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## Investigating translation strategies used by students in translating metaphors from English into Indonesian: A case study on translation

Erika Sinambela<sup>1</sup>, Rohdearni Wati Sipayung<sup>2\*</sup>, Herman Herman<sup>3</sup>, Ridwin Purba<sup>4</sup>, Endang Fatmawati<sup>5</sup>, Magdalena Ngongo<sup>6</sup>, Lastri Wahyuni Manurung<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Literature, Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

<sup>2\*</sup>Department of English Education, Universitas Simalungun, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Department of English Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Indonesia


<sup>4</sup>Department of Teacher Professional Education, Universitas Simalungun, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>Department of Information and Culture, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

<sup>6</sup>Department of English Education, Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana, Indonesia

<sup>7</sup>Department of English Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

\*Corresponding email: [dearsipayunk@gmail.com](mailto:dearsipayunk@gmail.com)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8299-8609> \*

### Abstract

The main interest of this study is to analyze the translation strategies used by the students of the English Department in translating metaphors from English into Indonesian and how the students choose their translation strategies in translating the source text into the target text related to the metaphorical meanings. This study used a descriptive-qualitative research design by using linguistic data. The linguistic data is the translation results produced by the students at the English Department of Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan. The students are randomly chosen as the participants of the study. A questionnaire of metaphorical stimuli and an interview are adapted to collect the data. The results showed that metaphorization strategy was the most effective strategy used by the students in translating metaphor from English into Indonesian. Based on the data analysis conducted, overall there is a minor difference in the use of translation strategies by students. In the case of metaphor variation, students often change metaphors of the form of the verb, noun, or adjective into the form of the verb, noun, or adjective, but not vice versa

**Keywords:** English, Indonesia, metaphors, translation strategies



### Public Interest Statement

The present study offers a brief discussion on pedagogy, highlighting the implications of the research findings for the teaching and learning of metaphor translation, particularly from English into Indonesian, in the EFL classroom. Based on the findings of this study, there are several pedagogical strategies to assist the students in translating the metaphors, especially in the English Study Program. Simply put, these strategies include highlighting the students' knowledge of the metaphorical source in reading and in translation activities. The lecturer should provide enough knowledge and explanation about the second language's cultural and social background knowledge, and so forth. Hence, the students will be able to understand the metaphorical source's "potential bias" and also produce the same or nearest meaning to the source language and appropriate with the context of the situation into the target language or interpret what the source metaphorical mean in their target language.

### Introduction

Translation is indeed not an easy activity. This problem seems to be more complex when translating a text containing a lot of metaphors, including translating literary works. In line with the opinions of various scholars, when discussing the translation of metaphors, the metaphors of the source language can only be translated into the member of the receptor language with the equivalent meaning. In reality, not all source language metaphors can be conveyed into the receptor language with equivalent meaning. To solve this problem, Nida and Taber (1974) argue that the translator should be able to find which category of metaphor can be simply translated and which requires a special mention. (Torres-Martínez, 2022; Pungă, 2023).

In classifying translation techniques, Baker (2011) subdivided free translation and literal translation into various types of the class based upon the ways translation techniques are conducted using the following categories: literal translation, oblique translation, overt translation, covert translation, communicative translation, semantic translation, paraphrase, adaptation, imitation, free translation, idiomatic translation, transference, modulation, nihilization, amplification, displacement, a more neutral term, alienation, etc. According to Saputra et al (2022), the equivalence of the translated equivalent with the counterparts in the original source language is clear even though not identical. The related paradigm is stated by Nida. Equivalent is defined as "an equalling of two plus two four" was distinguished as the equivalent, which is "a yielding in legal payment, but are not necessarily the same" two things like "watched on the clock and at the football ground." Then the equivalence at the translation is said as dynamic equivalence, explained by Nida once communicated, cited by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995).

Jiawen Chen (2013) states that translating metaphors is far from word replacement, but requires intuitive sense and creative thinking. Bussmann (1996: 804) argues that metaphors are viewed as the understanding from corresponding points and may vary slightly in accordance with diverse disciplines. Departing from that standpoint, Hymes (1972: 201) argues that metaphors typically must be studied in collage with literature, for the reason that too many considerations are important, thereby the translator is allowed to use terminology. Drawing upon the views held by the theorists, it is asserted that the translator may use replacement with the same characteristics and features of the original meaning as the TL synonym. Dealing with metaphors, Leach (1981: 2) distinctly claims that there are some major fundamental principles that may be addressed to guide the shift above are distinct.

A metaphor is the name of one thing applied to another in virtue of some similarity between

them. There exist simple concepts of metaphor that discard the active role of the metaphorized concept. Metaphor translation strategies can be defined with the help of metaphor knowledge structures. A conceptual metaphor is the cognitive link between a source and target domain, whereas a linguistic metaphor is the verbal realization of such a conceptual metaphor. Conceptual metaphors are language-specific, as per the poetic metaphor, which is a metaphor that cannot be translated literally. The linguistic metaphor reflecting ontological or structural conceptual metaphors tends to be culture-specific and thus is possible to translate with the neutrality of conceptual metaphors. Adopting a comprehensive approach to metaphor translation, theoretical concerns must be followed by an investigation into metaphor translation strategies used by students in translating metaphors from their A language into their B language (Piekkari, Tietze, & Koskinen, 2020).

Leach further mentions criteria that apply to creative translation, covering a principle that states that the original message to be conveyed needs not to be reproduced, but instead a new thing about the world or a spicing up of the existence is established. Therefore, translation with replacement extends two choices for translation and thereby propagates the dynamism of TT. Idealists might dismiss the product of the replacing procedures as not more than the result of adaptation, and not of translation. However, given the fact that translation shares no charge of undoubted meaning among theorists, translation is actually called as translation. In contrast, realists acknowledge the replacement strategies as translation, where the deploying of aims is related to what has been replaced. (Popel et al., 2020).

Translating metaphors is a challenging task because the metaphor itself is bound to the source language. In other words, the metaphor is often peculiar and cannot be translated literally. The second language user must have enough knowledge of the first culture, the target language, and the default mode of that language. It is of fundamental importance to consider the connotative aspect of the translation because it must coincide with the metaphor of the first language or at least produce a similar response from the target language user. (Milenković, Tasić, & Stamenković, 2024)

Admittedly, figurative language can be found across genres, and its translation raises various difficulties even for proficient translators. The translation of metaphors is often thought to be a realm for intuition, creativity, and artistry strictly beyond the reach of any systematic study. Therefore, it is important to set the following two questions: how do human beings, especially students, understand and translate metaphor? What is the thought process behind it?

The first question can be divided into two sub-questions. The first sub-question is whether metaphor translation is of a technological or linguistic nature. This question confers metaphor a literary status. This view presupposes that translating is solely to express the same idea as in the original text. Furthermore, a metaphor in one language could be adopted by another language if its expressive character fits the rules of that tongue. The second sub-question is whether a systematic approach exists to teach metaphor translation. Admittedly, time-honored paradigms encourage the teaching of various forms of metaphor translation, although their scientific relevance remains doubtful. Additionally, the translation of metaphors is often thought to depend closely on the translator's individual experience.

Concerning the first question, categorizing any metaphor is very difficult. Most students do not have access to checking metaphors at the utmost moment of producing a plausible translation. Concerning the second question, mastery of metaphor translation is gained inductively through experience. Although the passage of time increases the probability of experience, it does not guarantee the quality of younger translators as their metaphor translation is often deemed bizarre.

### Literature Review

This sub-section discusses the theories of translation review that have been conducted by the proponents. Here, the focus of the study is on the metaphorical meaning of the metaphor in the target text. The research methodologies are descriptive and qualitative research. The object of this research is a novel entitled *Double Trouble* by Deborah Cooke. The object chosen as a source of data is metaphors. The results of the study related to the metaphorical meaning are that in translating metaphors from the source language into the target language, the students determine the translation strategies based on the translation shifts of Monotranslation. (De Sutter & Lefer, 2020; Munday et al., 2022)

A metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, but a whole thought model comprising associations between ideas or concepts. It is a concept of TT that is defined by identity with the ST metaphor (that consists of ideational and stylistic meaning), yet does not retain the form of the ST. The connection between the meaning of TT and ST in a translated metaphor of metaphors in written texts form can be classified into two; first is transcoding and transference. It can be said that the translated metaphor of the written text must consider the context of the situation, but if the ST and TL frames differ, the translated metaphors in the TL should consider the SL text feature. In addition, the written text adheres to the legal rules and has some level of predictability. Moreover, translators can use visualization, transformation, and other types of translation strategies to solve problems or obstacles in translating SL text. (Kövecses, 2021).

### Research Method

The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative studies focus on exploring the what, why, and how of phenomena rather than quantifying them. Specifically, the investigators utilized content analysis as their research methodology (Herman, Purba and Saputra, 2024; Rony et al., 2024; Setiawati et al., 2024; Rakhmyta et al., 2024). This technique involves examining text within its context to derive meaningful insights. This study was conducted at Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan with 16 undergraduate students. The students were taking the eighth semester and the TOEFL prediction test as the criteria. They all have taken translation courses. The participants had sufficiently completed 124 hours and 35 minutes for the CAT tool workshops. The TOEFL PBT prediction test was conducted to evaluate students' English proficiency. The mean score was 455.8125, with standard deviation 66.48, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.8148. The students were taking the TOEFL PBT independent test with the average score of 370. Communication and Language Skills were the subject matters that are included in the TOEFL Prediction test. They consisted of 6 male students and 10 female students. The age range of the participants was between 23 and 30 with the mean of 25.5 for both.

Data collection procedures. A lot of literature has been divided into sentences and used as questionnaires to adapt for collecting the data (Judijanto et al., 2024). The questionnaire was distributed among six translation students who are attending the course of Translation in the English Department in Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan. Since metaphor has been used as the data of this research, the focus of the questionnaire was on translating metaphorical expressions used in the literature from English into Indonesian. The students were asked to give an equivalence of the phrase from English into Indonesian. Their solutions should then be written in the single provided column. The questionnaires which have been given to the students can be seen on the following page.

After the questionnaires had been filled in by the respondents, the papers had been taken back.

To make it easier, the strategies which had been chosen by the students were then divided into groups based on Toury's basic strategies. The analyses were then performed since it provided twenty-seven pieces to work with, which were quite enough for the analysis. The collected data were first categorized differentiate the number of strategies employed by the students based on the category suggested by Toury.

The written translations of the metaphors used in the visual advertisements were collected and then analyzed using language data. First, the words of the original English form and the students' translations in Indonesian form were compared and examined to determine if they had the same meaning, at least in terms of denotation, as the translated words in the original foreign language. Next, the meanings of the metaphorical expressions were examined to see if they contained connotation's meaning. If the meaning and translation could not be found in the dictionary, the meaning of the poetic expression was examined theoretically by considering the social elements of meaning. That is, the shared meaning possessed by the community was applied in the analysis of the potential connotation's meanings of the metaphorical expressions used in advertisements. (Macagno, 2020; Rose, 2021).

After the meanings of the words and the metaphorical expressions were found, the data was analyzed based on the translation strategies. The strategy related to using a language image was not found yet in the students' translation of the visual advertisements. The data concerning translation strategies were completed with the benefit of the theory of meaning related to translation, especially those concerning the issues of meaning and translation.

### Results

This section presented the analysis based on the translation strategies used by students and also the reason. In solving their way of translating metaphors, students may use one or more strategies. By using Newmark's theory of translation strategy, students' translations of seven introductory text samples using metaphoric utterances have been analyzed. In this case, the best strategy was used by the students (57%) and the least strategy used was reduction and expansion. Based on the ranking result for the best translation strategy used by students and calculated using the formula:  $TS1 = \frac{\text{the number of strategy } n1}{n} \times 100\%$ . The table shows that the strategy of metaphorization is the most effective strategy used by students in translating metaphors because of the intensity to maintain the meaning of the metaphorical language or even indirectly (coating the translation). Many adjectives today have been directly absorbed into Indonesian such as "human" (the meaning is truncated into "human"), climatic (the meaning of the Indonesian language means "tropical"), dynamic (meaning in Indonesian means "dynamics"), environmental (the meaning in Indonesian is interpreted to "environment"), and genetic (Indonesian meaning is "the genetic").

Table 1. Translation strategies used in translating the metaphor

No.	Strategies in Translation	Cases	Percentage (%)
1	Metaphorization	36	57%
2	Reduction	2	3%
3	Literal Translation	16	25%
4	Expansion	10	15%

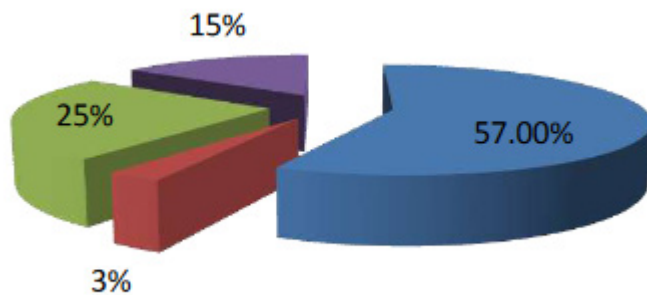


Figure 1. Translation strategies used in translating metaphor

### Discussion

Translation, as a constructing process, requires certain skills and expertise. In this respect, students with various personal characteristics, language proficiency, and cultural knowledge are likely to employ different translation strategies. This part will analyze the factors influencing translation strategies of English-majored university students when translating metaphors. The translations were finally analyzed to find out the strategies they used in translating each metaphor. In another analysis, the subjects' perceptions of the English language and culture were assessed through a questionnaire composed of 20 items. There were two separate parts, which assessed the subjects' perceptions of English linguistic features and cultural aspects. The subjects' scores in each part were calculated and compared with their translations in the first analysis to investigate the impact of cultural knowledge on the use of translation strategies. The data from both analyses were statistically processed to determine whether there are significant differences in the translation strategies employed by students from different groups and whether the students' perceptions of the English language and culture affected their use of translation strategies.

Research suggests that knowledge about the source and the target languages has a considerable influence on the selection of translation strategies. This is logical since both languages play a crucial role in the translation process. Evidence from the present study confirms that linguistic proficiency indeed affects the students' translation strategies of metaphors. It indicates that the students with higher linguistic proficiency tend to use the strategies that retain the original forms of the metaphor more frequently than those with lower linguistic proficiency. In contrast, the students with lower linguistic proficiency tend to apply the strategies that change or omit the metaphor more frequently. This is understandable since the students with higher linguistic proficiency have a better command of English lexical and syntactic features, so they can preserve the metaphor in the translation. Conversely, the students with lower linguistic proficiency, as they struggle to translate the metaphor, have to ensure that the message still gets across and thus opt for less metaphorical expressions in their translation.

#### A. Linguistic Proficiency

Language is the principal vehicle for communication, and it also serves as the portal through which cultures are manifested and communicated. Thus, there is a close interplay between language and

culture. Each language is packed with the worldview and cultural heritage of the people who speak it for generations. Language usage is shaped by social and cultural forces. On the other hand, translation always involves the transfer of content across languages, invariably resulting in the crossing of cultural borders. Hence, translation is closely related to language and culture. However, it is more than merely a reproduction of the source text in the target language; it entails adopting the target culture. A person's linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge co-determine how well he or she can perform in cross-language and cross-cultural communication.

Language is an important factor in any translation task. Building up a good command of the foreign language, be it the source language or the target language, is an important prerequisite for rendering proper translations. The more proficient one is in the foreign language, the more easily one will be able to understand the original text and identify the problems generated by the linguistic transfer, the cultural and aesthetic difficulties, or the pragmatic and stylistic issues. Having an idiomatic command of the foreign language will make it easier for one to use effective translation strategies to overcome specific translation problems prominent in the text.

In the present study, linguistic proficiency was measured through a comprehension and translation test, and very interesting findings were discovered. In particular, the student group with poor linguistic proficiency tended to choose literal translation as their most favored strategy, which almost automatically resulted in awkwardness in the English version or even outright incomprehensibility. The student group with good linguistic proficiency exercised contempt and indifference towards the option of literal translation, which was only selected in less than 4% of the responses. The metaphorical expressions would be modified or even dropped in versions. Examples of cross-linguistic and translation instabilities can be seen in expressions like hot air, dog days, and red tape, which were performed by certain students in differing ways. Overall, it can be inferred that training on lexical rendering or phraseology improvement is needed for the student group with poor linguistic proficiency.

## **B. Cultural Knowledge**

Notwithstanding the importance of linguistic competence and proficiency in the source and target languages for translation, these qualities alone do not ensure the successful completion of the task at hand. Bilingualism and knowledge of the two cultures, when not accompanied by a rich stock of general and particular knowledge, do not guarantee adequate translation. Knowledge presupposes both the mental representation of the entity and some cultural background concerning it. Likewise, an apparently simple task may become far more complex when different cultural backgrounds come into play.

## **2. Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching Metaphor Translation**

Based on the research results as discussed in the previous sections, there are pedagogic implications that may be drawn into the specificity of actual teaching and learning strategies and classroom approaches. Firstly, teachers should be aware that metaphor occurs at various levels of literal and metaphorical language. Since metaphorical language often embeds literal meaning, it is therefore crucial that learners have a good proficiency in the workings of literal meaning before they could proceed to an understanding of metaphorical meanings, and eventually their own translations. Practical strategies in

teaching metaphor can be seen in adjusting the translation tasks according to their levels of proficiency. Secondly, teaching based on cognitive stylistics strategies can make learners aware that metaphorical expressions can be culturally and empirically motivated and (ir)rationalized. Given the dichotomies they would not often internalize (e.g., natural/unnatural events, human/animal behaviors, etc.), the learners should have the pragmatic, communicative, and socio-contextual sufficiency to decide on which meaning level they should orient their micro or macro-translation strategy. Teachers can impart this to their students using text analysis activities because they connect particular metaphors to the universal empirical schema in the novel (built on similar real-world events), thus helping them make the reality/fiction dichotomy transparent and take their decisions accordingly.

Thirdly, corpus-based teaching needs to make learners aware of metaphorical patterns in the source text. Metaphorical language triggers should be analyzed in both the source language (SL) and target language (TL) to help see how they are culture-specific and how they are already ritualized into the target language. Teachers may conduct activities that involve text analysis with the lexicogrammatical patterns and use of such nouns as triggers of particular conceptual metaphors.

### Conclusion

The aim of this research is to find out the application of the translation strategies used by the students in translating metaphors from English into Indonesian. Based on the data analysis conducted, overall there is a minor difference in the use of translation strategies by students. In the case of metaphor variation, students often change metaphors of the form of the verb, noun, or adjective into the form of the verb, noun, or adjective, but not vice versa. There is only one student who translates a noun in the SL into an adjective in the TL. The difference is that some students change negative metaphors in the SL into positive metaphors in the TL. One student changes the metaphor of increasing an abstract noun into its adjective. The following are the number of metaphors translated by the top 4 out of a total of 4 metaphor data with the following number of successful metaphors.

In translating idiomatic variations, the majority of the students tend to change idioms with a verb pattern in the SL into idioms with a verb pattern in the TL, but not necessarily the reverse. Only a small number of them translate idioms with verb patterns in the SL to idioms with noun patterns in the TL. Interestingly, the word order, which by experts translates the word order directly, differs in a variety of idioms so that one of the idioms is incomprehensible. The percentage distribution of yes, no, slightly metaphor and idioms translated by the top four numbers of metaphors of 12 metaphors and idioms! The most frequent translation strategy is to ignore metaphors and idioms in the text. Thus, based on the number of metaphors and idioms “not” and “other” creature, which is a kind of translation strategy, students ignore it. This raises the question whether the students understand the metaphor and idiom variations. However, the data on the number of successful idioms cannot be used as the basis for drawing conclusions about the validity of the hypotheses because the target of idiomatic and idiomatic variations in the text is small. To answer this, further study is recommended. In the future, the researcher may still focus on the field of metaphor and idiom translation with students with different language backgrounds.



**Biographies**

Erika Sinambela is an Associate Professor and a permanent lecturer at Universitas HKBP Nommensen in Medan, Indonesia. Her interests are in the field of translation

Rohdearni Wati Sipayung is an Associate Professor and a lecturer at Universitas Simalungun, Indonesia. She obtained her doctoral degree in 2016. She is currently a dean of faculty of teachers training and education. Her majorities are in the fields of Education and Translation.

Herman Herman is a Professor and a lecturer at Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Indonesia. He completed his studying from Doctoral degree from State University of Medan, Indonesia in 2020. His interest in reading and writing. His majorities are discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis and applied linguistics.

Ridwin Purba is an Associate Professor at Universitas Simalungun, Pematangsiantar, Indonesia. His majorities are sociolinguistics and applied linguistics

Endang Fatmawati is a lecturer at the Information and Culture Study Program, Universitas Diponegoro in Semarang. She is an expert in information, digital business, management, public relations, education, languages, and libraries.

Magdalena Ngongo has been a lecturer of English teaching at Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana in Kupang since 1998. She is also a Professor. She has a background of educational research in linguistics, including culture, ecology of language, and systemic functional linguistics. Besides doing research, she also wrote some books relating to discourse analysis and educational research methods.

Lastri Wahyuni Manurung is a lecturer at Universitas HKBP Nommensen in Medan, Indonesia. She is now teaching in the Department of English Education. Her interests are in the field of pragmatics.

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