

**STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING NARRATIVE TEXT AT GRADE  
EIGHTH IN SMP SWASTA CINTA RAKYAT 2 PEMATANGSIANTAR**

Umami Kalsum Siahaan<sup>1</sup>, Sanggam Siahaan<sup>2</sup>, Bloner Sinurat<sup>3</sup>  
Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar  
siahaancell97@gmail.com, Sanggam.siahaan@uhn.ac.id,  
bloner.sinurat@uhn.ac.id

**ABSTRACT**

*This research aims to analyze the difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar in translating narrative texts from English into Bahasa Indonesia and to identify the strategies they use in the translation process. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method involving 17 students as participants. Data were collected through students' translation tasks and analyzed based on Nida and Taber's (1982) theory of translation difficulties and Mona Baker's (1992) translation strategy framework. The findings reveal that students experienced linguistic difficulties particularly in vocabulary (100%), grammar (100%), and word choice (88.2%) while non-linguistic factors were not identified. Regarding translation strategies, students used six out of eight strategies proposed by Baker: translation by paraphrase using a related word (28.07%), omission (26.32%), paraphrase using an unrelated word (15.79%), more general word (14.04%), more neutral/less expressive word (12.28%), and loan word plus explanation (3.51%). The dominant strategy, translation by paraphrase using a related word, indicates students' attempts to maintain meaning despite limited vocabulary mastery. The study concludes that insufficient linguistic competence, especially in vocabulary and grammar, remains the main obstacle in students' translation performance.*

**Keywords:** Translation Difficulties, Narrative Text, Linguistic Factors, Translation Strategies

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesulitan yang dihadapi siswa kelas VIII di SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar dalam menerjemahkan teks naratif dari bahasa Inggris ke bahasa Indonesia, serta mengidentifikasi strategi yang digunakan dalam proses penerjemahan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 17 siswa sebagai partisipan. Data diperoleh melalui hasil terjemahan siswa dan dianalisis berdasarkan teori kesulitan penerjemahan dari Nida dan Taber (1982) serta teori strategi penerjemahan dari Mona Baker (1992). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami

kesulitan linguistik, terutama pada aspek kosa kata (100%), tata bahasa (100%), dan pemilihan kata (88,2%), sementara faktor non-linguistik tidak ditemukan. Dalam hal strategi penerjemahan, siswa menggunakan enam dari delapan strategi yang dikemukakan oleh Baker, yaitu: penerjemahan dengan parafrasa menggunakan kata yang berhubungan (28,07%), penghilangan (26,32%), parafrasa dengan kata yang tidak berhubungan (15,79%), kata yang lebih umum (14,04%), kata yang lebih netral atau kurang ekspresif (12,28%), serta penggunaan kata serapan atau kata serapan dengan penjelasan (3,51%). Strategi yang paling dominan adalah parafrasa dengan kata yang berhubungan, yang menunjukkan upaya siswa untuk mempertahankan makna meskipun memiliki keterbatasan kosa kata. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keterbatasan kompetensi linguistik, khususnya dalam penguasaan kosa kata dan tata bahasa, merupakan hambatan utama dalam kemampuan siswa menerjemahkan teks naratif.

Kata Kunci: Kesulitan Penerjemahan, Teks Naratif, Faktor Linguistik, Strategi Penerjemahan

### **A. Introduction**

Language is important in human life. This is because language allows people to communicate with others and express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. With the existence of language, communication has become easier, especially in today's modern society. According to Noam Chomsky (1965), language is a collection of sentences formed from a few elements, but by following the rules of grammar and you can create an infinite number of sentences. Harold Gleason (1961) defined Language as a system of arbitrary (non-content) signs used by groups of people to communicate collaboratively.

In this world, there are various languages used for communication, such as Mandarin, Arabic, French, Russian, English, and others. In Indonesia, English has moved to improve its linguistic status, namely starting to act as a second language and the language of instruction (Alrajafi, 2021). Proficiency in English is considered a crucial asset that enhances an individual's prospects in terms of education and career opportunities in Indonesia (Alrajafi, 2021). In addition, in the current era of globalization, translation cannot be separated from power relations, social setting, political context, and cultural paradigms (SUN,2009). English is a global standard for communication,

and it has been a part of Indonesia's educational system for a long time until today (Mappiasse and Sihes, 2014a).

In Indonesia, English has become the first foreign language that has been taught in every Educational Institution from the elementary level up to higher education level (Laela Fitriyani, 2018). In 1967, the Minister of Education and Culture decided that English should be taught as the official foreign language in Indonesian schools (Cesare Ardaya et al., 2022). This was the first year of English language learning in schools in Indonesia. This was because foreign languages were very important at that time. English consists of several components including, writing, reading, listening, and speaking (Istiqomah, 2016). According to Brown (2000), listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the main components of language teaching.

According to Harmer (2007), these four skills are divided into two categories: the ability to receive and the ability to produce. This means that students can improve their performance by learning the language they are studying. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), the four

skills complement each other and form the foundation for effective communication. Without balanced development, language learning progress can be hindered and affect overall communication ability. Mastering these skills is not only useful in education, but also in daily life and the professional world, as good English skills are important. Unfortunately, not all students can master these four English skills. In reality, students experience difficulties in teaching and learning activities, this causes students to be lazy to learn English.

Apart from the skills above, there are several language elements that cannot be ignored in the English teaching and learning process, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling and translation (Richards and Schmidt, 2010). One of the ways to learning English is by translating the text or book in the subject English lesson. Translation exists not only in English but also in every language and not only serves as a method or skill in learning another language but also as a means of sharing culture. Hatim and Munday (2004:6) define translation as the transfer of text in written form from

source language (SL) to the target language (TL). Translation is the process a person goes through to convey a message from one language to another language accurately without changing the intended meaning of the message or words.

Translation brings an idea from one language to another. This is the process that directs written text from the source language to the target language (Pinchuck, 1977; Wilss, 1982; Newmark, 1991). Translation functions to translate written or spoken SL texts to an equivalent TL text, such as translating from English to Indonesia. It also involves the use of various dictionaries and references, as well as the ability to write, express and generate ideas. Translation is an interesting topic, not only for professional and amateur translators but also for students.

Students must learn to translate, especially in countries where English is not the primary language. In Indonesia, for example, translation is very important to help students translate materials from English to Indonesian. For translating a text, the students must transfer the meaning or message which is written in source language (SL) to target language (TL)

such as in English text to Indonesian text (Erry Silviana, 2008). Students should not translate as they want. This is because translation must pay attention to each word that is translated as it will affect the meaning and make misunderstanding and confusion between the source language and the target language. If students can translate English well, they will not encounter obstacles during the English learning process and will be able to understand what is being taught. However, most students, especially students at the senior high school level, still face difficulties when they are asked to translate texts in English. In translation courses, it is expected that students can translate well, but most students do not have the ability to translate. According to Krashen (1982), a poor understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure is one of the reasons why students struggle to translate English text.

In junior high school, students study several types of texts such as descriptive, recount, procedure, and narrative texts, which require students to be able to translate these texts in order to understand the content of a text. Between the kinds of the text, the researcher focuses on one of the kind

of texts above, that is Narrative text. Narrative texts are a type of writing that tells a story with characters, settings, and plots arranged to capture the reader's attention and convey a moral message or life lesson (McKnight, 2013). An important part of narrative text is the orientation, complication, resolution, and coda.

Based on Based on experience during teaching practice (PPL) at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar, the researcher found that grade twelve students faced difficulties in translating the narrative texts they created themselves, students also have limited vocabulary, and students are afraid and feel insecure when faced with the task of translating a text. Additionally, they have a poor grasp of grammar, especially regarding the use of tenses, complex sentence structures, and passive forms, which often causes inaccurate construction of translated sentences.

In the previous research done by by Nita Juniati Hasibuan (2019), students are struggling with grammar, they cannot effectively create grammatical elements. Students then have difficulty arranging words into coherent sentences and lack

vocabulary, especially when it comes to new words. Mei Sakriani Hadrus (2017), stated that the students' difficulties in translating argumentative text were the difficulties in linguistics factors more prominent than non-linguistics factors.

Seeing the impact and difficulties faced by students in translating English texts and the importance of a student having translation skills, the researcher is interested in analyzing and understanding more deep the difficulties faced by grade eighth students in SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar in translating texts, especially narrative texts. Based on the explanation above, the researcher intended to a research entitled "Students' Difficulties in Translating Narrative Text at Grade Eighth in SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar".

## **B. Research Methods**

This research used a descriptive qualitative method to describe the result systematically, factual, and accurately. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is "a research process based on data collection through open or semi-

structured interviews, observations, and/or document reviews to gain an understanding of social and human issues and phenomena." This approach emphasizes the exploration and interpretation of complex social phenomena through in-depth analysis of narrative data, which is often collected through methods such as ethnography or grounded theory.

This research used descriptive qualitative because this study aims to produce valid and reliable data and provide a description of student's difficulties in translating narrative text and the strategies that used by student's in translate narrative text at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar.

### **C. Research Results and Discussion**

After analyzed and categorizing the factors of difficulties in translation and the strategies used in translation, the researcher found:

#### **The Students' Factors Difficulties in Translating Narrative Text**

After analyze and categorizing the data into 2 factors of difficulties in translation according to Nida and Taber (1982) theory, namely linguistic factors and the non- linguistic factors.

The researcher found that all students experienced linguistic difficulties when translating narrative text from English into Bahasa Indonesia. These difficulties were categorized into three areas: vocabulary, grammar, and word choice. However, non-linguistic factors were not found in students that caused them difficulties in translating narrative text. In factors of linguistic, the researcher found that 17 students struggled in vocabulary (100%), 17 students struggle in grammatical (100%), and 15 students struggled in word choice (88,2%). Errors in vocabulary and grammar were the most common, appearing in the translations of all 17 students (100%). Based on the analysis, the detail explanation will be presented into a table:

**Table 1. Detailed Explanation**

<b>Factors of Difficulties in Translation</b>	<b>Types</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Linguistic Factors	Vocabulary	17	100%
	Grammar	17	100%
	Word Choice	15	88,2%
Non-Linguistic Factors	Ideology	0	0%
	Cultural	0	0%
	Economics	0	0%

#### **The Students' Strategies in Translating Narrative Text**

Based on the analysis of student answer sheets, the following information outlines how frequently students use various translation

approaches. These results are categorized into 8 strategies according to Mona Baker (1992) theory. Overall, 6 out of the 8 strategies have been identified, with frequency details presented in the following table and chart:

**Table 2 The percentage of Students' Strategies in Translating Narrative Text**

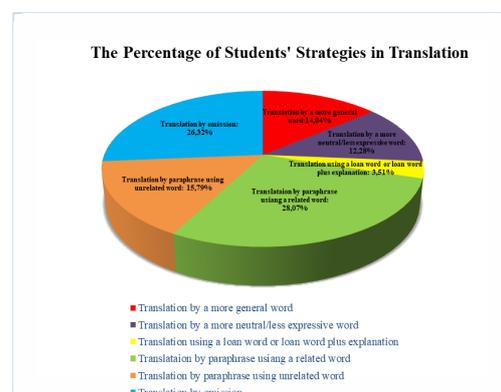
Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Translation by paraphrase using a related word	16	28,07%
Translation by omission	15	26,32%
Translation by paraphrase using unrelated word	9	15,79%
Translation by a more general word	8	14,04%
Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word	7	12,28%
Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation	2	3,51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the table above, the data analysis shows that there are 6 strategies found in students' translation of narrative text. The researcher found 57 data from all the strategies used in translating narrative text. There are 16 students using translation by paraphrase using a related word (28,07%), 15 students using translation by omission (26,32%), 9 students using translation by paraphrase using unrelated word (15,79%), 8 students using translation by more general word (14,04%), 7 students using translation by a more neutral/less expressive word (12,28%), and 2 students using translation using a loan word or loan

word plus explanation (3,51%). Strategy translation by paraphrase using a related word is the most dominant used by students, which is 28.07%. This indicates that students in translating, will look for equivalent words that have similar meanings. Next is the strategy translation by omission, which is 26.32%, indicating that students tend to remove words that they think difficult to translate and unimportant.

After classifying and calculating the strategies used by students in translating narrative text, the researcher drew a chart to provide a visual representation of the frequency of translation strategy used by students. The detailed percentage distribution for each strategy can be seen in the following diagram:

**Chart 1. The Percentage of Students' Strategies in Translation**



## Discussion

The findings from this research showed that eighth grade students at

SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar faced many difficulties when translating narrative texts from English into Bahasa Indonesia. The analysis indicated that the main reason for the students' struggles was related to language issues, while other factors outside of language did not seem to affect their translations much. This result supports the idea presented by Nida and Taber in 1982. They claimed that differences in the languages, like grammar, sentence structure, word selection, and common phrases, are the key reasons why translating can be hard.

Students had a hard time with language mainly because they didn't know enough words, made mistakes in grammar, and sometimes chose wrong words. Many students found it tough to pick the right words in Bahasa Indonesia, which led to translations that were either wrong or not complete. For example, some students translated English words straight into their language without thinking about the context, making their sentences sound strange or incorrect. This agrees with what Krashen (1982) that having a small vocabulary and not using the target

language much makes it harder for learners to understand and express meanings accurately.

Grammar was another big problem. Students often forgot to keep tenses the same, used prepositions incorrectly, or left out helping verbs, which changed what the sentences meant. These grammar mistakes show that students still don't fully grasp how English sentences are formed or how they differ from Bahasa Indonesia. This supports what Davies (2004) about how grammar and word formation create significant challenges in getting translations right. Also, the trouble with using the right grammar shows that students haven't practiced using translation rules enough while learning English.

There were also clear issues with choosing the right words. Some students picked words that were correct in grammar but didn't fit the meaning needed for the situation. For example, some words were translated too literally without thinking about how they are used in sayings or cultures. This shows a lack of understanding of contextual meaning, which Hatim and Munday (2004) is an important skill in translation since meaning involves more than just language; it also

includes the practical and cultural aspects.

Regarding the translation strategies, the study found that students applied six out of the eight strategies proposed by Mona Baker (1992), namely translation by a more general word, translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, translation by paraphrase using a related word, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, and translation by omission. The most frequently used strategy was translation by paraphrase using a related word, followed by translation by omission. The choice of paraphrasing methods shows that students tried to keep the meaning of the original text, even though they didn't know many words. By rephrasing, they changed the sentences to include simpler words, which helped them keep the main idea, even when finding exact matches was hard. This result backs up what Mona Baker said in 1992, which is that paraphrasing is one of the best ways to deal with differences in words and culture between languages.

However, the frequent use of omission suggests that many students chose to skip words or phrases that they did not understand. Although this strategy can sometimes make the translation more natural, it often leads to information loss or reduced accuracy, especially when key elements are omitted. According to Larson (1998), omission should only be used when the meaning remains clear without the omitted part; otherwise, it results in incomplete message transfer. In this research, omission tended to indicate avoidance rather than strategic simplification, which shows the students' struggle with lexical comprehension.

The findings of this study are in line with those of Hasibuan (2019) and Hadrus (2017), who found that linguistic factors, especially vocabulary and grammar, were the most significant causes of students' difficulties in translation. Similarly, Pasaribu, Herman, and Hutahaeen (2020) discovered that grammatical structure—particularly tenses and sentence patterns—was a dominant problem in students' translations. The present study supports these results, confirming that language mastery is

the strongest determinant of students' translation performance.

However, this study differs slightly from Waty Kembaren et al. (2023), whose participants showed both linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties, such as misunderstanding cultural references and contextual meaning. In the current study, non-linguistic difficulties were not evident, likely because the narrative text used did not contain complex cultural elements. The content was more literal and easier for students to understand, allowing them to focus on language form rather than cultural context.

### **E. Conclusion**

Based on the result of the research, the researcher draws the conclusion to answer the research problem of this research, namely: what are the factors of difficulties faced by students in translating narrative text from English into Bahasa Indonesia and what strategies are used by the students in translating narrative text from English into Bahasa Indonesia at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 2 Pematangsiantar. Here are the conclusions of this research:

1. From 2 factors of students'

difficulties in translation according to Nida and Taber (1982), namely factors linguistic and factors non-linguistic, the researcher found only factors of linguistic in students' translation. There are 17 students struggled in vocabulary (100%), 17 students struggle in grammatical (100%), and 15 students struggled in word choice (88,2%). Errors in vocabulary and grammar were the most common, appearing in the translations of all 17 students (100%). This indicates that vocabulary and grammar are the most significant and consistent challenges for students in translating narrative texts from English into Bahasa Indonesia.

2. From 8 types of strategies in translation according to Mona Baker theory (1992), there are 6 types of strategies used by students in translating narrative text from English into Bahasa Indonesia, namely translation by a more general word (14,04%), translation by a more neutral/less expressive

word (12,28%), translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation (3,51%), translation by paraphrase using a related word (28,07%), translation by paraphrase using unrelated word (15,79%), and translation by omission (26,32%). The most dominant types of strategy in translation used by students is translation by paraphrase using a related word, with the percentage 28.07%. This indicates that the students prioritize conveying meaning by finding suitable words that have similar meanings.

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