"). Despite these variations, no significant differences in meaning were found.

e. Sentence 5: "He is planting some banana trees"

Students	Translation
1	Ia a'lamung-lamung unti
2	Ia najamaia a' lamungi poko' unti
3	Poru a'lamung-lamungi kammayami poko'-poko' unti
4	Siagadang pole a' lamung tommy pole poko'-poko' unti
5	Ia mange a'lamung poko' unti siapang jaina
6	Poru' a' lamungpoko-poko' unti siagadang natangkasi tommy pole kokona
7	Siagang pole a'lamung tommy pole poko-poko unti
8	Nampa a' lamung-lamung tommy pole poko' unti
9	Na lamung-lamung tommy pole poko unti
10	Nalamung tommy pole poko'-poko' unti

This table shows the translations of fifth sentence ("He is planting some bananas") by each student. It reveals that students translated the sentence differently, both lexically and syntactically. Some students misunderstood "trees," using the singular "*poko*" instead of the plural "*poko-poko*." Variations also appeared in "planting," with some writing "*lamung*" and others "*lamung-lamung*." Additionally, "he" was sometimes translated as "*ia*" (meaning "father" or "*bapa'na*"), and some students omitted it entirely. Despite these differences, no significant variations in meaning were found.

f. Sentence 6: "Adi is helping his father"

Students	Translation
1	Adi nabantui bap'na
2	I Adi nabantui bapak'na
3	I Adi a'tojeng-tojeng ambantui bapa'na
4	I Adi sanna rajinna ambantui bapakna
5	I Adi nabantui bapa'na
6	I Adi attojeng-tojeng nabantui tettana
7	Adi nabantutommy bapak'na
8	I Adi sanna rajinna ambantui bapa'na anjama ri kokonna
9	Adi nabantui bapa'na anjama rikokonna
10	Adi nabantui manggena anjama

This table shows the translations of sixth sentence ("Adi is helping his father") by each student. It indicates that two students translated the sentence identically in both lexical and syntactic terms, while the other eight provided different translations. Variations occurred in translating "father" (e.g., "*manggena*," "*tettana*," "*ua'na*," and "*bapa'na*"). Some students added the preposition "I," reflecting uncertainty about the English equivalent, as "I" is often used in Makassarese when mentioning names. Despite these differences, no significant variations in meaning were found.

DISCUSSION

As shown in the tests above, the questionnaire assessed students' views on their translation skills, difficulties, and general opinions about translation. The short translation test measured their ability to understand English text and translate them into Makassarese. The sample included English department students and native Makassarese speakers to ensure a strong command of target language grammar and style, thus reducing mistranslation.

Results showed that while most students rated themselves as good at translation, many still faced difficulties, indicating that translation challenges persist regardless of proficiency. However, more skilled translators were better at overcoming these difficulties.

Students reported that 40% of their difficulties were at the lexical level, such as translating the word "father" with variations like "*manggena*," "*tettana*," "*ua'na*," and "*bapa'na*." For example, in translating "They stay at home," some students omitted "they" or used incorrect equivalents.

30% of students faced syntax-level difficulties, reflected in varied translations of "He is planting some banana trees." Differences in sentence structure were evident, with some students providing the same translations but most offering different ones.

Regarding semantic difficulties, 30% of students reported issues. However, all students successfully transferred meaning from the source to the target language, likely due to their native Makassarese background and English department education. The simplicity of the text also contributed to this success.

Most students used a free translation method, often paraphrasing content extensively due to grammatical differences between English and Makassarese. This method reproduced the content without closely mirroring the original form (Venuti, 1995).

CONCLUSION

In summary, the difficulties faced by translators in translating English text into Makassarese occur at three levels: lexical, syntactic, and semantic. Lexical difficulties are related to word equivalence, syntactic difficulties involve sentence reformulation, and semantic difficulties pertain to meaning transfer. Lexical difficulties are the most frequently encountered.

Translating English text into Makassarese can employ various methods, including word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptation, idiomatic translation, free translation, and communicative translation. The

research found that students often prefer using the literal translation method as it helps them better understand the meaning of the text.

REFERENCES

- Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. Routledge.
- Bassnett, S. (1980). *Translation Studies*. Methuen.
- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Chesterman, A. (1997). *Memes of translation: The spread of ideas in translation theory*. John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Fisher, R. A. (1935). *The Design of Experiments*. Oliver & Boyd.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (1993). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Hatim, B., & Munday, J. (2004). *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book*. Routledge.
- Herder, J. G. (1772). *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Treatise on the origin of language).
- House, J. (2015). *Translation Quality Assessment: Past and Present*. Routledge.
- Molina, L., & Albir, A. H. (2002). *Translation Techniques Revisited: Current Issues and Research*. Routledge.
- Newmark, P. (1957). *Approaches to Translation*. Pergamon Press.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Brill.
- Pym, A., & Harvay, M. (1992). *Translation and Text Transfer: An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication*. Frankfurt/Main: Berlin.
- Sadtono, E. (1985). *Issues in English Language Education in Indonesia*. IKIP Malang.
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge.