Lexical Error Analysis of Indonesian-English Translation of Texts in Dewantara Kirti Griya Museum

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ABSTRACT

The current research aims to examine lexical errors in Indonesian-English translated texts in Museum Dewantara Kirti Griya. The classification of Lexical errors proposed by Legenhausen (1975) is applied in analyzing the texts. From 43 texts, the result indicates that there are 88 errors, classified into formal errors (62.5%) and semantic errors (37.5%). The first one deals with the arrangement of words and phrases, while the second deals with meaning and collocation. The most common errors are about the confusion between concepts and terms. This happens when the translator meets local-cultural terms in the SL that need extra effort to translate.

Keywords: formal errors, lexical error, local-cultural terms, museum, semantic errors.

INTRODUCTION

There was a time in history when a translation error brought a tragedy. It happened in 1945 when an interview with Japanese Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki was wrongly translated (National Security Agency, 1968). He was asked about Japan’s response to the ultimatum of the allied countries that pressed Japan to concede defeat. The Prime Minister mentioned the word mokusatsu, which means that Japan wanted to “withhold comment” about it, yet the western media mostly wrote as if it was the act of “ignoring” (Virino, n.d.). Thus, it was considered by the allied countries as a negative response where Japan decided to ignore their ultimatum and allegedly triggered them to proceed with the bomb attack on Hiroshima, one of the cities in Japan. The incident killed thousands of people, demolished many buildings and caused long-term bad effects of radiation. It gives a shred of evidence that translation errors can have a terrible impact.

Indeed, translation is not an easy job. Translators should be able “to render the meaning of a text into another language in that the author intended the text” (Newmark, 1988, p. 5). It is challenging because every language has a different culture, geographical situation, and way of seeing the world, which determines the vocabulary they use (Larson, 1998, p. 103). For example, in English-Indonesian translation, the word “rice” can be translated into more than one word, such as padi, gabah, beras or nasi, according to its meaning (Ratyhlicious, 2018). It might happen because Indonesia is an agricultural country whose people are more familiar with rice production than people in English-speaking countries, such as the USA or Singapore. Without being aware of the language and its worldview, translators will fail to produce an
equivalent translation and potentially produce errors in their translation.

Recently, translation study has been developed widely because many things in the world are increasingly required to be translated, including texts in museums. Research has been conducted by Muarrifa (2016) on translation errors of captions in Museum Sonobudoyo and Kraton Yogyakarta. Both are famous museums in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

For example, she found some errors, ‘Masjid Besar’ in Bahasa Indonesia, which was translated as “the Big Mosque” in English. It might be correct because ‘masjid’ means “mosque” and ‘besar’ means “big”. However, ‘besar’ in the phrase ‘Masjid Besar’ does not mean “big” in size. It is more accurate to be translated into “the Great Mosque”. Another example was the word ‘menyusui’, translated into “a woman who must give his mother’s milk”. In contrast, the English word “breastfeed” is identical to the Indonesian term ‘menyusui’. Most of them are errors in the lexical unit and meaning concepts that, according to Muarrifa (2016), can bring ambiguity, misunderstanding and ridicule. Many native speakers claim that such lexical error is more irritating and disrupting than other errors, including grammar (James, 2013).

The current research examined the lexical errors of Indonesian-English texts in Dewantara Kirti Griya Museum (hereafter MDKG), a well-known museum in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. It houses memorabilia for Ki Hadjar Dewantara, one of the national heroes in Indonesia. As a museum that displays important information about history, MDKG must house all well-informed memorabilia of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, one of the national heroes in Indonesia. It must also provide its visitors with the English translated version as certain visitors might not understand the Indonesian language. MDKG has made a translation version of all its texts from Bahasa Indonesia to English, considering these two reasons. However, a question arises concerning the publication of its English translation version as to whether the translation is readable as the original. Indeed, the translation version with too many errors might make the memorabilia lose its allurement. Accordingly, the research was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What lexical errors are found in the translation version of the Indonesian texts in MDKG?
2. What causes the lexical errors in the translation version of the texts in MDKG?

Several previous studies gave insights to the current research and mostly come from the study of error analysis in language teaching. The first one is a research conducted by Krisetyawati (2010). She analyzed and classified the errors using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy made by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). Similar to other earlier research on error analysis, the classification focuses on discussing grammatical errors.

Other researchers, such as Silalahi et al. (2018) and Nasution (2019), made error categorizations covering both grammatical and ungrammatical errors. Their categorizations are generally similar in covering grammatical and lexical errors, yet their ways of classifying the errors are different. Silalahi et al. (2018) classified errors into three wide categories (lexical, morphological and syntax errors), while Nasution (2019) used a more detailed categorization because it encompasses verb error, preposition error, article error, possessive pronoun error, even lexical errors and technical errors, such as capitalization and punctuation.


The majority of the aforementioned studies evaluated the classroom performance of language learners by analyzing the errors they made. The clear-cut difference between the current study and previous studies is that the current research analyzed errors in the translated texts found in Dewantara Kirti Griya museum and focused on lexical errors. By analyzing the lexical errors and their causes, it would
be easy to improve the English texts in the museum so that the visitors can receive accurate and understandable information.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Error Analysis**

Error Analysis (hereinafter EA), a branch of applied linguistics (James, 2013), is used to analyze errors made by second language learners when applying a new language. Early research in EA mostly focused on discussing grammatical problems. James (2013, p. 142) stated that Chomsky influences making the study focus on syntax and grammatical rules and neglects the discussion of lexis and meaning.

Nevertheless, many scholars have begun to recognize no clear-cut boundary between lexis and grammar because both are important to construct a good text product. Lexis, or a lexical item, is defined as words or phrases of a particular language (Lexis, n.d.), which according to James (2013), becomes an important aspect of language learning. Errors in translating lexical items, called lexical errors, are considered “more disruptive and irritating than other types of errors” even by native speakers (James, 2013).

Legenhausen (1975, as cited in James, 2013, pp. 145-154) introduced the detailed classification of lexical errors and classified them into formal and semantic errors as described below. The first one deals with the formation of words and phrases, while the second one deals with meaning and collocation.

1. Formal Errors. These include errors in morphology, functional or situational restriction, syntactic behaviour, and the frequency of word usage. These errors are further subdivided into a) formal misselections, b) misformations, and c) Distortions

2. Semantic Errors. These errors appear in terms of semantic values (denotations), secondary meanings (connotations), what other words it is associated with. These are subclassified into a) confusion of sense relation by sing a more general term, using a more specific term, using less apt two co-hyponyms, and using wrong one from a set of near-synonyms, and b) collocational errors which include semantically determined word selection, statistically weighted preferences, and arbitrary combinations

The classification above was also used by Carrió-Pastor & Mestre-Mestre (2014) to analyze the causes of errors. According to the causes, the errors are categorized into interlingual, intralingual, and conceptual errors. Interlingual errors refer to errors that are caused by first language interference. Intralingual errors happen because the translator generalizes the rules of the second language. At the same time, conceptual errors refer to errors caused by the confusion of concepts and terms.

**Translation and Lexical Equivalence**

In translation study, the original language of a text is called *Source Language* (hereafter, SL), and the language of the translation result is called *Target Language* (hereafter, TL). The original text is called *Source Text* (hereafter, ST), and the translated text is called *Target Text* (hereafter, TT).

The most challenging issue in translation occurs when the translator encounters a word or phrase in the SL that corresponds to an unknown concept in the TL (Larson, 1998) since some lexical elements in the SL are usually unknown or do not correspond to concepts in the TL.

In the current research, the research object is museum texts that contain many unfamiliar words, such as local-cultural terms. The translator cannot find any word or phrase in the TL that is easily available for the translation, but if the terms are written only, it might bring problems for the readers to understand the meaning. Larson (1998) proposes three solutions that could be used to overcome the problems.

1. **Equivalence by modifying a generic word.** When words in the SL do not occur in the TL, the translator can analyse the SL word to discover its generic component, the contrastive components, and the function of the word in its context. From there, an adequate equivalent may be found in the TL. Modification can made by Making explicit the form of the item, making explicit the function of the item, making explicit both the form and the
function, and modifyng with a comparison to some thing or event which does occur in the receptor language.

2. Equivalence by modifying a loan word. Larson (1998) defined a load word as “a word which is from another language and is unknown to most of the speakers of the receptor language”. It does not have any meaning in the TL unless it is modified by a classifier and with additional description to build the meaning into the context and into the word.

3. Equivalence by cultural substitute. Sometimes, there are some lexical items in the SL which can best be translated using the word which is not exactly the same but occurs in the TL. A real-world referent from the TL culture is substituted for the unknown referent of the SL culture. However, Larson (1998) warned that the use of cultural substitute can sometimes be inappropriate. Therefore, he suggested that the translator uses a loan word or other modification.

### METHODS

**Method of Data Collection**

The data sources used in this research were the texts and their translations displayed in MDKG that consist of the descriptions of museum collections, photo captions and the wall texts telling the life story of Ki Hadjar Dewantara. From all 73 texts displayed in the museum, only 43 of them were randomly selected as samples. The texts that have been selected were named using a coding system with the format “(Room Name). (Order Number)”. For example, code “A.1” refers to text number 1 in room A (room 1).

**Method of Data Analysis**

In this research, Legenhausen’s lexical error classification (James, 2013) was used to identify the errors. In addition, two dictionaries were also used to analyze the data, namely *A Comprehensive Indonesian-English Dictionary* (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings, 2004) and *Online Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionaries* (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/). They were used to help identify errors and analyze the causes of all the errors found in the translated texts.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From 43 texts, a total of 88 lexical errors were found in MDKG. 62.5% of the errors belong to semantic errors and 37.5% to formal errors. Furthermore, it was found that the most common type of error in MDKG is the semantic error, i.e., a confusion of sense relation. The second-most common error is misformations, followed by distortions, collocation errors and formal misselections. Figure 1 below presents the percentages of the errors.

![Figure 1. Frequency of lexical errors](https://example.com/figure1.png)

#### Formal Errors

As mentioned previously, formal errors include errors in morphology, functional or situational restriction, syntactic behaviour, and the frequency of word usage. A total of 33 errors (37.5%) were found in the translated texts in MDKG. Table 1 below presents the frequency of the formal errors in the texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Formal Errors</th>
<th>Token</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal Misselection</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Misformation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Distortion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Frequency of formal errors
Formal misselections

The first subcategory of formal errors is formal misselections. It happens when the translator faces pairs (or triples) of words that look and sound similar and finally selects the wrong one. For example:

(1) **ST**: Ki Hadjar beserta beberapa guru Tamansiswa turut andil dalam pendirian Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia (ASRI) pada tahun 1949, yang saat ini bernama Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI).

**TT**: Ki Hadjar and Tamansiswa teachers *where* also heavily involved in the creation of the Indonesian Art Academy (ASRI) in 1949, which would later become the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI).

The translator made an error in example 1 by using the word "where" in the phrase "where also heavily involved". It seemed that what he meant is "were also heavily involved". The word "where" is a type of question key such as "what, who, why, how", while the word "were" plays a role as an auxiliary to make the sentence passive. In the SL, another way to say *turut andil is terlibat* which can be translated into English as "(to be) involved" or in the sentence, "were also (heavily) involved".

In example 2, the translator used the word "cooperation" to translate the word *koperasi* in Bahasa Indonesia, whereas they have different meanings. The equivalent word in English for the word *koperasi* is "cooperative" (Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings, 2010), which means a business or organization owned and run by people involved and the profits shared by them (Cooperative (n.d.).

Misformation

The second subcategory of formal errors is misformation. It happens because of the interference of SL that produces non-existent words in the TL.

(3) **ST**: Putrinya, Kartika Affandi, juga seorang pelukis terkemuka di Indonesia, yang lulus dari *SMP* Taman Dewasa Jakarta pada tahun 1949.

**TT**: His daughter Kartika Affandi, also a distinguished painter, graduated from SMP Taman Dewasa Jakarta in 1949.

The word *SMP* in example 3 is an abbreviation of *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* that is equivalent to "Junior High School (JHS)" or "Middle School" in English (Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings, 2010). Unfortunately, the translator did not translate the word and only used it in the TT. It is better if the word *SMP* is translated into "JHS" or, to make it clear, "Junior High School."

The translator also found some local-cultural terms in the ST, which are included in unknown concepts in the TL. These words are usually called *loan words*, which mean a foreign word unknown to most TL speakers (Larson, 1998).

(4) **ST**: Koleksi kebaya dan kain tradisional milik Nyi Hadjar dan keluarga.

**TT**: Kebaya and traditional cloth owned by Nyi Hadjar and family.

Because of the difficulties in translating the terms, the translator needs to find a way to bring the concepts to the target readers. The readers will never understand the word unless it is modified in some way to make it clear. According to Larson (1998), a loan word can be modified by a classifier and with a description of form, function, or both.

The word *kebaya* in example 4 is borrowed from the ST and used in the TT as it is. Actually, some dictionaries have included the word in their word lists because it has become a quite popular term for traditional clothes in Indonesia, Malaysia, and some other South-East Asian countries (Kebaya (Noun), 2021). Nonetheless, not all English readers will
understand the word as they do not have the concept of *kebaya*. Using Larson’s modification of a loan word, it is better to modify it using an additional description, such as “*kebaya*, Indonesian traditional clothes or costumes.”

Misformation also happens when the translator uses literal translation and produces confusing terms that are non-existent in TL. Below is an example.

(5) ST: Gamelan tersebut dibeli dengan cara pinjaman seharga lima gulden melalui sistem ‘*ekonomi kekeluargaan*’ Tamansiswa’ (koperasi).

TT: The Gamelan was purchased through a loan of five *guildings* through the Tamansiswa system of ‘family economy’ (cooperation).

The term *ekonomi kekeluargaan* in example 5 is literally translated into “family economy”. *Kekeluargaan*, according to Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings (2010), refers to “consanguinity, family relationship” and, in some cases, means “a spirit of mutual cooperation, brotherhood.” The term *ekonomi kekeluargaan* is actually a popular term in Indonesia that refers to an economic system run with kinship principles. It does not refer to biological families, yet a relationship built with a sense of togetherness and belonging. It is more appropriate to translate it as a “kinship-principled economy.”

**Distortions**

The last subcategory of formal errors is distortions. It happens because the translator misapplies TL rules and also results in non-existent words in TL.

(6) ST: Selama tahun 1930-an hingga 1950-an, Soekarno sering berinteraksi dengan Ki Hadjar untuk membahas *masalah* nasional dan internasional dan juga bercakap-cakap sebagai sahabat.

TT: During the 1930s to 1950s, Sukarno would often communicate with Ki Hadjar to seek his advice on national and international *affairs* and also just to catch up as friends.

The word *masalah* in example 6 was translated into “affairs” by the translator. At a glance, there is no problem with the translation result. Nevertheless, the word “affairs” has not been correctly written. It misses the double “f” which should be “affairs”.

(7) ST: Gamelan tersebut dibeli dengan cara pinjaman seharga lima gulden melalui sistem ‘*ekonomi kekeluargaan*’ Tamansiswa’ (koperasi).

TT: The Gamelan was purchased through a loan of five *guildings* through the Tamansiswa system of ‘family economy’ (cooperation).

In example 7, the translator used the word “guildings” to translate the word *gulden* in Bahasa Indonesia. *Gulden* itself was a former currency in the Netherlands until 2002 when the euro replaced it. The word comes from the Dutch language. In English, the word is known as “guilder” (Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings, 2010), and the word *guildings* does not exist in the TL even though both “guilder” and “guildings” are quite similar.

**Semantic Errors**

Besides formal errors, the translated texts in MDKG also contain semantic errors. These are errors that have to do with semantic values (denotations), secondary meanings (connotations), what other words it is associated with. A total of 55 errors (62.5%) were classified as semantic errors. Table 1 below presents the frequency of the formal errors in the texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Formal Errors</th>
<th>Token</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Confusion of sense relation</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Collocational Errors</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Confusion of sense relation**

The first subcategory of semantic errors is a confusion of sense relation. It happens when the translator uses words in the TL that are more general, more specific, or less appropriate. The use of the wrong synonym is also included here.

(8) ST: Ki Hadjar mengenakan pakaian bangsawan Jawa tradisional dengan *keris* di sisinya, sebagai simbol keteguhan jiwa.
Ki Hadjar wearing the traditional dress of a Javanese noblemen with his keris (sword), a symbol of self confidence, by his side.

The word *keris* in SL in example 8 is translated into the word “sword” in TL. Despite having similar functions as weapons, both of them are physically different. The word “sword” is known by many people as a weapon that has a long metal blade (Sword (Noun), 2021). While, *keris* is a Javanese “kris, creese, a wavy-bladed ceremonial dagger” (Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings, 2010). In addition, *keris* is also considered as a cult object said to have magic powers. It is too general to be translated into “sword”. Using Larson’s modification of a load word, it can be translated, for example, into “*Keris*, a wavy-bladed said to have magic powers”.

This painting was donated by Affandi, one of Indonesia’s most prominent modern artist to the Tamansiswa school in 1984.

This type of error also appears because the translator adds more information in the TT from outside what is said in the ST and makes the information in ST more specific. The word *seniman* (“artist”) in example 9 is translated into “modern artist”. As a consequence of using more specific words or phrases, the TT readers will gain too much information that has not been checked whether it is accurate or not.

Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat was born on May the 2nd 1889 in to a life of privilege as the grandson of the Sultan of the Paku Alam III Kingdom.

In example 11, the translator translated *Paku Alam III*, the name of the king, into “the Sultan of the Paku Alam III Kingdom.” It makes the TL phrase semantically wrong because *Paku Alam III* is followed by the word “kingdom,” whereas *Paku Alam III* is the name of the king. Readers can misunderstand the information. Therefore, it is enough to write “Sultan Paku Alam III” or “King Paku Alam III”. According to Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings (2010), sultan means “sultan, monarch of Yogyakarta” for example, king or queen.
pendidikan bagi generasi muda dan orang dewasa, dalam rangka menumbuhkan semangat kemandirian melalui pendidikan.

TT: The meetings of Selasa Kliwon resulted in a decision to create educational youth and adults, in order to foster a spirit of independence through education.

In example 12, the translator also omits the word fasilitas in ST (“facility” or “facilities” in English) and translates it as “educational youth and adults.” The word “educational” and “youth and adults” do not collocate. The phrase should be translated in the TT as “educational facilities for youth and adults” to make the translation equivalent.

Causes of Error

To analyze the causes of the errors, all the errors in MDKG are categorized into interlingual, intralingual, and conceptual errors. According to Carrió-Pastor & Mestre-Mestre (2014), interlingual errors arise due to SL interference since the sentence structure and word formation present a pattern based on the mother tongue. In the current research, the errors cover some types of errors in Legenhausen’s classification, such as borrowings and calques. For example, the word “ekonomi kekeluargaan” was translated into family economy. It happened because the translator considered that the Indonesian word “kekeluargaan” has the same meaning as “keluarga” which is equivalent to the English word family. Whereas, the word family might refer to biological relationship, while the concept of “ekonomi kekeluargaan” is a kind of economic system which uses the kindship principles.

Intralingual errors occur because of generalizations based on partial exposure to the TL. It is related to the TL acquisition of the translators. The translator might try to generate the rules that govern the data to which they have been exposed and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor the target language. Included in the errors are misselections, coinages, distortions, and collocational errors. For instance, the translator wrote the preposition into wrongly several times by putting a space between in and to (in to).

Another case in the misselection errors, the translator might be also influenced by his mother tongue when translating the word “koperasi” into cooperation. It is because most English words with the suffix -tion are borrowed in Indonesian and modified with the suffix “-si” such as organization (organisasi) or polarisation (polarisasi). Therefore, this case is included in both interlingual and intralingual errors because it is influenced by the translators’ mother tongue and language acquisition, which generalizes the TL rules.

Last and the most dominant in the current research, conceptual errors are caused by the translator’s confusion between concept and term. Included in the classification are errors of confusion of sense relation. This error mostly happened when the translator met local-cultural terms in SL that do not have certain equivalence in the TL. For example, the word keris was translated into “sword” which has a different concept from “keris” (kris). Another example is the word kebaya, gamelan, Pendopo Agung, etc. The errors caused by this confusion are the most dominant, followed by intralingual errors, and the last is interlingual errors. It is because texts in the museum contain many local-cultural terms, so the translator needs extra effort to find their equivalence in English.

CONCLUSION

The current research indicates that the most common errors in MDKG were in the translation of local-cultural terms. Therefore, it can be argued that translating cultural words is one of the most difficult aspects of translating museum texts. According to Carrió-Pastor and Mestre-Mestre (2014), the errors in translating local-cultural terminology fall under the category of “conceptual errors,” in which the translator becomes confused when dealing with words and their meanings. The errors happen when words in TT do not represent the meaning concepts in the ST completely or appropriately.

In general, the result of the present research does not have big differences from the prior studies, such as those done by Carrió-Pastor & Mestre-Mestre
Similar to them, the current research indicates that the number of semantic errors was higher than the number of formal errors with the comparison of 62.5% and 37.5%, respectively.

The differences between prior studies and the current research can be seen in the data of errors that were found. Carrió-Pastor & Mestre-Mestre (2014) analyzed translation errors of scientific papers, Andre & Jurianto (2015) analyzed the translation errors of narrative writings, and Kristyaningsih (2016) analyzed errors in the students’ utterances in speaking class. They found errors in the translation of daily vocabulary or general terms.

The research result becomes an evaluation of the translated texts in MDKG that can be improved in the future. In addition, since it was done only in one museum, the result cannot represent all errors in museum texts in general. Next, it is required more scholars and researchers to do further analysis which discusses alternatives or strategies for the translation of local-cultural terms, involves translation experts, and even covers more museums in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

In the future, the contribution of museum administrators and the government might also be needed to develop the translation of museum texts to support the quality of public service.

REFERENCES


