



A STUDY ON STUDENTS' ABILITY IN TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF UNIVERSITAS RIAU

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the translation ability of students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau in translating sentences from English to Indonesian. The method used is descriptive quantitative with assessment criteria based on the translation ability classification by Frey & Schmitt (2010), which includes five categories: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Poor, and Very Poor. Data were collected through two-way translation tests from 32 students. The results showed that most students fell into the "Very Good" and "Excellent" categories, especially when translating from English to Indonesian. The strong components were context comprehension and accurate message delivery in the target language. However, weaknesses were identified in translating from English to Indonesian, particularly in sentence structure, grammar usage (tenses and subject-verb agreement), and English idioms. The study suggests that lecturers emphasize more translation practice using authentic texts, students improve their grammar and idiomatic knowledge, and institutions provide training or workshops on translation. These findings are expected to serve as a foundation for further development of students' translation skills in the future.

Keywords: Translation Ability, English, Students, Universitas Riau

ANALISIS KEMAMPUAN MAHASISWA DALAM PENERJEMAHAN PADA PROGRAM STUDI PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS UNIVERSITAS RIAU

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Riau dalam menerjemahkan kalimat dari Bahasa Inggris ke Bahasa Indonesia. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kuantitatif dengan teknik penilaian yang mengacu pada klasifikasi kemampuan terjemahan dari Frey & Schmitt (2010), yang mencakup lima kategori: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Poor, dan Very Poor. Data diperoleh dari hasil tes terjemahan dua arah oleh 32 mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa berada dalam kategori "Very Good" dan "Excellent", terutama dalam menerjemahkan dari Bahasa Inggris ke Bahasa Indonesia. Komponen yang kuat adalah pemahaman konteks dan penyampaian makna dalam bahasa target secara akurat. Namun, kelemahan ditemukan dalam terjemahan dari Bahasa Inggris ke Bahasa Indonesia, terutama dalam penggunaan struktur kalimat, tata bahasa (tenses dan subject-verb agreement), serta idiom Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menyarankan agar dosen lebih menekankan praktik terjemahan dengan teks otentik, mahasiswa meningkatkan kemampuan tata bahasa dan idiom, serta institusi menyediakan pelatihan atau workshop terjemahan. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi dasar pengembangan kemampuan terjemahan mahasiswa di masa depan.

Kata kunci: Kemampuan Terjemahan, Bahasa Inggris, Mahasiswa, Universitas Riau

Submitted	Accepted	Published
May 30 th 2025	June 3 th 2025	June 8 st 2025

Citation	:	Putri et al. (2025). A STUDY ON STUDENTS' ABILITY IN TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF UNIVERSITAS RIAU. <i>JOEEI (Journal of English Educational Issues)</i> , 1(1), 153-159.
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INTRODUCTION

Translation is a fundamental aspect of language learning, particularly in higher education where students are required to comprehend, interpret, and convey meaning across languages. According to Newmark (in Budianto & Fardhani, 2010), translation is the process of replacing a written message or statement in one language with the equivalent message in another language, emphasizing not just literal equivalence but contextual and stylistic accuracy. Similarly, Nida and



Taber (in Budianto & Fardhani, 2010) define translation as reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and then in terms of style.

Within the context of English language education, translation competence is an essential skill. It not only enhances students' linguistic proficiency but also supports their reading comprehension and critical thinking. Research by Suksaeresup and Thep-Ackrapong (2009) emphasizes that poor reading ability is one of the primary causes of translation errors, while Widiyasari et al. (2019) highlight the importance of metacognitive strategies in monitoring comprehension during translation. Translation requires students to engage in complex cognitive processes that involve grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics, and cultural interpretation (Newmark, 2016).

Despite the importance of translation, students often encounter challenges in achieving accurate and fluent translations, especially when translating from their native language (Indonesian) into a foreign language (English). These difficulties are frequently associated with limited vocabulary, inadequate grammatical knowledge, and struggles in maintaining contextual and idiomatic appropriateness. This is in line with research findings by Ismayanti et al. (2024), which point to grammatical and structural challenges in student translations from Indonesian to English.

Preliminary observations conducted at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Riau indicated that many students were relatively confident when translating from English to Indonesian, but faced considerable difficulties in the reverse process. Errors commonly identified included incorrect use of tenses, awkward sentence constructions, and literal translations of idiomatic expressions. These initial findings suggest that while students possess a foundational understanding of translation, targeted instructional strategies are needed to address their specific weaknesses.

Grounded in theories of translation by Newmark (2008), Nida (2004), and supported by Nababan's (2014) indicators of translation quality—accuracy, acceptability, and readability—this study aims to analyze the translation ability of English Education students at Universitas Riau. The purpose is to identify both the strengths and the recurring difficulties faced by students in translating English and Indonesian texts. By doing so, the research seeks to provide recommendations for enhancing translation instruction in tertiary-level language education.

Based on the issues described, this study aims to examine the translation ability of students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau in translating sentences from English to Indonesian. It also seeks to identify their main strengths and weaknesses during the translation process and to provide empirical evidence that can support the development of more effective translation learning strategies in higher education settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation Ability

Translation ability refers to a person's competence in transferring meaning from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) with consideration to linguistic accuracy, cultural equivalence, and communicative intent. According to Catford (2014:7), translation is a craft involving the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language with an equivalent message in another. This definition emphasizes the transfer of meaning, not just the form. In line with this, Machali (2020:5) states that translation is the replacement of textual material in one language with equivalent textual material in another.

Furthermore, Wills (in Choliludin, 2016) adds that translation is a process which results in a target language text that is optimally equivalent to the source text and requires the translator's syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic comprehension. Newmark (in Budianto & Fardhani, 2010) also highlights that translation involves not only a transfer of meaning but also style, requiring the



translator to capture both the message and the expressive quality of the source text. This means that the success of a translation does not solely depend on literal equivalence but on how well the translation reproduces the intention and tone of the original text.

Translation competence, therefore, goes beyond lexical substitution; it includes a dynamic interplay of reading comprehension, grammatical mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and stylistic sensitivity. Nababan (2014) emphasizes that a quality translation should meet three main criteria: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. These indicators ensure that a translation conveys the correct meaning (accuracy), sounds natural in the target language (acceptability), and is easily understood by the reader (readability).

Translation Procedures

Translation procedures are strategies used at the micro-level, typically at the word, phrase, or sentence level, to achieve an equivalent meaning in the target language. According to Newmark (2018), translation methods deal with the entire text, whereas procedures are applied to individual linguistic units. One common procedure is literal translation, where the translator attempts to translate word-for-word without significantly altering structure or meaning. Although useful in straightforward cases, literal translation can be problematic when dealing with idioms or culturally specific expressions.

Newmark (2018) identifies other procedures such as transference (borrowing), naturalization (adapting SL terms to TL phonology and morphology), and cultural equivalent (replacing SL cultural elements with TL ones that have similar impact). These approaches help retain the cultural relevance of the source text. Another important procedure is functional equivalence, in which a term is translated by describing its function, and descriptive equivalence, where the term is explained based on its characteristics. These are especially useful for culturally loaded or technical terms that lack direct equivalents in the TL.

Other procedures include synonymy, through-translation (*calque*), shifts or transpositions (grammatical structure changes), modulation (semantic shifts), and recognized translation (using accepted standard translations). More complex procedures involve compensation, componential analysis, reduction and expansion, paraphrasing, and using notes or glosses (Newmark, 2018). Translators often combine these procedures—referred to as couplets or triplets—to solve intricate translation challenges, particularly with texts that are rich in cultural, idiomatic, or technical content.

Indicator of Translation

According to Nababan (2014), there are three key indicators used to assess translation quality: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy refers to the extent to which the meaning of the source text is transferred correctly into the target text. Acceptability pertains to whether the translation conforms to the norms and grammar of the target language. Readability focuses on how easily the translated text can be understood by the target audience. A high-quality translation is one that preserves the original message while ensuring that the text is natural and accessible in the target language.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive quantitative method aimed at providing an objective analysis of students' translation ability. According to Creswell (2015), descriptive research is conducted to describe systematically a phenomenon without manipulating variables. This method was chosen to measure how well students translate texts from English to Indonesian. The study was conducted in the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Riau, during the academic year 2024/2025. The population of the study consisted of sixth-semester students, totaling 32 participants, all of whom were selected using a census sampling technique. As Sugiyono (2020) explains, census sampling includes the entire population when the total number is manageable, allowing for comprehensive data representation without generalization bias.

The primary research instrument was a translation test consisting of two parts: Part I (70%), and Part II (30%) focused on translating English sentences into Indonesian. Each student's translation was assessed based on scoring criteria adapted from Frey & Schmitt (2010), which classify translation performance into five categories: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Poor, and Very Poor. To



ensure reliability, test items were validated by expert reviewers. Data collection involved individual administration of the test within a 60-minute timeframe. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics—mean, percentage, and classification scoring. Additionally, the percentage formula ($P = F/N \times 100\%$) was applied to determine the distribution of translation ability levels among students (Ary et al., 2010). This comprehensive analysis aimed to capture both the general trends and specific challenges faced by students in their translation performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most students (84.4%) were classified as "Excellent," while 12.5% were "Very Good" and 3.1% "Good." Students excellent in translating English to Indonesian due to better comprehension and familiarity with context. However, when translating english to indonesian, common errors included subject-verb agreement, tense misuse, and non-idiomatic expressions. These findings align with previous research suggesting that reverse translation is more complex for learners.

Tabel 1. Classification of Translation Ability

No	Classification	Sample	Percentages (%)
1	Excellent	27 students	84,4%
2	Very Good	4 students	12,5%
3	Good	1 student	3,1%
4	Poor	0 student	0%
5	Very Poor	0 student	0%

The data clearly indicates that the majority of the students (84.4%) achieved the "Excellent" level. This means they were able to produce translations that maintained semantic and stylistic equivalence between the source and target texts, used accurate vocabulary and grammatical structure, conveyed nuanced meaning with a high degree of fluency and readability. According to the classification rubric adapted from Frey & Schmitt (2010), these students demonstrated a strong command of both the source (English) and target (Indonesian) languages. They met the critical criteria of accuracy, acceptability, and readability as defined by Nababan (2014), which are essential components of quality translation.

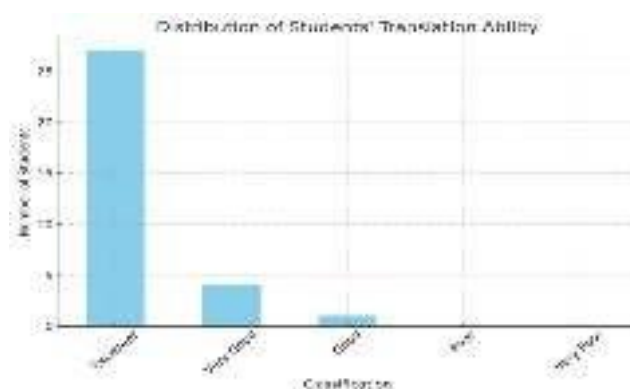


Figure 1. Student's Ability Level in Translating

Most students showed excellent translation ability. This indicates that they have strong linguistic competence and translation skills, which are essential both in academic and professional contexts, considering that translation is a core skill in the English Education Study Program. Scores in this section show that most students could understand the meaning of English texts and translate them into Indonesian with appropriate word choice and structure. Although some still struggled with



adapting to the target language structure, the main message was clearly delivered.

In general, the findings show that out of 32 student respondents, the majority fell into the "Excellent" category (81–100), with the rest in the "Very Good" (61–80) and "Fair" (41–60) categories. None of the students were categorized as "Poor" or "Very Poor". This indicates that students already possess a very good basic translation ability. These findings align with the translation competence theory by PACTE (2003), which states that translation competence includes bilingual, extra-linguistic, instrumental, strategic, and transfer competencies. In this context, most students demonstrated strong bilingual and transfer competencies. Based on the translation results, the students' strengths were evident in:

1. Appropriate vocabulary and idiom usage: Many students used accurate and idiomatic word choices, indicating strong lexical mastery.
2. Sentence structure in Indonesian (Part I): Translations from English to Indonesian showed fluency, clarity of meaning, and logical sentence structure.

These findings support Newmark's (1988) view, which emphasizes the importance of balancing semantic accuracy with fluency of structure in translation. This study can be compared with previous studies. For example, research by Rahmawati (2021) at Universitas Negeri Malang found that most students' translation skills were at the "Good" level, with the main weakness in English sentence structure. Similarly, Andini & Putra (2020) reported that common student translation errors involved vocabulary choice and passive sentence structure in English. Moreover, Santosa (2022) showed that intensive practice and lecturer feedback significantly improved idiomatic translation skills.

This study reinforces earlier findings by providing new data that Universitas Riau students were mostly in the "Excellent" classification, though the same pattern of weakness in Part II remains. Theoretically, these findings affirm the importance of a competence-based approach as emphasized in the EMT Framework (2022), which highlights the need for balance among cultural understanding, use of translation tools, and mastery of both source and target languages. The results show that students' main strength lies in understanding and conveying meaning from English to Indonesian. Meanwhile, weaknesses remain in translating into Indonesian, particularly in grammar, sentence structure, and idiomatic usage. Therefore, further instructional intervention should focus on strengthening Part II and applying context-based translation strategies. The scaffolding translation strategy proposed by Li (2021) is highly recommended for developing more balanced competencies.

In conclusion, the analysis of students' translation performance highlights a predominantly high level of proficiency, particularly in translating from English to Indonesian, as evidenced by the majority being classified as "Excellent." However, the consistent pattern of slightly lower scores in translation (English to Indonesian) underscores the need for targeted instructional interventions focusing on grammatical accuracy, idiomatic expression, and syntactic structuring in the target language. These findings reinforce the importance of a balanced translation curriculum that not only emphasizes bilingual and transfer competencies but also cultivates strategic and cultural awareness, ensuring that students are well-equipped to meet both academic and professional demands in the field of translation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study on the translation ability of students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau, it can be concluded that the majority of students demonstrated translation abilities classified as "Very Good" and "Excellent" according to the classification by Frey & Schmitt (2010). Students generally performed better when translating from English to Indonesian compared to the reverse direction. Their strengths lie in comprehending the overall context and accurately conveying messages in their native language.



However, some weaknesses were identified, particularly in translating from English to Indonesian. Several students still struggled with sentence structure, grammar usage such as tenses and subject-verb agreement, as well as the use of English idioms. These weaknesses indicate the need for further improvement in mastering the syntactic and idiomatic aspects of English. Overall, the research findings show that students possess a solid foundation in translation skills. Nevertheless, continuous training and intensive practice with authentic texts are necessary to prepare them to compete in professional environments. In sum, while students show strong potential in translation, sustained efforts through curriculum refinement and pedagogical innovation are essential to elevate their competencies to meet academic, professional, and global communication standards.

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