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## English Translation Errors in Abstracts of Educational Administration Students of Post Graduate School of State University of Medan

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**Abstract:** This study aimed at: (1) investigating the types of translation errors in abstracts, (2) ascertaining the dominant type, and (3) contextualizing the use of the dominant type. This study was classified as descriptive qualitative research. The data were obtained from the thesis abstracts of Educational Administration students of the Post Graduate School of State of the University of Medan. The data were analyzed by classifying them into two types of errors, namely grammatical errors and content errors. The proportion of each type was converted into percentages. The results of this study were as follows: (1) in the grammatical error type, the use of verb group took 58%, and (2) in the content error type, presentation of different senses took 38%. The dominant type of grammatical errors was caused by the confusion of verb groups in dealing with the English grammar systems. The dominant type of content errors was caused by the failure in choosing appropriate words. This is because of the lack of vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** abstract translation, error, English grammar, verb group, vocabulary mastery

### 1. Introduction

In the present time, the role of translation has been widely known as an important aspect of communication. Translation work focuses in the area of education, particularly in the higher education. Hence, university students feel the needs to translate work into English in order to inform what they have done. It is a contribution to the development of science. The Post Graduate Program State University of Medan, especially educational administration department also takes this role. They encourage the students to master English for academic purposes, especially in thesis writing.

The final step of writing a thesis is abstract writing. An abstract is the an important part

of a thesis that contains the basic ideas of a thesis. By reading the abstract, the readers are able to decide whether or not they need to read the whole content of thesis. In this case, students of the Post Graduate Program the State University of Medan are required to be able to write the thesis abstract in English. However, there are students who do not have not the adequate skills in English, particularly for doing translation.

Doing translation is not an easy task. Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent material in another language (Catford, 1969). A translator should have equal knowledge of the source language and target language. The requirement must be fulfilled because

translating a text is not only translating words, but also in explaining concepts and ideas.

Some post graduate students are able to transfer their ideas into English just like what they want to write in abstracts, so readers can get the right understanding as the authors mean. Unfortunately, there are students who fail in doing translation. They do not pay attention on the technique of translation. Seeing the results of the translation, it seems clear that the students are faced with a lot of ambiguities in Indonesian words, phrases, and sentences. The students fail in grammatical and content errors. Grammatical errors include errors in the production of verb groups, errors in the use of prepositions, miscellaneous errors in the distribution of verb groups, etc (Richards, 1980).

Here is one of an example of grammatical errors: *Pengumpulan data penelitian dilakukan dengan teknik observasi dan pengkajian dokumen.* This Indonesian sentence is translated into: *Data collecting execute using observation technique and document study.* The translation contains grammatical errors and content errors. First, the error is in the word “execute”; it should be “is/was executed” because it is passive voice (S+ to be + Verb 3). Second, it is in the word “document study”; it should be “a document study” because “study” is a countable noun. In the content error, the word “collecting” is not the best word choice. It should be “collection” because it is a proper noun while “collecting” is a gerund used as a noun.

In addition, content errors include different senses, less precise or less accurate, misuse of phrases, misuse of formal or official registers, etc. (Newmark, 1988; Barnett and Stubbs, 1980). Here is an example of content errors: *Maka nara sumber dalam penelitian ini mencakup ketua dan pengurus komite sekolah, kepala sekolah, guru, staf tata usaha dan siswa.* This text is translated into: Hence

the guest speakers in this research include chief and official member of committee, school headmaster, student and school administrator. In this translation, “the school headmaster” should be written “headmaster”, leaving out the word “school”. According to native speakers’ perspectives, the word “headmaster” already has the meaning of the “leader of school”. Thus, the word “school” is not needed in the sentence.

Due to the condition above, conducting research studies on translation is necessary. In the present study, investigation on the translation of thesis abstracts from Indonesian into English was chosen according to the need. It is useful to improve the knowledge about abstract writing. It will hinder the outside world from underestimating the educational quality of the post graduate students.

In this study the research problems are common. Translation errors occur in content and grammatical errors. Beginners in abstract translation from Indonesian into English may make errors or fail in the task. For this analysis the problems are elaborated by the following: (1) What types of translation errors are found in abstracts of educational administration students? (2) What are the dominant types of translation errors found in the abstracts? And (3) Why do the dominant types of translation errors occur?

This study attempts: (1) to investigate the types of translation errors in abstracts of educational administration students, (2) to ascertain the dominant types in abstract translation, and (3) to contextualize why the dominant types of errors in translation occur.

The translation field is extensive. Nevertheless, this study merely deals with error analysis in translation. It is used to reveal content and grammatical errors made by students in abstract translation, within the scope semantic and grammatical theories. This study focuses on content and grammatical

errors which occur in the thesis abstracts of educational administration students of the Post Graduate Program of the State University of Medan. Other aspects have been ignored. For example, spelling errors which do not affect content and grammar of the text are not included into the research analyses.

## **2. Method**

In conducting this study, the descriptive qualitative method was used. (Bogdan, & Sari: 1992), stated that qualitative research is descriptive, where data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. So in coherence with the citation above, this study was descriptive qualitative because the data consisted of words, not numbers. Moreover, a valuable source of information in descriptive qualitative research could be in the form of documents. Documents represent a good source for texts (words) for qualitative data. The sentences were analyzed, described, and then explored in relation to the errors. The analyses made in this study were supported by the references of library research studies.

The data sources of this study were thesis abstracts of the Educational Administration Department students of the Post Graduate School of the State University of Medan. The data for this study were sentences containing errors in the thesis abstracts. The abstracts were issued from 2008 to 2010. There were five abstracts that were chosen randomly from each year period totalling to fifteen abstracts which became the objects of the study.

In order to do the analysis systematically and accurately, there are some steps to execute to explore the errors that were found in abstracts. First, in order to understand the main idea, the Indonesian abstract was read. After that, the abstract was read sentence by sentence and was compared to the corresponding English sentences intensively and carefully. Then, the

analysis focused on the errors and underlines the Indonesian parts and the corresponding English errors in bold types. Finally, the errors were classified based on the types of content errors (Newmark, 1988; Barnett & Stubbs, 1980).

After identification of the content errors, the identification of the grammatical errors was done. The types of the grammatical errors were classified according to Richards' categories (1980). Next, the dominant translation errors which occurred in the abstracts were analyzed. As in any other qualitative studies, the four issues of trustworthiness were maintained in the forms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

## **3. Finding and Discussion**

Based on the analyses of the data, there were 68 grammatical errors found in the abstract sentences. Errors in the production of verb groups takes the dominant type: numbering to 40 sentences (58%). Miscellaneous errors occur in 16 sentences (23%). Errors in the use of prepositions are found in 11 sentences (16%). Errors in the distribution of verb groups occur 2 sentences (3%).

In terms of content errors, there are 65 which are found in the abstract sentences. The dominant content error is related to different senses: 25 sentences (38%), less precise errors are found in 21 sentences (32%), left-out errors occur in 11 sentences (17%), and addition errors are found in 8 sentences (12%). It is concluded that the dominant grammatical error in the abstract translation is error related to the production of verb groups (58%) and the dominant content error is related to use of different senses (38%).

The findings can be specified based on the aims of the study which are related to finding out dominant errors in students' abstract translation.

These can be presented as: (a). Errors in the production of verb group are found as the dominant type in terms of grammatical errors because the students are still confused with English grammar systems especially in the use of participle forms (present/past), infinitives, and concords (agreement of verbs with the subjects); (b). Failure in choosing appropriate words dominates the occurrence of errors. This can be seen from the use of many improper words which do not have the right senses in the target language. This is because of the lack of vocabulary mastery in the students; (c). The findings also show that students do not have adequate mastery in the use of tenses. It can be seen from the number of the errors made. It seems apparent that students are still confused with which correct tense to use when making sentence; and (d). There are many ideas in the source language which cannot be found in the target language. There are missing ideas. So, the readers of the abstract cannot get the complete idea. These errors affect the whole meaning of the text.

By seeing the students' errors in translating the abstracts, the researcher is concerned with the fact that those abstracts are to be published widely. It may be true that the outside world will underestimate the educational quality of the post graduate students from seeing quality of the translation. In addition, students seem not to pay attention to the technique of translation. In doing a translation, at least the students should master the two languages, in this case, Indonesian and English. Unfortunately, by seeing the product of the translation, it seems clear that students are still faced with ambiguities of Indonesian words, phrases, and sentences.

It seems obvious that abstract translators make errors in English translation largely because their language proficiency is not good enough for them to use this language. In order to fill up the gap between inadequate proficiency

and tough requirements of a task, language learners draw on different strategies, such as ignorance and avoidance, mother tongue transference, incomplete rule application, and over generalization in their English abstracts, which cause different types of errors. The present study supports the idea that interlingual errors are predominant. This is due to the fact that while the students try to know a second language, they are not fully familiar with target language rules. The only language they are familiar with is their own language, so they transfer their own grammatical rules into the target language with the result of making errors.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of the research are as follows: (1) the errors in abstract translation from Indonesian into English often occur. The errors include both grammatical and content errors. In general the tendency of the categories of errors is more or less the same. (2) Errors in the production of verb groups belong to the dominant grammatical error type and errors in the use of different sense belongs to the dominant content error type. (3) The occurrence of errors in the production of verb groups is due to translators' lack in comprehending the English grammatical structures such as tenses, participles, and concords with the consequence that they cannot write sentences in good grammatical structures. The occurrence of different senses is caused by their failure in finding the appropriate words for the target language. This is because the lack of English vocabulary that the students have.

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