

**AN ANALYSIS OF GOOGLE TRANSLATION ERRORS IN  
TRANSLATING INDONESIAN FOLKLORES INTO ENGLISH**

**Thesis**

***Submitted as Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements to Obtain Strata I (S1)  
Degree***



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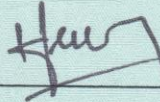

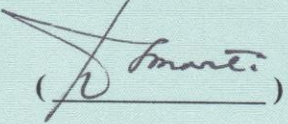
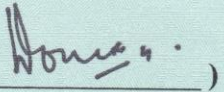
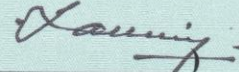
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## ABSTRAK

Putri, Gustika Dayama. 2014. **“An Analysis of Google Translation Errors in Translating Indonesian Folklores into English.”** *Skripsi*. Padang: Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan jenis kesalahan terjemahan yang muncul pada hasil terjemahan *Google Translate* dalam menerjemahkan teks cerita rakyat Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris. Disamping itu, penelitian ini juga dimaksudkan untuk mengidentifikasi penyebab dari kesalahan tersebut dipandang dari segi masalah mesin penerjemah dalam menerjemahkan bahasa sumber. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Objek penelitian ini adalah terjemahan bahasa Inggris dari empat cerita rakyat Indonesia yang dihasilkan oleh *Google Translate*.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 4 jenis kesalahan terjemahan yang muncul pada hasil terjemahan *Google Translate*. Berdasarkan total kemunculannya, ditemukan 209 “incorrect words” errors, 139 “missing words” errors, 34 “word order” errors, dan 4 “unknown words” errors. Sehubungan dengan penyebab dari masing-masing kesalahan tersebut, ditemukan 4 masalah mesin penerjemah yaitu *lexical ambiguity*, *lexical mismatch*, *structural mismatch*, dan *multiword units: idiom*. Diantara keempat masalah tersebut, *lexical mismatch* atau ketidakcocokan leksikal merupakan masalah yang paling banyak menyebabkan kesalahan terjemahan *Google Translate*. Dalam hal ini, perbedaan mendasar sehubungan dengan kosakata yang terkait dengan budaya mempersulit *Google Translate* dalam menerjemahkan bahasa sumber ke bahasa target.

Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa hasil terjemahan *Google Translate* belum dapat dipercaya sepenuhnya, terutama dalam menerjemahkan cerita rakyat. Cerita rakyat mengandung istilah budaya yang tidak dapat diterjemahkan dengan hanya mengandalkan pendekatan statistik tetapi juga harus melibatkan pertimbangan konteks dalam penerjemahannya. Meskipun *Google Translate* menawarkan fasilitas yang mudah dan cepat dalam menerjemahkan bahasa sumber, namun campur tangan manusia masih diperlukan untuk memperbaiki hasil terjemahan *Google Translate*.

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Padang, December 2014

Researcher

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRAK .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLE .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</b>	
A. Background of Research Problem .....	1
B. Identification of Research Problem .....	8
C. Limitation of Research Problem .....	9
D. Formulation of Research Problem .....	9
E. Research Questions.....	10
F. Purposes of the Research .....	10
G. Significance of the Research.....	10
H. Definitions of Key Terms .....	11
<b>CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>	
A. Translation .....	13
1. Concepts of Translation .....	13
2. Translation Aids.....	15
3. Translation Criticism .....	17
B. Google Translate.....	19
C. Error Analysis .....	22
1. Classification of Machine Translation Errors.....	24
2. Causes of Machine Translation Errors .....	29
D. Folklore.....	35
E. Previous Studies.....	36
F. Conceptual Framework.....	38
<b>CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODS</b>	
A. Research Design .....	40
B. Data and Source of Data .....	40
C. Instruments of the Research.....	41
D. Techniques of Data Collection .....	43
E. Techniques of Data Analysis .....	43
<b>CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	
A. Data Description and Findings .....	46
B. Data Analysis .....	49
1. “Missing Words” Errors .....	49
a. Content Words.....	49
b. Filler Words.....	54
2. “Word Order” Errors .....	60
a. Local Word Order.....	60
b. Local Phrase Order .....	63
c. Long Range Word Order .....	65



d. Long Range Phrase Order.....	70
3. “Incorrect Words” Errors.....	74
a. Sense.....	74
- Wrong Lexical Choice .....	74
- Incorrect Disambiguation.....	78
b. Incorrect Form .....	81
c. Extra Words.....	88
d. Style .....	92
e. Idiom.....	95
4. “Unknown Words” Errors .....	97
a. Unknown Stem .....	97
b. Unseen Form.....	99
C. Discussion.....	101
<b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION</b>	
A. Conclusion .....	111
B. Suggestion.....	113
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>118</b>

## LIST OF TABLE

Table 1 : Types of Machine Translation Errors .....	42
Table 2 : Table of Findings .....	47
Table 3 : Datum 115 - Example of Missing Content Words Error .....	50
Table 4 : Datum 38 - Example of Missing Content Words Error .....	52
Table 5 : Datum 51 - Example of Missing Filler Words Error .....	55
Table 6 : Datum 117 - Example of Missing Filler Words Error .....	57
Table 7 : Datum 13 - Example of Local Word Order Error.....	60
Table 8 : Datum 20 - Example of Local Word Order Error.....	62
Table 9 : Datum 6 - Example of Local Phrase Order Error .....	63
Table 10: Datum 131 - Example of Local Phrase Order Error .....	64
Table 11: Datum 69 - Example of Long Range Word Order Error .....	66
Table 12: Datum 132 - Example of Long Range Word Order Error .....	68
Table 13: Datum 19 - Example of Long Range Phrase Order Error.....	70
Table 14: Datum 15 - Example of Long Range Phrase Order Error.....	72
Table 15: Datum 136 - Example of Wrong Lexical Choice Error .....	74
Table 16: Datum 22 - Example of Wrong Lexical Choice Error .....	76
Table 17: Datum 4 - Example of Incorrect Disambiguation Error .....	78
Table 18: Datum 80 - Example of Incorrect Disambiguation Error .....	80
Table 19: Datum 6 - Example of Incorrect Form Error .....	82
Table 20: Datum 67 - Example of Incorrect Form Error .....	83
Table 21: Datum 39 - Example of Incorrect Form Error .....	85
Table 22: Datum 108 - Example of Incorrect Form Error .....	86
Table 23: Datum 125 - Example of Extra Words Error .....	88
Table 24: Datum 41 - Example of Extra Words Error .....	89
Table 25: Datum 10 - Example of Extra Words Error .....	90
Table 26: Datum 25 - Example of Style Error .....	93
Table 27: Datum 28 - Example of Style Error .....	94
Table 28: Datum 49 - Example of Idiom Error.....	96
Table 29: Datum 43 - Example of Unknown Stem Error .....	98
Table 30: Datum 45 - Example of Unseen Form Error.....	99

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A. Background of Research Problem**

In the era of globalization, technology devices have assisted people to gain any kinds of information from any countries. One no longer has to be in exact area to acknowledge the conditions of certain country, beginning from its economic matters, political conditions and even its cultures. Nevertheless, human speak different languages in different areas. They need a way to create good communication among people with different languages. In this case, translation functions as a key process in the development of global connectedness (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009: 18).

In this modern era, translation has become a significant study in human lives. It is not only for the sake of social interaction but translation is also beneficial for delivering knowledge, voicing political matters, and supporting economic activities. That is because translation relates to language, which is actually the main component of communication for all purposes. Since language is various based on specific areas, translation becomes a bridge to meet the communication between people in different languages. Etymologically, translation comes from the word *translate*, which means expressing the sense of words in another language. The goal of translation is to deliver the message of one language to another language in order to build the communication between people who have different languages.



To succeed the process of translation, there are several translation aids that can be utilized. Holmes in Munday (2008: 11-12) mentions three translation aids: dictionaries, grammars and information technology. Today when the development of technology is growing significantly, information technology becomes the central attention since it is practical and helpful. Information technology itself consists of machine translation, translation software, online database and use of internets. Among other information technologies, the most phenomenal one is machine translation (MT). MT differs from the other technologies as it aims to automate the core task of the translation (Munday, 2009: 106-107). On the other hand, translation software, online database and use of internets which belong to Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools merely increases the productivity but leaves the core task to the human translator (Munday, 2009: 107). In other words, MT transfers the source text (ST) to target text (TT) without any human interference whereas CAT tools only provide human translator informatics' resources to support the efficiency of the translation.

Due to its ease and practicality, MT has often become the prominent choice among people in any level of education, especially for language learners. There are lots of machine translation such as *Google Translate*, *Microsoft Translator*, *Rekso Translator* and many others. Among those machine translations, *Google Translate* is the most popular and the most accessible media in the era of globalization. It provides more than 80 different languages in the world, and it can be easily accessed since it is supported by its well-known search engine—Google. For its accessibility, *Google Translate* has been utilized by

many people from all over the world. Not only do adults use this facility, but also teenagers and children are familiar with this machine translation. That is due to its ease of usage. The users should only put the original text on available box, choose the available target language, click enter command, and then the source text will be successfully translated in a second.

It has been widely known that *Google Translate* employs statistical approach in translating the source texts (cited from [translate.google.com/about/intl/en\\_ALL](https://translate.google.com/about/intl/en_ALL)). It provides a comprehensive list of equivalences between source language (SL) and target language (TL). However, translating itself is not an easy task. It is not as simple as altering one language to another language. Sometimes, certain term in SL may not be found in TL. Furthermore, each language may have different grammatical system as well as different structure. These matters may affect the quality of the translation itself. As emphasized by Hall et al. (2011: 224), translation does not merely relate to a process of linguistic substitution, but it also involves semantic, pragmatic and cultural process, in which equivalence becomes elusive. A particular word in one language may have translation equivalent in another language. However, the word may differ in its actual communicative acts. For example, Indonesian *menolak* is equivalent to English *refuse*, *reject*, *deny*. Nevertheless, there are differences between those three based on the underlying intentions and interpretations. *Refuse* is used when someone not accepting an offer or not willing to do something whereas *reject* has wide message such as a form of ignorance or a rejection to think something over, commonly used in a passive form. *Deny*, on the other hand, is used to reveal that a statement

is not right. Related to these, an ability to translate based on the context of its use is important to produce accurate translation in target language.

It is undeniable that *Google Translate* provides the simple and fast way to produce the target text. Nevertheless, the quality of its output is still unclear. In some cases, the output of *Google Translate* is reliable. In other conditions, its output is confusing in regard to the lexical and the structural errors. Moreover, translation involves two languages and two cultures to be translated. For literary texts which contain culture specific, translation can be more complicated for *Google Translate*. Here is an example of the translation produced by *Google Translate* in translating literary text, which is a folklore from Sumatera Utara entitled 'Terjadinya Danau Toba' cited from educational site of Indonesian culture, [http://www.seasite.niu.edu/indonesian/budaya\\_bangsa/cerita\\_rakyat/](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/indonesian/budaya_bangsa/cerita_rakyat/):

Source text : Pada jaman dahulu, hiduplah seorang pemuda tani yatim piatu di bagian utara pulau Sumatra. Daerah tersebut sangatlah kering. Syahdan, pemuda itu hidup **dari** bertani dan memancing ikan. Pada suatu hari ia memancing seekor ikan yang sangat indah. Warnanya kuning keemasan. **Begitu dipegangnya**, ikan tersebut berubah menjadi seorang putri jelita. **Putri** itu **adalah** wanita yang dikutuk karena melanggar suatu larangan. Ia **akan** berubah menjadi sejenis makhluk yang pertama menyentuhnya. Oleh karena yang menyentuhnya manusia, maka ia **berubah** menjadi seorang putri.

Target text : In ancient times, there lived a young orphan farmer in the northern part of the island of Sumatra. The area **is** very dry. Syahdan, the young man lived **from** farming and fishing. One day he was fishing a very beautiful fish. The color **is** golden yellow. **So holding**, the fish turned into a lovely princess. The **daughter of** a woman who was condemned for violating a ban. **He will** turn into a kind of creature



who first touched it. Because the human touch it, then she **turns** into a princess.

At first glance, the output of *Google Translate* seems reliable because the first sentence contains no errors. Nevertheless, the next sentences have serious errors in case of lexical and syntactical aspects. The lexical errors can be seen from the wrong classification and choice of words. Related to the example, it seems that *Google Translate* fails to preserve cohesion of each sentence of the text in case of classifying word based on its tenses. For texts, especially narratives, it is important to maintain the cohesion between the first and the following sentences. Hence, if the first sentence converses the past, the next sentences should also be in the past.

The errors related to the choice of word are ‘from’, ‘so’, and ‘daughter.’ In the first case, Indonesian lacks hyponyms whereas English has specific term for SL, which ultimately causes lexical mismatch in TL. Related to its use, the translation ‘from’ is not suitable to be paired with the previous word ‘lived’ because the source sentence refers to how the person supplied himself with the means of subsistence. Therefore, the right translation for ‘hidup dari’ should be ‘lived by’ instead of ‘lived from.’ The other lexical error can also be seen from the translation of ‘putri.’ Unlike the previous example, this error occurs due to the ambiguity of SL word. In SL, the word ‘putri’ can refer to four meanings. Those are ‘princess’, ‘woman’, ‘girl’, and ‘daughter.’ However, based on the previous sentence, it can be seen that ‘putri’ was referred to ‘princess’ instead of ‘daughter.’ Similar condition also goes to the translation ‘so.’ Although ‘begitu’ is

equivalent to 'so' in English, the idea is different in this context. Here, 'begitu' functions as relative adverb of time. Thus, the right translation should be 'when' instead of 'so.'

Furthermore, syntactical error can be seen from the last sentence which is a complex sentence. *Google Translate* creates its own sentence construction in translating the subordinate clause. Considering syntactical aspects, the translation is correct because the sentence consists of Noun and Verb Phrase (*human* as Noun, and *touch it* as Verb Phrase). Nevertheless, the translation leaves the original message of the source sentence. The original sentence forms syntactical structure as Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase. In Google Translation, however, the original object was positioned as the subject and the original subject (NP) was altered into verb. As a result, the idea also changes. The emphasis of the original sentence is actually on who does the action, (e.g. '*the one who did it was human; therefore, the fish turned into human*'). However, the translation eliminates this emphasis, which ultimately causes incoherence between the main and the subordinate clause.

From the example, it can be seen that *Google Translate* has a basic ability to translate Indonesian text into English. Nevertheless, there are also several lexical and syntactical errors found in the translation of *Google Translate*. Translation itself does not merely concern with language but also culture. As mentioned by Kuhiwczak and Littau (2007: 23), language and culture cannot be separated in translation. Languages are affected by cultures. For example, *English* has tenses on its verbs as its people value punctuality. *Indonesian*, on the other

hand, does not have tenses but it has honorifics on its terms of address as its people regard for social status. The differences between these languages, in case of lexical and syntactical aspects, might become the obstacles for *Google Translate* to produce accurate translation.

As a respond to this problem, this research was intended to explore and analyze the errors produced by *Google Translate* in translating literary texts, especially texts related to contextual matters. The errors were classified into four big classes proposed by Vilar et al. (2006) because their classifications are particularly based on machine translation errors. Also, the classification provides more specific errors in case of lexical and syntactical aspects. In addition, this research was also aimed to analyze and describe the causes of translation errors produced by *Google Translate*. The causes were based on MT problems presented by Arnold et al. (1994) since those problems are typical of MT.

The source texts were limited to literary texts, specialized in Indonesian folklores. The folklores were chosen because those are included in narrative texts which demand for cohesion and coherence between the sentences. In order to achieve cohesion and coherence in narrative texts, meaning in context is necessary to decide appropriate translation for source language. Also, folklores are culture specific since they have cultural terms, contents and structures. Compared to other kind of texts, translating folklores requires more considerations because it involves not only language but also culture. Therefore, this research needs to be conducted in order to find out how well *Google Translate* in translating culture specific text as Indonesian folklores.



The research on the analysis of translation errors produced by *Google Translate* is not only valuable for linguistic studies but also practically influential for language engineering. Theoretically, the analysis of Google translation errors may give valuable data and information about the dominant errors of *Google Translate* so that the users might be aware of certain errors that often occur in the translation of *Google Translate*, particularly Indonesian to English language. Also, this research may give useful information about what causes Google translation errors related to its typical problems. Furthermore, it is hoped that this analysis provides a reference for the development of *Google Translate* to minimize translation errors.

## **B. Identification of Research Problem**

Translation can be studied in two aspects: the process and the product. The process of translation concerns with the psychology of translation, emphasizing on translation process. It involves cognitive perspectives of the translator, that is, the way the translator takes the original or source text (ST) and turns it into a text in another language (TT). The study of translation process can be analyzed by finding out the methods and the strategies used by the translator to find the equivalence between the source language and the target language. On the other hand, the study of translation product focuses on the translated texts. It tries to examine existing translations, involving the description or analysis of a single ST-TT pair or a comparative analysis of several TTs of same ST (into one or more TLs). The study of translation product is related to quality of the translated text. Related to machine translation, the quality of translation can be analyzed

through four evaluation methods: intelligibility, accuracy, error analysis, and the test suite (Arnold et al.: 1994). This research focused on the product of translation, that is, the output of *Google Translate*. The point of discussion was to examine the translation of *Google Translate* in translating Indonesian folklores into English, through error analysis.

### **C. Limitation of Research Problem**

Based on the identification of research problem, this research was limited to the analysis of translation errors in the English translation of Indonesian folklores produced by *Google Translate*. To provide the details of Google translation errors, the errors were classified into four classifications of MT errors proposed by Vilar et al. (2006). Those are “Missing Words”, “Word Order”, “Incorrect Words”, and “Unknown Words” errors. In addition, the causes of the translation errors were analyzed, specifically in the scope of MT errors. The causes of Google translation errors were based on MT problems presented by Arnold et al. (1994); namely lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity, lexical mismatch, structural mismatch, collocation, and idiom.

### **D. Formulation of Research Problem**

In relation to the identification and the limitation of research problem, the problems of the research were formulated as follows: What types of MT errors are found in the English translation of Indonesian folklores produced by *Google Translate*, and what causes those Google translation errors?

### **E. Research Questions**

The aim of the research was to explore and analyze translation errors found in the English translation of Indonesian folklores produced by *Google translate*. The focus point of this research was error analysis related to the types of MT errors and its causes. Thus, the research questions were elaborated as follows:

1. What types of MT errors are found in the English translation of Indonesian folklores produced by *Google Translate*?
2. What causes those Google translation errors?

### **F. Purposes of the Research**

Related to the research questions, the purposes of this research were:

1. To classify the types of MT errors found in the English translation of Indonesian folklores produced by *Google Translate*.
2. To analyze the cause of each translation error occurred in the English translation of Indonesian folklores produced by *Google Translate*.

### **G. Significance of the Research**

The findings of the research were expected to provide a significant contribution both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the findings were hoped to enrich linguistic studies in the field of translation, particularly in analyzing machine translated texts. Practically, the results of the research were expected to enlarge people's knowledge about the peculiar errors produced by *Google Translate* in translating Indonesian folklores into English. Furthermore, the findings of this research were hoped to give a contribution for the development of *Google Translate* in case of minimizing the errors of translated

texts, especially for the translation of Indonesian folklores into English. Also, the findings of the research hopefully can be a reference for the next linguistic research which tries to raise the same problems of translation from different perspectives.

## **H. Definitions of Key Terms**

In order to avoid misunderstanding of some conceptual terms that may appear later on, it is important to make clear definition of key terms used in this research. The key terms were defined:

Error Analysis : A technique to identify, classify and interpret individual errors in a Google translated text systematically.

Google Translate : A statistically based machine translation provided by Google Inc. in order to help people to translate text from one language to another language.

Google Translation : The translation produced by *Google Translate* in translating Indonesian Folklores into English.

Indonesian Folklore : Indonesian traditional stories of its local area such as Pak Lebai Malang, Si Pitung, Sangkuriang, and Manik Angkeran.

Translation : The activity of Google Translate in transferring the message of Indonesian Folklores by its lexical and structural equivalences into English.

Translation Error : Non-equivalence between ST and TT.

Types of MT Error : Classifications of translation errors presented by Vilar et al. (2006); namely “missing words”, “word order”, “incorrect words”, and “unknown words” errors.

Causes of MT Error : Machine translation problems which are proposed by Arnold et al. (1994) such as lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity, lexical mismatch, structural mismatch, collocation, and idiom.