

## Strategies in Solving Equivalent-related Problems in Translation: Implications to Cross-cultural Understanding

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### ABSTRACT

Any translation practice is intended to produce a text which is equivalent in meaning with its source text. However, to arrive at such equivalence is not an easy task due to a number of differences between the source language and the target language. Therefore, finding the right equivalence is a problem often encountered by translators, especially student translators. Suggested by such problem, a study on equivalence problems and possible strategies to solve the problems is obviously necessary. This article aims at finding out the problems of equivalence encountered and the strategies to solve such problems applied by student translators in translating a historical recount text. This is a descriptive study taking 10 student translators as the participants who were asked to translate a historical recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia. The data were collected using Translog that recorded all the translation process done by the student translators. The results of the study were: (i) the student translators encountered five equivalence problems while translating a historical recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia; and (ii) to solve such problems, they applied six strategies (naturalization, borrowing, description, deletion, addition and generalization). The findings imply that the problems were motivated by the student translators' lack of cultural understanding of the source language.

### INTRODUCTION

Translation is intended to reproduce a text in another different language. The term "reproduce" implies that a translated text or target text (TT) should be equivalent in meaning with its source text (ST); in other words, a TT is not a newly created text. Translation is needed to accommodate people's limited access to a variety of information due to failure to understand a foreign language. Therefore, accurate translation is required to avoid any possible misleading information given to target language (TL) readers. Accuracy in translation is a prolonged debate among translation scholars since accuracy is both subjective (Andersen, 1998; Almutairi, 2018) and relative (Mossop, 2001; Sofyan & Tarigan, 2019). Nevertheless, accuracy is not an unsolved problem in translation. Using the idea of nothing absolute in translation (Newmark, 1988), accuracy can be achieved under certain conditions. To reveal such conditions, a number of studies on translation accuracy have been conducted. Vossoughi and Ghelichkhani (1996) found the applicable role of componential analysis to achieve translation accuracy. In addition, componential analysis is helpful to bridge the gap for culture differences (Chen-Chen & Jin-Zhu, 2016). In addition to human translation, other studies have also been conducted to examine the accuracy of translation performed by translation machines (Baldwin & Tanaka, 2001; Aiken et al., 2009; Aiken & Bal-

an, 2011). They found that, despite their small number of weaknesses, translation machines are helpful in achieving accuracy in translation.

The notion of accuracy discussed in the previous paragraph is basically related to the reproduction of a text which is equivalent in meaning with its ST. Finding meaning equivalence is considered as the real definition of translation, so studying equivalence problems in translation should always be regarded useful. Besides, equivalence is a central problem encountered by translators during the translation process (Catford, 1965; Panou, 2013). Moreover, Alfaori (2017) argues that producing non-equivalents in translation is inappropriate and distorts or blurs the meaning. The notion of equivalence has attracted many researchers to conduct studies on it. Most of studies were conducted to redefine the term equivalence in translation (e.g. Leonardi, 2000; Krein-Kuhle, 2003; Yinhu, 2011). Yinhu (2011) who studied features and necessity of equivalence in translation, for example, found that equivalence in translation cannot be interpreted as identity in terms of its scientific sense because there are no words that have exactly the same meaning in one language. This means that studying equivalence should be established on different levels and in different aspects. In addition to redefining the concept of equivalence, other studies also investigate the issue of equivalence and non-equivalence in translation (e.g.

Kashgary, 2010; Moafi, 2015; Andreici, 2016). Other studies were conducted to investigate the equivalence in TT. Herlambang (2017) who analyzed the equivalence of the translated subtitle of Intel advertisements, for example, found that the TT was equivalent in meaning with its ST.

A number of studies have been conducted to find out strategies best applicable to solve such equivalence-related problems. Rezaei and Kuhi (2014) conducted a study on translation strategies used in translating two tourist guidebooks and found foreignization as the most common strategy. Furthermore, Obeidat (2015), who studied translation strategies in the English-Arabic e-brochures of baby care products, found transference, transliteration, literal translation and omission as the translation strategies frequently used. Other researchers focused their translation strategies-related studies on preaches or speeches (Alajlan, 2016), legal texts (Buma, 2016; Stepanova, 2017), scientific texts (Zheng, 2017; Ashuja'a et al., 2019), etc. However, the term "strategies" used in their studies needs to be revisited since the focus of their studies was on the product of translation. Meanwhile, the use of the term "strategy" refers to mechanism used by translators in solving translation problems during translation process (Hurtado, 2001). In other words, strategy is the terminology related exclusively to translation process.

Considering the gap left (paying less attention to the problem encountered by translators in achieving equivalence) and the slightly misconception of the term "strategy" in those previous studies, this study takes equivalence problems and translation strategies to such problems as the issue that needs to be investigated. In particular, this study aims at finding out equivalence problems encountered and translation strategies used by student translators in translating a historical recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia. The choice of specific text genre as the object of investigation is motivated by the research conducted by Krein-Kuhle (2003). Besides, the choice of student translators as the participants is mainly motivated by previous studies suggesting that student translators have their own unique translation characteristics different from professional translators (Sofyan & Rosa, 2015; Rosa et al., 2018).

### Research Questions

This research was conducted to answer the two research questions:

1. What are the equivalence problems encountered by student translators in translating a recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia?
2. What are the translation strategies used by student translators to solve the equivalence problems in translating a recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia?

### Equivalent-related Problems

In every translation process, a translator certainly faces problems that all boil down to choosing the right equivalent in the TT. Amina (2010) argues that translating verbal phrases is a problem often found in the translation process from English into Arabic. Furthermore, she believes that the problem is not only caused by the translator's lack of understanding of

the meaning of English verbal phrases, but also by the difficulty of reproducing these verbal phrases into Arabic.

The next problem relates to the translation of neologisms (Moghadas & Sharififar, 2014; Kolev, 2016; Fumani & Abdollahpour, 2017). As newly formed words, neologisms present certain difficulties for translators to find their right equivalent in the TL because their meaning is often not found in general dictionaries (both printed and electronic dictionaries), so translators must use other sources that are relevant to the related neologisms to gain an understanding of their meaning, or use certain proper strategies.

Furthermore, Aljubayri (2016) summarizes four difficulties or problems often encountered in the translation process: (i) cultural problems, (ii) semantic content problems, (iii) problems of translating expressions containing idioms, and (iv) grammatical problems. He concluded that the problems are mainly because translation involves two different languages which certainly have different cultures and grammatical rules. Cultural problems in translation have also been expressed by de Mendoza (2008), who believes that translating emotion-related vocabulary is heavily influenced by the TL culture, and by Brazill (2016), who argues that cultural and historical terms often present difficulties to translators in determining their right equivalents.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This is a descriptive study conducted in the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang located in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. This study was intended to explore and describe the problems and strategies used in the translation process from English into Bahasa Indonesia.

The data were the translation process done by student translators who were selected based on the predetermined criteria as suggested by Rosa et al. (2018). 10 students were selected because: (i) they have passed three courses on translation studies offered in their study program (basic theory of translation, English-Indonesian translation, and Indonesian-English translation); (ii) they have good English proficiency proved by their TOEFL score (more than 500); (iii) they never worked as professional translators (they did not translate outside the educational setting and never received money for their translation); and (iv) their mother tongue is bahasa Indonesia. They were asked to translate a historical recount text entitled "Machu Picchu, Ancient City, Peru" (downloaded from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Machu-Picchu>) from English as the ST into bahasa Indonesia as the TT.

The data were collected using Translog for its effective use of recording the whole translation activities performed by the student translators, and the use of any online resources was allowed. The data were analyzed using error analysis technique.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Equivalence-related Problems

The results of data analysis found several equivalence-related problems in the translation of student translators. The first

problem encountered by the student translators in translating the historical recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia is the SL interference in the TT. One of the examples is presented in (1).

(1) ST : Although the site escaped detection by the Spaniards, it may have been visited by the German adventurer Augusto Berns in 1867.

TT : *Meskipun situs tersebut tidak terdeteksi oleh orang-orang Spanyol, situs itu mungkin telah dikunjungi oleh petualang Jerman Augusto Berns pada tahun 1867.*

Back Translation : Although the site was not detected by the Spaniards, it may have been visited by the German adventurer Augusto Berns in 1867.

The SL interference is obvious when the student translator keeps the ST structure in the TT. The ST is a complex sentence, and so is the TT. The decision to keep the ST structure results in using the repetition of the same subject “*situs itu*”. The repetition is due to the absence of established equivalence of the word “it” as the subject in the TL. Although “it” as the subject literally means “*dia*” in the TL, it should refer only to human. To avoid such repetition, deletion strategy may be applied. As the two clauses have the same subject, one of the subjects (the subject in the first clause) can be omitted. In addition, the SL interference is visible when the student translator writes “*petualang Jerman Augusto Berns*” as the equivalent of “the German adventurer Augusto Berns”. Although such translation represents the original meaning contained in the ST, such structure is awkward in the TL. Generally, the phrase “*yang bernama*” is inserted between the title “the German adventurer” and the person’s name “Augusto Berns”. Furthermore, the word “*seorang*” can be added in order to show that the ST informs only one German adventurer may have visited the site. The translation in (1) can be improved as in (1a).

(1a) Revised TT : *Meskipun tidak terdeteksi oleh orang-orang Spanyol, situs itu mungkin telah dikunjungi oleh seorang petualang Jerman yang bernama Augusto Berns pada tahun 1867.*

Back Translation : Although not detected by the Spaniards, the site may have been visited by a German adventurer named Augusto Berns in 1867.

The other SL interference found in the translation of student translators can be seen in (2).

(2) ST : Technology in the 21st-century, however, identified a significant proportion of males and a great diversity in physical types.

TT : *Teknologi pada abad ke-21, bagaimanapun juga, men-*

*gidentifikasi proporsi signifikan laki-laki dan keberagaman bentuk fisik.*

Back Translation : Technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, identified a significant proportion of males and a diversity in physical types.

The SL interference in (2) is found in the use of conjunction “*bagaimanapun juga*” (as the equivalent of “however”) that interrupts the sentence in the TT. In the TL, such contrast conjunction is used only in the beginning of a sentence or a clause, and it is never used to interrupt the elements of a sentence or a clause. Therefore, it is easily identified that the use of contrast conjunction “*bagaimanapun juga*” that interrupts the TT sentence in (2) is influenced by the SL structure.

The second equivalence problem found in the translation of the student translators is SL culture. Language is so cultural, and culture influences its structure. Consequently, translators’ insufficient knowledge of the SL structure affects the equivalence chosen in their translation. One of the main SL structure problems encountered by the student translators is a phrase structure, particularly in defining the modifier(s) in a phrase. Study the translation of the phrase in (3).

(3) ST : ... a local Quechua speaking resident

TT : ... *penutur bahasa lokal Quechua*

Back Translation : ... a speaking resident of local Quechua

The ST in (3) is a noun phrase (NP) composed of “local” (adjective) as the modifier and the remaining is the core. The translation problem arises in identifying which elements are modified by the modifier “local” because the core is composed of another NP “Quechua speaking resident”. In the SL structure, the core of NP composed of several nouns is the noun appearing in the final position; therefore, the core should be “resident”. However, the TT indicates that the word “local” modifies “Quechua”, one of the local languages in Peru. The student translator’s insufficient knowledge of the modifier and the core of the phrase makes the TT in (3) fail to represent the meaning contained in the ST; in other words, the TT is not the right equivalent of the ST. Such failure certainly results in inaccurate translation.

In addition, the equivalence problem related to SL culture is found in translating the phrase as in (4).

(4) ST : Machu Picchu, also spelled Machupijchu,...

TT : *Machu Picchu, yang juga disebut Machupijchu,...*

Back Translation : Machu Picchu, also called Machupijchu,...

The translation problem shown in (4) occurs in translating the ST word “spelled”. This problem is caused by the different culture of the TL and SL. The TL is a phonetic language, while the SL is not (see Khalilzadeh, 2014); therefore, spelling is not well recognized in the TL culture. The use of ST word “*disebut*” as the equivalent of the ST word “spelled”

is not precise since “*disebut*” is related to “pronunciation”, while the ST original meaning is related to “orthography”.

The third equivalence problem found in the translation of the student translators is the improper use of borrowing technique. Although borrowing is one of the translation techniques mentioned in a number of studies (e.g. Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992; Molina & Hurtado, 2002; D’Hulst, 2010; Raesa Rm & Rosa, 2020), it should be used when there is no established equivalence available in the TL. Study the example of incorrect borrowing in (5).

- (5) ST : It is perched above the Urubamba River valley in a narrow saddle between two sharp peaks
- TT : *Machu Picchu terletak di atas lembah Sungai Urubamba di sadel yang sempit antara dua puncak yang tajam*
- Back Translation : Machu Picchu is located above the Urubamba River valley in a narrow saddle between two sharp peaks

The incorrect use of a borrowing technique in the translation in (5) is indicated by the underlined words. The borrowing was done by naturalizing the ST word “saddle” into “*sadel*”, the acceptable SL spelling. Even though the word “*sadel*” is used in the TL, its meaning does not represent the meaning of “saddle” in the ST. According to the Monolingual Indonesian Dictionary, “*sadel*” means a seat on horse or on a bicycle, while the meaning of “saddle” in the ST is a space. So, the use of “*sadel*” in the context of translation in (5) indicates the use of incorrect equivalence.

The other equivalence problem related to the incorrect use of borrowing technique found in the translation of the student translators is shown in (6).

- (6) ST : ... which were sponsored by Yale University and the National Geographic Society
- TT : ... *yang disponsori oleh Universitas Yale dan National Geographic Society*
- Back Translation : ... which were sponsored by Yale University and the National Geographic Society

The problem of equivalence occurs when the student translator decided to borrow the ST phrase “National Geographic Society” in the TT. As the initial letters of each of the words are capitalized, the student translator simply regards it as the proper name, which is usually unchangeable in translation. However, it is not a proper name as it is the name of organization which is usually translated into certain target languages. In the context of bahasa Indonesia as the TL, the right and widely used equivalent for such organization is “*masyarakat geografi nasional*”.

The fourth equivalence problem in the translation of the student translators is related to meaning omission as in (7).

- (7) ST : ... however, that interpretation is no longer widely accepted.

TT : ... *namun, interpretasi itu tidak diterima secara luas.*

Back Translation : ... however, that interpretation is not widely accepted.

Meaning omission in the translation in (7) shows that the TT is not equivalent in meaning with the ST. The student translator decides to delete the meaning carried out by the ST word “longer” in the TT, and such omission certainly leads to changes in the original meaning contained in the ST. The TT in (7) saying that “the interpretation is not widely accepted” means that the interpretation has never been widely accepted. Meanwhile, the ST originally means that the interpretation used to be accepted, but it is not accepted anymore nowadays. Omission is only allowed when the original meaning is comprehensively conveyed in the TT.

The omission-related equivalence problem found in the translation of the student translators can also be seen in (8).

- (8) ST : One of the few major pre-Columbian ruins found nearly intact, Machu Picchu was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.
- TT : *Sebagai reruntuhan bangunan pada masa pra-Kolumbia yang ditemukan hampir utuh, Machu Picchu ditetapkan sebagai situs Warisan Dunia UNESCO pada tahun 1983.*
- Back Translation : As the pre-Colombian ruins were found almost intact, Machu Picchu was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.

The ST in (8) means that Machu Picchu is one of the few major pre-Columbian ruins found nearly intact; however, the TT means that Machu Picchu is the only major pre-Columbian ruin, showing that the meaning contained in the ST is partially omitted in the TT. Such omission influences the TL readers’ understanding of the pre-Columbian ruins found nearly intact.

The fifth equivalence problem is lack of TL competence. A good translator must have good competence in both the SL and the TL. As the student translators are Indonesian students, the TL competence in this context refers to the language competence in bahasa Indonesia. In translation, competence as the person’s knowledge of his/her language (Chomsky, 1965) influences the use of the linguistic code of a language (Newby, 2011) in the TT. In other words, the translators’ competence of the TL is reflected in their TT. The translation in (9) presents the student translator’s lack of TL competence.

- (9) ST : The dwellings at Machu Picchu were probably built and occupied from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> to the early or mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.
- TT : *Rumah di Machu Picchu mungkin dibangun dan ditempati dari pertengahan abad 15*

*hingga awal atau pertengahan abad 16.*

Back Translation : The dwelling at Machu Picchu was probably built and occupied from the mid-15 to the early or mid-16 century.

The TT in (9) sounds strange to TL readers due to several problems. First, the word “dwellings” in the ST indicates plural nouns, but its equivalent in the TT is in the form of singular noun. Although English plurals should not always be translated plurals in bahasa Indonesia (Alzuhdy, 2014), the context of the translation in (9) requires “dwellings” to be translated in a TL plural form. Referring to the prevailing TL structure, plurals are formed through reduplication; consequently, the right equivalent of “dwellings” is “*rumah-rumah*”. Second, the decision to use “*dari*” as the equivalent of the ST word “from” is not appropriate because it forms a “from ... to” prepositional phrase structure. In the TL, such phrase structure is equivalent with “*sejak ... hingga*” structure in the TL. Finally, the student translator’s lack of TL competence is found in providing the equivalence of SL ordinal numbers. The ordinal numbers 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in the ST are translated in cardinal numbers (15 and 16) in the TT. In the TL, such ordinal numbers should be equivalent with “*ke-15*” and “*ke-16*”. Thus, the TT in (9) can be improved as in (9a).

(9a) Revised TT : *Rumah-rumah di Machu Picchu mungkin dibangun dan ditempati sejak pertengahan abad ke-15 hingga awal atau pertengahan abad ke-16.*

Back Translation : The dwellings at Machu Picchu were probably built and occupied from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> to the early or mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.

As a matter of fact, the student translators’ insufficient TL competence can be solved by having online resources management skill, precisely utilizing Internet facilities. Internet provides a variety of online resources helpful to cover up their weaknesses in the TL competence. Online nationally reputable newspapers, online Indonesian monolingual dictionary, and the website of Language Development, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia are several online resources serving as the useful references of the prevailing spelling and structure of the TL (Sofyan & Tarigan, 2017).

Translator’s lack of vocabulary stock, which used to be a translation problem in finding equivalence, does no longer present a problem to the student translators. In this study, the student translators were allowed to use any online resources, and they could easily solve such problem by using online dictionaries or online machine translation. This is corresponding to the issue of the role of human as a post-editor in translation process.

### Strategies in Solving Equivalence-related Problems

In order to solve the equivalence-related problems elaborated above, the student translators applied various strategies which are summarized in Figure 1 below.

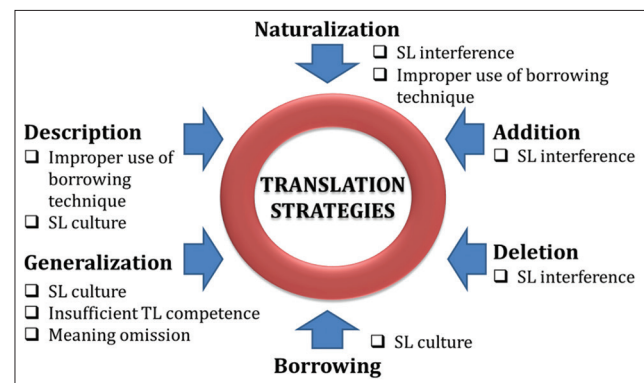


Figure 1. Strategies in solving equivalence-related problems

Figure 1 shows that six translation strategies – naturalization, description, generalization, borrowing, deletion and addition were used by the student translators in solving the equivalence-related problems. In addition, the results presented in Figure 1 also indicate that the six strategies used by the student translators in solving the equivalence finding-related problems are helpful for differently specific equivalence problems. For example, one of the equivalence problems solved by naturalization strategy is improper use of borrowing technique as shown in (10).

(10)ST : However, Machu Picchu’s existence was not widely known in the West until it was “discovered” in 1911 by the Yale University professor Hiram Bingham.

TT (1<sup>st</sup> Draft) : *Namun, eksistensi Machu Picchu tidak diketahui secara luas di barat sehingga ini telah ditemukan pada 1911 oleh profesor Hiram Bingham dari Universitas Yale.*

TT (Final Draft) : *Namun, keberadaan Machu Picchu tidak diketahui secara luas di barat sehingga ini telah ditemukan pada 1911 oleh profesor Hiram Bingham dari Universitas Yale.*

Back Translation : However, Machu Picchu’s existence was not widely known in the West until it was discovered in 1911 by the Yale University professor Hiram Bingham.

The improper use of borrowing technique occurs in the use of the word “*eksistensi*” as the equivalent of the ST word “existence”. Although the word “*eksistensi*” has been used extensively in many Indonesian texts, its use in the context of translation in Data 10 is incorrect because bahasa Indonesia has an established equivalent for the word that fits the context of the translation above. Such equivalence problem is solved by using a naturalization strategy, i.e. by looking for the common equivalent appropriately used in such con-

text. The naturalization strategy performed by one of the student translators can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 is the linear view of translation process in Translog. It can be seen that the word “eksistensi” is the diction used in the student translator’s first draft. The log records that the first diction is substituted with another word “keberadaan”, which is the established equivalent of the ST word “existence”.

The other example is the use of addition strategy in translating the ST in (11).

(11) ST : One of the few major pre-Columbian ruins found nearly intact, Machu Picchu was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.

TT (1<sup>st</sup> Draft) : *Situs ini merupakan satu dari penemuan utama reruntuhan pra-Colombia yang ditemukan dalam keadaan utuh, Machu Picchu ditetapkan sebagai warisan dunia UNESCO pada tahun 1983.*

TT (Final Draft) : *Karena situs ini merupakan salah satu dari penemuan utama reruntuhan pra-Colombia yang ditemukan dalam keadaan utuh, Machu Picchu ditetapkan sebagai warisan dunia UNESCO pada tahun 1983.*

Back Translation : As one of the few major pre-Columbian ruins found nearly intact, Machu Picchu was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.

There are two instances of SL interference in the TT in (11) which are both solved by using addition strategy. At the first draft, the TT did not have any conjunction following the ST style; however at the final draft, the student translator decided to add conjunction “*karena*” due the cause-effect meaning conveyed in the ST. The second addition strategy is applied by adding the word “*salah*” in the TT as shown in Figure 3.

As shown in Figure 3, in the first draft, the TT phrase in (11) “One of the few major pre-Columbian ruins found” was translated literally following the ST structure and style “*satu dari penemuan utama reruntuhan pra-Colombia*”. Considering the phrase style is not common in the TL, the student translator decided to add the word “*salah*” indicated by the red arrow.

The results of the study concerning the equivalence problems and the choice of strategies to solve them support the important role of culture in translation as Akbari (2013) argues that a good translator should be familiar with the culture, customs, and social settings of the source and target language speakers. Language is the product of human’s thoughts, and so is culture; therefore, the structure and the style of language are influenced by culture. This confirms

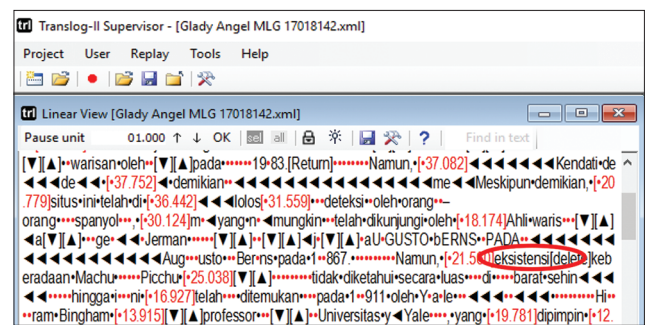


Figure 2. Naturalization of TT Word “eksistensi”

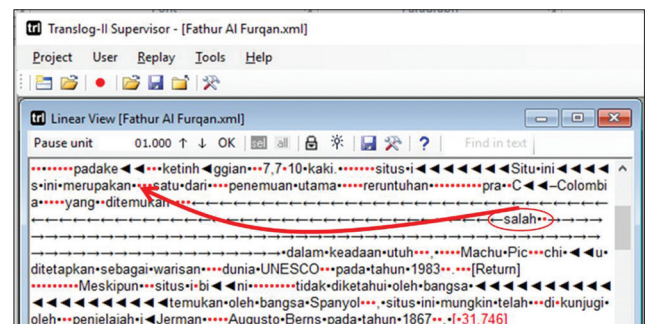


Figure 3. Addition of word “salah” in the translation draft

Hatim and Mason’s (1990) statement that socio-cultural context in translating a text is probably a more important variable than its genre.

In addition, the results of this study imply that translation helps in cross-cultural understanding; in other words, translation serves as the bridge to cross-cultural communication. The historical recount text translated by student translators in this study helps them understand the local culture of several indigenous people in Peru, where Machu Picchu is located. Translation makes it possible for every nation’s local culture to be known by people around the world.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that SL interference, SL culture, improper use of borrowing technique, meaning omission and insufficient TL competence are the equivalence-related problems encountered by student translators in translating a historical recount text from English into bahasa Indonesia. SL interference is obviously seen in the student translators’ TT that tends to follow the SL style and structure; SL culture is caused by the student translators’ insufficient knowledge of the SL structure and the different characteristics of the SL and TL; improper use of borrowing technique is caused by the issue of non-equivalent terms; meaning omission is mainly due to improper generalization; and insufficient TL competence is mainly caused by the student translators’ TL proficiency and inability to utilize online resources. To solve those equivalence-related problems, six strategies are used: naturalization, borrowing, description, deletion, addition and generalization. As certain strategies work better for certain equivalence problem, translators should be able to choose the right strategy for the right equivalence problem.

Furthermore, the results of the study give contribution to the role of translation as the bridge to facilitate cross-cultural communication. Translation allows people to communicate their local culture to other people from different culture. Therefore, studies on translation communicating local cultures are truly recommended.

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