

THE CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF THE STUDENTS IN THE TRANSLATION PROJECT

Sinta Ria¹, Yelia², Rosinta Norawati³
English Education Study Program
Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Email: ¹shinta090903@gmail.com, ²davizayelia@gmail.com,
³rosinta.norawati@unja.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Translation projects are essential in preparing students for real-world language services, especially within project-based learning contexts. However, a gap still exists between theoretical instruction and the practical challenges students face during such projects. This study explores the challenges encountered by English Education students at Universitas Jambi and the strategies they used to overcome them. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research involved students enrolled in the Project in Language Services course during the even semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with three student groups. The analysis identified four main categories of challenges: linguistic (e.g., technical terms and sentence structure), cultural (e.g., cultural expressions), technological (e.g., tone inaccuracies in machine translation), and managerial (e.g., time constraints and client communication). To address these, students used strategies such as consulting academic references, applying semantic techniques, collaborating with peers and lecturers, and using digital tools. The findings conclude that while translation projects expose students to real-world challenges, the integration of adaptive strategies enhances their problem-solving skills, autonomy, and preparedness for professional translation work.

Keywords: *Challenges, strategies, translation project, students, case study*

INTRODUCTION

Since 2020, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has promoted the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program as part of its higher education transformation. One of the main implementations of this policy is encouraging higher education institutions to apply innovative learning models such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which supports student autonomy, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving (Kemendikbud, 2020). This initiative is formally regulated in *Permendikbud No. 3 Tahun 2020* concerning the National Standards of Higher Education, which emphasizes

outcome-based education and authentic assessment through projects and field experiences.

In alignment with this national policy, Universitas Jambi implemented the 2021 Curriculum across its study programs, including the English Education Study Program, which integrates PjBL into several core courses. One such course is Project in Language Services, where students are required to work on projects in the form of translation projects, interpretation projects, or creative writing projects. The implementation of PjBL in this course aims to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that combine linguistic competence, cultural understanding, and project management skills—core components of language service work in the global context.

In the even semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, the students of the Project in Language Services class were assigned a task to complete a translation project as a practical assignment in the form of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). The goal of this project was to provide real entrepreneurial experience in the field of translation, where students not only translated texts but also faced challenges often encountered by professionals in the field, such as linguistic, cultural, and technical challenges involving a technology known as localization (Sdobnikov, 2019). Therefore, this research aims to explore the challenges faced by students when working on projects and what strategies they apply to face those challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic Aspect

Loureiro (2019) identifies seven major challenges in academic translation that affect the accuracy, readability, and appropriateness of a text according to academic standards. These challenges include grammatical and syntactic errors that may distort meaning, difficulties in selecting precise technical and academic terms, semantic ambiguity due to structural or contextual differences, the complexity of translating idiomatic and culturally bound expressions, risks of omitting or adding information that can alter meaning, inconsistency in terminology and language

structure, and non-compliance with academic conventions and scientific writing style. Translators must possess a deep understanding of both languages and the specific academic field involved to address these issues effectively.

Loureiro (2019) proposes various strategies to address linguistic challenges in academic translation, aiming to maintain accuracy, readability, and adherence to academic norms. These strategies are divided into syntactic and pragmatic approaches. The syntactic strategies, adapted from Vinay and Darbelnet (2000), include borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation, which help translators adjust grammar and structure while preserving meaning. Meanwhile, pragmatic strategies focus on conveying intended meaning within context and include addition, omission, explicitation, implicitation, domestication, foreignization, formality change, speech act change, and transediting. Loureiro also highlights the importance of consistency through the use of glossaries, adherence to academic journal styles, and careful revision and editing to ensure coherence and professionalism in the translated work.

Cultural Aspect

Sdobnikov (2019) emphasizes that translation involves not only words but also the cultural context in which they are used, requiring students to adapt cultural elements for accurate and relevant translations. Cultural challenges occur when terms related to local traditions or social contexts need adjustment for different audiences. These challenges are divided into two types: cultural expressions, such as “pulang kampung” or “gotong royong,” which cannot be translated literally into English without losing their meaning, and cultural context adaptation, where concepts like Hari Raya must be explained in a way that is understandable to English-speaking audiences unfamiliar with the culture. Therefore, cultural knowledge is essential for ensuring both accuracy and comprehension in translation.

To overcome cultural challenges in translation, several strategies can be employed by students, such as cultural context analysis, consultation with cultural experts, and the use of reliable sources. Cultural context analysis involves

researching the target culture—particularly English-speaking cultures—before translating, to understand idiomatic phrases and cultural expressions that cannot be directly translated. Consulting cultural experts, such as lecturers or experienced professionals, provides deeper insight into difficult cultural elements. Additionally, searching for terms through credible sources like government websites, journal articles, or online dictionaries ensures accuracy and relevance. As emphasized by Munday et al. (2022), using reliable sources supports culturally appropriate translations, a view supported by Sdobnikov (2019), who underlines the importance of cross-cultural collaboration in addressing culture-specific elements that must be adapted for the target audience.

Technological Aspect

According to Untara and Setiawan (2020), challenges in technology-based translation, particularly with AI-based machine translation like Google Neural Machine Translation (GNMT), can be classified into four main types based on Christiane Nord's (1991) framework. The first is linguistic translation problems, which stem from structural differences between source and target languages, such as syntactic, lexical, and grammatical issues. Machine translation often struggles with complex sentence structures and inaccurate word choices, hindering natural translations. The second challenge is pragmatic translation problems, where machine translation fails to capture contextual meanings, such as time, place, culture-bound terms, and interpersonal relationships, resulting in translations that misalign with the source text's intent. The third challenge is conventional translation problems, arising from cultural differences, including formal conventions, forms of address, and measurement systems, which machine translation often overlooks, leading to translations that don't meet the target language's norms. Finally, text-specific translation problems involve difficulties in translating creative elements like wordplay, alliteration, and rhetorical figures, which AI-based translation struggles to handle, often requiring further adaptation to preserve meaning and aesthetic effects.

Han (2020) emphasizes several strategies to address challenges in translation technology, including the use of Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools like SDL Trados Studio and MemoQ to enhance efficiency, consistency, and quality. He also highlights the integration of Machine Translation (MT) with human post-editing to ensure linguistic accuracy, and the use of cloud-based platforms like Memsources and Google Document to support collaborative work. Other strategies include applying Translation Memory (TM) to reuse previous translations, adopting a hybrid approach that combines manual and technology-assisted translation, and promoting team collaboration among translators, editors, and project managers. These strategies show the importance of combining technology with human expertise in modern translation.

Managerial Aspect

In the context of project-based learning, Hussein (2021) identifies three main managerial challenges that influence the success of teamwork: schedule misalignment, differences in priorities, and project uncertainty. Schedule misalignment occurs when students have conflicting academic schedules and responsibilities, making it difficult to coordinate work sessions and often leading to delays or lack of engagement. Differences in priorities emerge when some team members are more committed to other obligations, such as part-time jobs or organizational activities, resulting in unequal contributions and workloads. Meanwhile, project uncertainty includes three sub-challenges: product uncertainty (difficulty defining the final output due to diverse skills and backgrounds), process uncertainty (ineffective task distribution and organization), and impact uncertainty (doubt about whether the outcomes meet academic or practical expectations). These challenges significantly affect communication, task management, and overall group effectiveness.

To address these issues, Hussein (2021) outlines five managerial strategies: clear communication structures, thorough initial planning, regular monitoring, flexibility, and fostering an inclusive work culture. These strategies are aligned with the Collaborative Group Work (CGW) model proposed by Stanley and Zhang

(2020), which highlights the importance of teamwork and mutual support. Open communication ensures all members are informed and client expectations are understood. Proper planning helps define goals and assign roles. Monitoring allows teams to track progress and make timely adjustments. Flexibility is crucial for responding to unexpected changes, and inclusivity encourages engagement and cooperation, ultimately enhancing the quality and efficiency of the translation project.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the challenges and strategies faced by students in completing the translation project. A qualitative method was chosen because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives (Sharan & Robin, 2019). The case study design allowed the authors to focus on a specific group of English Education students at Universitas Jambi who had completed the Project in Language Services course in the 2023–2024 academic year (González, 2021, as cited in Aswani et al., 2023). Six participants were selected purposively from three different project groups. Data were gathered through semi-structured group interviews conducted in Indonesian via Zoom Workplace. The interviews were recorded, transcribed using TurboScribe, and manually checked for accuracy. Selected excerpts were translated from Indonesian into English using AI-assisted tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly, followed by the authors verification to ensure the meaning was preserved.

The interview protocol included ten questions: two general questions based on Creswell and Poth (2018), and eight specific questions covering four aspects—linguistic, cultural, technological, and managerial—guided by the theoretical insights of Loureiro (2019), Sdobnikov (2019), Untara and Setiawan (2020), Hussein (2021), Han (2020), Stanley and Zhang, and Munday et al. (2022). The data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, which includes familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing

themes, defining and naming them, and producing the report. To ensure credibility, member checking was carried out by returning interpretations to participants for confirmation (Birt et al., 2016; McKim, 2023). The authors also maintained reflexivity by recognizing her role as a peer to the participants, aiming to present authentic and trustworthy findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study identifies several challenges that students face in translation projects, with linguistic, cultural, technological, and managerial aspects playing significant roles. These challenges, as discussed in the previous section, require students to employ a variety of strategies to ensure effective translation. This section explores the findings and further discusses how students address these challenges in the context of their academic and professional development.

Table 1. Students' challenges in the translation project

CHALLENGES		
Linguistic	Grammatical Challenges	"For the linguistic challenges themselves, the most noticeable one is grammar, of course, or sentence structure." (P1) "Some of the linguistic challenges we frequently encountered during this project were differences in sentence structure. In Indonesian, explanations often use long sentences." (P3)
	Technical and Academic Terms	"Besides that, there are also terms that are very unfamiliar to us. Again, we are English language students, and then we meet clients whose fields are very different from ours." (P1) "Additionally, there are technical and academic terms that were quite difficult for us to translate, such as terms in government like '<i>kabupaten</i>,' '<i>kecamatan</i>,' and '<i>DPRD</i>,' which do not have direct equivalents in English." (P3)
	Semantic Ambiguity	"..., the linguistic challenge I faced might be meaning ambiguity, such as the word 'bank' in English, which can refer to a financial institution but can also mean the side of a river." (P6)

CHALLENGES		
	Idiomatic Expressions	“Then there are also some words that have an implied meaning that if translated into English will lose its nuance of meaning.” (P3)
Cultural	Cultural Expressions	“Well, cultural challenges are quite difficult to overcome due to our limited knowledge of external cultures. We ourselves are from Jambi, and sometimes we receive documents or texts originating from other regional cultures.” (P1) “Maybe I can give an example, like the <i>Ngaben</i> ceremony. This ceremony is a distinctive tradition from Bali. Now, for us as people from Jambi, we are not familiar with these kinds of traditions.” (P1)
	Cultural Context Adaptation	“Yes, cultural terms that do not have a direct equivalent in English include <i>posyandu</i> , <i>Madrasah Aliyah</i> , <i>puskesmas</i> , and others.” (P3)
Technological	Tone Inaccuracies	“In the translation results, we found that the output from two different translation tools was too literal, which caused some sentences to lose their original meaning.” (P3) “Even though we use the tools I mentioned earlier, we still do not want to rely 100% on translation tools. We believe that, in terms of context, the output is often too rigid or too formal.” (P5)
	Lack of Context	“... we also sometimes use AI tools like Grammarly to re-check vocabulary because we need to ensure that we are delivering the correct message in our translation. Besides using those tools, we also conduct post-checks.” (P1) “..., sometimes the translation results can be inaccurate or out of context.” (P6)
	Grammar and Tense Errors	“Perhaps a minor addition, Google Translate and DeepL often make tense errors.” (P4)
Managerial	Time Management	“... we are students, we have our own individual responsibilities, so we need to manage our time well.” (P1) “... as students in the sixth semester at that time, we had different commitments and also had different courses or class schedules.” (P2) “... at that time, we were still in the sixth semester, so we also had other courses to attend, and we had other

CHALLENGES		
		assignments, so we found it difficult to manage our time for offline discussions.” (P5) “Of course, our challenge was scheduling discussions because one of our team members was out of town...” (P3) “..., our biggest challenge was scheduling a time when we could discuss together because sometimes not all members were present.” (P4) “... our team’s challenge in this project was time management. As we know, at that time, we had other courses and many assignments to complete, so sometimes it was difficult for team members to gather and discuss in person or offline.” (P5)
	Client Acquisition	“Because again, this project was not just about translating texts; we were also required to find clients. However, since we are not sworn translators, we had to convince the clients.” (P1)

Table 2. Students’ strategies to overcoming challenges

STRATEGIES		
Linguistic	Utilizing Glossaries and Academic Journals	“... how we face the challenge of choosing the right key terms and analyzing them more deeply, namely by reading many journals that match the context.” (P2) “... we conducted research using, for example, for the term <i>DPRD</i>, we used the official glossary from <i>DPR RI</i>. We also searched for supporting journal sources, academic journals, and references from other articles that had already been published in English.” (P3) “..., we used technology such as dictionaries or searched for more relevant terms that could provide examples or help us understand the technical terms we found in the article.” (P5)
	Discussions with Team, Clients, and Lecturers	“... we also held open discussions within our group and took advantage of the weekly meetings with our lecturer for knowledge-sharing.” (P1) “Then, we also conducted team discussions to find the right terms. In the final stage, we proofread multiple times, carefully rereading our translation to ensure there were no errors or meanings that did not align with the context.” (P3)

STRATEGIES		
		“We also attempted to ask clients directly to obtain their interpretation or opinion on the terms that would be used in our final translation.” (P5)
	Borrowing and Amplification	“..., when translating from Indonesian to English, there are some terms in Indonesian that do not have an equivalent or combination of words in English. So, like it or not, we decided to keep the term and then provide an explanation in parentheses to clarify its meaning.” (P1) “If there are key terms that do not have an equivalent in either Indonesian or English, we usually use the term itself and then provide an explanation ...” (P2) “For this, we translated into English and then provided an explanation in parentheses using the Indonesian term so that it could be understood within the Indonesian context as well, not just for foreign readers.” (P3)
	Syntactic Adjustment	“... for sentence structures that differ between English and Indonesian, I adjust the sentence structure to fit the target language’s grammar. The technique I use is syntactic adjustment or changes in word order to maintain the correct meaning according to the subject in each language.” (P6)
	Semantic Translation Approach	“So, we used the semantic translation approach to preserve the original meaning.” (P3) “... the strategy I used for handling ambiguity was to thoroughly understand the context and select the most relevant meaning to use in my translation.” (P6)
Cultural	Cultural Adaptation	“..., we usually do not translate cultural elements literally. Instead, we provide explanations, express the meaning, or create expressions or cultural references that are similar to those in the target language as a form of explanation...” (P1) “..., another strategy we could use, besides discussion, is providing a short and concise definition that is not ambiguous.” (P2) “So, we translated it into English but still provided the original term in parentheses, such as ‘integrated service post’ for <i>posyandu</i>, so that the local readers could still understand the context.” (P3)
	Academic References	“We also read a lot, referring to cultural elements with similar contexts to avoid cultural misunderstandings.” (P2)

STRATEGIES		
		"... we also conducted in-depth analyses, repeatedly revising aspects that needed to be addressed." (P1)
	Consultation and Discussion	"Then, we also discussed with our group members and the lecturer of this course, allowing us to find solutions for what should be written and what should be avoided to prevent ambiguity in the text." (P1)
Technological	Manual Post-Editing	"We divided tasks again to edit together so that we could ensure the text conveyed was not merely a translation result from technology," (P1) "..., this means that in the initial stages of the process, we used some technological tools, but the revision process was certainly done manually." (P3)
	Utilizing Various Tools	"... we used a combination of technology and manual skills. For example, in the early stages of translation, we used readability tools such as DeepL Translate, Quillbot, WebFX, and other translation aids." (P6) "Then, we also used tools such as glossaries and dictionaries to help translate phrases accurately and appropriately." (P6)
	Team Collaboration	"We also conducted multiple rounds of proofreading to make sure the final result aligned with the Indonesian language context." (P3) "... we conducted double-checking, periodically reviewing whether a term was appropriate or not, and then discussing it together to determine which result was the most relevant to translate the document." (P6)
Managerial	Creating a Flexible Schedule	"..., before we started discussing this project, we carefully created a well-thought-out schedule," (P2)
	Task Allocation	"... we divided the translation tasks as previously discussed, such as assigning each member to translate a specific section per page." (P4) "We divided the tasks individually so that each person was responsible for a specific part. This allowed us to take ownership of our work and be accountable for our individual contributions." (P5) "We needed to adjust our schedule, then we divided tasks such as assigning members to handle promotions, creating promotional content, and assigning an admin to respond to or manage client-related matters." (P1)

STRATEGIES		
	Collaborative Group Work (CGW)	“In our team, we conducted individual translation checks, but all members worked together in the proofreading process.” (P3) “... so we used Google Docs, where each member could work on the translation according to their own schedule and availability.” (P4) “... for coordination, we found it more reliable to use online platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Zoom Meetings, and Google Docs, allowing us to conduct most of our discussions online.” (P6)

Linguistic Challenges and Strategies

Linguistic difficulties were the most prominent challenges that students encountered. These included issues with grammar, technical terminology, ambiguity of meaning, and idiomatic expressions. The findings corroborate previous research by Loureiro (2019) and Sriyono (2018), emphasizing that grammatical differences, especially between Indonesian and English sentence structures, contribute significantly to translation difficulties. For instance, long sentences in Indonesian pose problems for students when translated into English, which often has stricter grammatical rules. The inability to adjust sentence structure appropriately leads to translations that may sound unnatural or unclear.

Students also faced challenges related to technical and academic terminology. As highlighted by Yelia et al. (2024), non-English education students often struggle with specialized terms used in academic contexts. In this study, students translating materials from diverse fields encountered technical terms with no direct equivalents in English. To overcome these challenges, students relied on glossaries and academic references to find appropriate terms. This approach aligns with Loureiro's (2019) suggestion that translators must not only understand the underlying concepts of terms but also adapt them to meet the specific requirements of various fields.

The ambiguity of meaning also posed a challenge, particularly when dealing with words in the source language that had multiple interpretations. Loureiro (2019) discusses how translators must carefully select the most appropriate equivalent in

the target language. To resolve this kind of challenge, students apply a semantic translation approach, aiming to preserve the intended sense rather than the literal structure of the source text. Similarly, translating idiomatic expressions required students to use strategies such as paraphrasing, as literal translations would result in the loss of meaning. The importance of employing modulation or adaptation when translating idioms is underscored by Safitri et al. (2023), who found that paraphrasing was the most frequently used strategy in translating idiomatic expressions in media content. Students in this research also apply amplification as a part of addition strategies when a direct translation is insufficient, especially in cases involving idiomatic or culturally dense phrases.

Cultural Challenges and Adaptation Strategies

Cultural differences were another significant challenge. The translation of culturally specific terms, such as *posyandu* or *puskesmas*, revealed the difficulty in finding exact equivalents in English. This finding supports Sdobnikov (2019), who emphasizes that translators must consider cultural context when translating terms that may not be directly understood by the target audience. Students faced challenges in translating cultural expressions that were deeply rooted in Indonesian society. In these instances, cultural adaptation strategies were necessary to ensure that the meaning remained relevant and comprehensible to the target audience.

In overcoming these cultural challenges, students engaged in discussions with lecturers and peers to determine the most appropriate way to translate culturally specific terms. This approach reflects the findings of Munday et al. (2022), who emphasize that a deep understanding of both source and target cultures is essential for producing accurate and contextually appropriate translations. Moreover, the students' experiences highlighted the importance of cross-cultural knowledge in the translation process, an essential skill for future language professionals.

Technological Challenges and Post-editing Strategies

The use of translation technology also presented challenges, particularly when students relied on tools such as Google Translate, DeepL, and Grammarly.

These tools often produced translations that were overly literal or grammatically incorrect, which aligns with the research of Untara and Setiawan (2020), who noted the limitations of AI-based translation systems. Students recognized that while these tools could enhance efficiency, they were not sufficient for producing high-quality translations. Therefore, post-editing became a critical strategy. Students manually revised the translations to correct errors, adjust tone, and ensure contextual accuracy, as suggested by Han (2020).

Additionally, students employed other tools like QuillBot and Grammarly to improve sentence structure and grammar. This approach reflects Norawati and Puspitasari's (2022) emphasis on the importance of evaluating information sources and conducting thorough revisions in project-based learning. By combining technology with human intervention, students were able to produce more accurate and fluent translations.

Managerial Challenges and Collaborative Strategies

Managerial challenges, particularly time management and client acquisition, also emerged as obstacles. Students faced difficulties balancing their academic commitments with translation projects, which led to time constraints. This finding is consistent with Hussein (2021), who discusses the impact of schedule issues and project uncertainty on team effectiveness. To overcome these challenges, students implemented flexible work schedules and task distribution based on individual capabilities and availability. This collaborative approach ensured that all aspects of the translation project were completed effectively.

Moreover, students recognized the importance of building professional relationships to secure future translation projects. As they had not yet established a reputation as professional translators, acquiring clients posed a significant challenge. However, the group work approach allowed them to build teamwork and communication skills, essential for future collaboration in the translation industry. Stanley and Zhang (2020) highlight the benefits of collaborative group work in enhancing project management abilities, which students in this study applied to improve their translation project outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the challenges faced by students in translation projects are multifaceted, involving linguistic, cultural, technological, and managerial aspects. However, through various strategies, including the use of glossaries, academic references, post-editing, and collaboration, students were able to overcome these challenges and produce high-quality translations. The study highlights the importance of integrating Project-Based Learning into translation courses, as it provides students with real-world experiences that foster the development of essential skills for their future careers. The findings also suggest that translation projects, when approached effectively, can significantly contribute to students' professional growth and prepare them for the complexities of the translation profession.

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