

## APPLYING ATA ERROR CATEGORIES TO ANALYZE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MUSEUM SANDI YOGYAKARTA'S EXHIBITION LABELS

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**ABSTRAK.** Sebagai salah satu destinasi edukasi yang populer, museum menarik pengunjung lokal maupun asing yang ingin mempelajari warisan budaya dan sejarah negara tersebut. Oleh karena itu, sangat penting untuk menyediakan terjemahan dalam bahasa lain, khususnya bahasa Inggris. Sebagai bahasa global, terjemahan dalam bahasa Inggris dapat sangat membantu pengunjung asing untuk memahami konten yang disajikan. Sayangnya, terdapat beberapa kasus di mana kesalahan terjemahan muncul pada label pameran di museum, yang memengaruhi akurasi terjemahan dan menyebabkan kebingungan bagi pembaca. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis kesalahan terjemahan pada label pameran di Museum Sandi Yogyakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, termasuk observasi dan pengumpulan data. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, ditemukan 10 kesalahan terjemahan dari 24 jenis kesalahan menurut *American Translators Association (ATA)*. Jenis kesalahan yang paling menonjol adalah kesalahan penggunaan dan tanda baca, yang masing-masing terjadi sebanyak 18 kali. Kesalahan-kesalahan tersebut sebagian besar disebabkan oleh kelalaian, kecerobohan, dan kurangnya penelitian terhadap aturan dalam bahasa target oleh penerjemah.

**Kata kunci:** penerjemahan; kesalahan terjemahan; American Translators Association; museum; exhibition labels

**ABSTRACT** As one of the popular educational destinations, the museum attracts both local and foreign visitors who are eager to learn about the country's cultural heritage and history. Therefore, it is crucial to have translations in other languages, particularly in English. As a global language, English translations can greatly assist foreign visitors in comprehending the content. Unfortunately, there are some cases where translation errors appear in the exhibition labels in museums, affecting the translation accuracy and leading to confusion for the readers. This study aims to identify the types of translation errors on the exhibition labels of Museum Sandi Yogyakarta. This study used qualitative descriptive methods, including observation and data collection. Based on the result, there are 10 translation errors out of 24 types, according to ATA's Framework for Standardized Error Making. The most prominent types were found in usage and punctuation errors, occurring 18 times for both cases. The errors were mainly influenced by the translator's negligence, carelessness, and a lack of research regarding the rules in the target language.

**Keywords:** translation, translation error; American Translators Association; museum; exhibition labels

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, educational institutions have gained popularity among tourists, surpassing traditional attractions such as malls and amusement parks. Museums, in particular, are increasingly favored as educational venues, offering enriching learning experiences for diverse audiences, including children, adults, locals, and international visitors. According to Dordová (2016), museums play an integral role in preserving and showcasing a nation's culture. They encompass a vast array of subjects, ranging from technical and scientific themes to those centered on culture, history, abstract concepts, or art. Through museums, visitors gain insights into both the past and present, exploring local traditions as well as the cultures of foreign lands. They are popular destinations for school excursions, students, families, and are frequently included in sightseeing itineraries for international tourists. Museums possess tremendous potential to connect people of all ages with science,

culture, history, and art. Museums are frequently visited by both local and international visitors, making it essential for them to cater to the needs of a diverse audience. To effectively fulfill their educational and informational roles, museums must translate their texts and materials into foreign languages. This ensures that international tourists can also gain knowledge, insights, and meaningful experiences from their visits. Given this diversity, it is crucial to provide multilingual translations, with English being a priority due to its status as a global language.

Museum texts can generally be divided into two distinct categories. The first category, known as panel texts, includes materials that provide an overview of a museum or exhibition, offering introductions and contextual information about a particular field. These texts vary in length but often consist of full sentences and paragraphs. The second category comprises object, exhibit, or exhibition

labels, which offer specific details, descriptions, and related information about individual items within the exhibition. These texts are typically brief and often presented as bullet points. They are "rich in cultural content, encompassing both explicitly identified cultural elements and subtle cultural implications" (Rázusová in Dordová, 2016). In this study, the term "exhibition labels" is used to refer to the latter category.

To provide international visitors, the labels need to be translated into the international language, in this case, it is English. Since English is a foreign language for the translator, it introduces a unique set of challenges related to linguistic and cultural fluency. Translating into a foreign language requires an advanced level of active language proficiency, as the translator must possess not only a deep understanding of the source language but also the ability to produce clear, idiomatic, and culturally appropriate text in the target language. In the context of translation competence, these challenges highlight the importance of specific sub-competences as proposed by PACTE GROUP (2005), such as bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistic sub-competence, translation knowledge sub-competence, instrumental sub-competence, and strategic sub-competence. The bilingual sub-competence encompasses pragmatic, sociolinguistic, textual, and lexical-grammatical knowledge in both languages. The extralinguistic sub-competence includes encyclopedic, thematic, and bicultural knowledge. Translation knowledge sub-competence involves understanding the principles that govern translation, including processes, methods, procedures, and the profession itself, such as different types of translation briefs and target audiences. The instrumental sub-competence pertains to expertise in utilizing documentation sources and information technologies relevant to translation. Finally, the strategic sub-competence is the most crucial, as it ensures problem-solving capabilities and the overall efficiency of the translation process.

Translation, as defined by Newmark (1988), is a complex and dynamic process that involves conveying the meaning of a text in another language while maintaining the original author's intent. This definition highlights translation as a multifaceted activity that requires more than linguistic equivalence; it demands a deep understanding of the cultural, contextual, and pragmatic elements embedded in the source text.

The translator must ensure that the target text faithfully reflects the meaning, style, tone, and purpose of the original, adapting these elements to suit the cultural and linguistic norms of the target audience. This process is not merely a mechanical substitution of words but a creative and interpretive act that bridges the gap between languages and cultures. It requires the translator to engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making, all while adhering to the principles of accuracy

and fidelity. Larson (1984) asserts that accuracy in translation refers to the precise and faithful transfer of information from the source text to the target text, ensuring that the meaning conveyed is entirely correct and consistent. This principle emphasizes the importance of preserving the integrity of the original message without adding, omitting, or altering the information during the translation process.

Accuracy is not limited to literal equivalence but extends to capturing the nuances, contextual significance, and intended impact of the source text. For a translation to be accurate, it must align with the linguistic, cultural, and situational context of both the source and target languages while avoiding any distortion of meaning. In Larson's framework, accuracy is foundational to high-quality translation, as it ensures that the reader of the target text receives the same information and understanding as the reader of the original. It is a key measure of a translator's ability to faithfully interpret the source material while adapting it to the grammatical and stylistic norms of the target language. Ensuring translation accuracy is crucial, as it serves to prevent errors by maintaining the fidelity of the original message and avoiding distortions or misinterpretations in the target text.

Several researchers have examined translation errors in various contexts. For instance, Imam and Rosa (2023) analyzed the translation of news items by third-year English Department students at Universitas Negeri Padang. Using Sager's (1989) theory, they found that inversion and derivation errors were the most common errors to find. Meanwhile, Anindya and Yonatri (2022) explored translation errors in three Indonesian-English pharmacy journal articles using the American Translator Association (ATA) classification. They reported that literalness and usage errors were the most prevalent. Similarly, Wahyuningsih (2021) analyzed errors in a COVID-19 workplace guideline translated from Indonesian to English, while Yowono and Amilia (2020) compared translations of a short story rendered by Google Translate and professional translators, using Mossop's revision parameters. Their findings highlighted Google Translate limitations in handling idiomatic expressions, word choices, and cultural nuances. Building on these studies, this research aims to identify and analyze translation errors in Yogyakarta Museum Sandi's English exhibition labels, contributing to the broader understanding of translation competences and its implications for educational and cultural communication.

## METHOD

This research applied qualitative methodology, which refers in the broadest sense to

research that produces descriptive data; people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior. (Bodgan, et.al., 2016). This study examined translation errors in the Museum Sandi Yogyakarta's exhibition labels using a descriptive qualitative method. The data consist of sentences containing translation errors found on the exhibition labels, which were written and translated by Museum Sandi's intern students in 2019. The researcher collected these labels in September 2023.

The research process began with data collection from the English translations of Museum Sandi's exhibit labels. Identified translation errors were categorized into various types based on the American Translators Association (ATA) framework, which classifies errors into 24 types, namely grammar, syntax, word form, spelling, capitalization, diacritical marks, punctuation, addition, omission, terminology, faux ami, verb form, ambiguity, cohesion, faithfulness, literalness, misunderstanding, indecision, unfinished, usage, text type, register, style, illegibility, and other errors. These categorized results were then presented to the raters for their evaluations. Following the raters' assessments, the researcher analyzed the data to identify patterns and draw conclusions. The analysis focused on the types of translation errors and their potential causes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Errors in any task, including translation, can significantly affect the outcome. As a process that seeks to convey the intended meaning of the source text (ST) in the target language (TL), translation should aim for accuracy and clarity. The responsibility for errors lies with the translator, who must be familiar with the types of translation errors and adhere to appropriate standards when translating texts.

Using the ATA classification framework, this study identified ten categories of translation errors across 24 types in the Museum Sandi exhibition labels. These categories include grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, addition, omission, cohesion, usage, style, and other errors. Below is a summary of the frequency and percentage of errors in each category:

Table 1. Types of Translation Errors

No	Types of Translation Error	Frequency	Percentages
	Usage	16	18%
	Punctuation	16	18%
	Capitalization	13	15%
	Grammar	10	11%
	Cohesion	10	11%
	Spelling	9	10%
	Addition	4	5%
	Other Error (untranslated)	4	5%
	Omission	3	3%
	Style	2	2%
	Total	87	100%

The table demonstrates that the highest translation errors in the museum are usage and punctuation (18% for each). Then, capitalization takes the second place by 15%. Meanwhile, grammar and cohesion equally occupy the third place by 11%. Slightly in number, errors in spelling is also identified by 10%. Addition and other error take the next place by 5% for each. Finally omission occupies 3% while the least number of error is style identified in 2 data or 2% of the total findings. To sum up, these errors vary ranging from grammatical level to the semantic and stylistic level.

### a. Usage

A usage error occurs when a word or phrase is improperly used in the TT convention. It deals with incorrect collocation, prepositional usage, and the use of definite or indefinite articles. For example:

ST: Mesin sandi SN-011 adalah buatan anak Indonesia akhir tahun 1990-an.

TT: The SN-011 cipher machine was made by in Indonesia in the late 1990s.

The use of double prepositions in the sentence above may cause a usage error in the words "made by in." This can create confusion regarding whether the meaning is "The machine made in Indonesia" or "Indonesian people made the machine." However, the ST refers to it as "buatan anak Indonesia," which translates to "made by Indonesian." Therefore, it is advised that the translator use the preposition "by" to ensure clarity of the statement. The data shows the translator's negligence in using double prepositions. Such errors often result from negligence or uncertainty in preposition usage.

### b. Punctuation

When a translation fails to follow the proper TL writing rules for punctuation, it contains a punctuation error. For example:

ST: Bangsa Sumeria sejak tahun 3200 SM telah menggunakan piktogram.

TT: Since 3200 BC the Sumerians had used pictograms to record their knowledge.

After the introduction phrase "Since 3200 BC," there should be a comma. It cannot stand alone since it does not have a subject and a verb. In order to connect it to the main clause, a comma is required. This oversight likely stems from a lack of understanding of TL punctuation rules or carelessness.

### c. Capitalization

A capitalization error occurs when a translation fails to follow the target language's capitalization rules, such as upper and lower case. For example:

ST: SR "Tjihaja Gakko" di Jakarta.

TT: SR "tjihaja gakko" in Jakarta.

The translator does not capitalize the name of the school, "tjihaja gakko." Every word in 'Tjihaja Gakko,' as it appears in the ST, should be capitalized. Since both languages have similar capitalization rules for place names, the translator should have translated the names appropriately. Seemingly, the translator violated this rule due to her negligence.

Another capitalization error is found in the research conducted by Erkirtay (2024) in the following example: Place is mediterranean and, time to joining area of the divine city Patara, identified with the Sun. The first error identified is the wording of "Mediterranean." The initial letter is written in lowercase; it should have been capitalized because it refers to name of a geographical place, while the word "Sun" is unnecessarily capitalized since it does not refer to any proper name.

#### d. Grammar

When a translation uses an incorrect verb, noun, subject, pronoun, or other grammatical form in the target language, it is considered a grammar error. Since grammar is the basic form of all languages, it is important to understand it, even though the rules may vary from one language to another. For example:

ST: Rumah keluarga Mertosetomo juga berfungsi sebagai pos pemeriksaan ke-2 bagi setiap orang yang akan menemui...

TT: ...the 2nd checkpoint for everyone who were going to meet...

The word 'everyone' is singular and an indefinite pronoun. Thus, 'was' should come after it to make a proper sentence. The word 'were' is used in the translation above, which indicates a grammatical error.

In the following example grammar error occurs in terms of misuse of determiner. This example is derived from research conducted by Aini (2018).

ST: seorang filsuf muslim...

TT: An Moslem philosopher...

The function of a determiner in a sentence is to provide additional information about the noun it precedes, specifically regarding definiteness, quantity, or possession. In English, articles (such as *a* and *an*) are a specific type of determiner, and their usage is governed by particular rules related to the noun they modify. The article *a* (or *an* depending on the sound that follows) is used with singular, countable nouns when referring to a non-specific or general item. In this case, the article *a* should precede a singular, countable noun that starts with a consonant sound. For example, in the noun phrase "a Moslem philosopher," the article *a* is correct because

"Moslem" begins with a consonant sound, and the phrase refers to one philosopher of an unspecified number of philosophers.

The translation error in the given sentence could have occurred due to the translator's misunderstanding of English article usage and grammatical rules. One common mistake in translation involves the misapplication of articles due to differences between languages, particularly when the target language (TL) lacks a similar system of articles or has a different way of marking definiteness or specificity. In this case, the error may stem from the translator's lack of understanding of the article system in the target language (e.g., if the translator's first language does not use articles or has different rules for their usage). Furthermore, the translator's unfamiliarity with sentence types in the target language may also contribute to the error. For instance, the translator might have mistakenly used the definite article *the* or omitted the article altogether, reflecting confusion over the function of the article in indicating specificity or generality. These types of errors often arise from inadequate familiarity with the syntactical and grammatical structure of the target language, highlighting the need for greater precision in understanding both the source and target language grammar during the translation process.

#### e. Cohesion

When the grammatical cohesion devices—reference, replacement, ellipsis, and conjunction—are used incorrectly, they create a cohesive error that makes the text difficult to read. This issue also encompasses the inconsistent translation of a form or phrase in the TT. For example:

ST: Dia ingin kembali ke Miletus dengan cara memancing pergolakan.

TT: He wanted to return to Miletus by stirring up unrest.

The Translator must choose words consistently when translating a text. If the translator is inconsistent in choosing words, an error in cohesion, such as the use of the terms "unrest" and "upheaval" in this context, can be found. Both terms have an identical meaning to the ST "pergolakan." By using both terms in the same paragraph, the translator shows inconsistency. It would be better to use the word "upheaval," which is more formal and suitable for political contexts.

This error is caused by the translator's confusion and uncertainty. It is assumed that the translator was unsure which word to use as there

were no specific instructions regarding the usage of both words. This confusion may also result from a lack of research on the meanings of terms and which words are more appropriate in a given context.

#### f. Spelling

Spelling errors happen when a word is misspelled by omitting or altering its letters, or when the translation does not match the correct spelling of the term in the target text.

Example:

ST: *Tato*

TT: Tatto

The word "tatto" as written in the target text (TT) is an obvious spelling mistake. The proper spelling of the word in both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) is "tattoo," with a double "o" at the end. This correct form is verified by consulting a reputable TL dictionary, which explicitly lists "tattoo" with the extra "o" as the proper spelling. To ensure clarity and avoid potential confusion for readers, it is essential for the translator to correct this error and use the proper spelling of "tattoo." The mistake appears to be the result of the translator's oversight or carelessness, as such errors are easily detectable by most modern writing tools. It seems likely that the translator either did not utilize the spelling error detection function in their word processing software or ignored the red underline that would have indicated the mistake. This lack of attention to detail could potentially undermine the professionalism of the translation and disrupt the reader's understanding of the text.

#### g. Addition

If a translator adds unnecessary meaning in a translation, it is called an addition error.

Example:

ST: *Dengannya pula, nilai-nilai kejuangan para sandiman dapat terwariskan.*

TT: It helps preserve and pass down the values of patriotism of the code officers to the next generation.

The phrase "helps preserve" and "to the next generation" are not mentioned in the ST of this data. Instead, it simply indicates that the values of the code officers should be passed down without specifying who is responsible for preserving these values. The translator's addition of this extra information altered the meaning and the writer's tone.

This error occurs from the translator's attempt to add features like the subject and action to give a deeper meaning. It would be more appropriate if addition was used to provide a brief explanation of the uncommon terms in the ST that were hard to understand. Since the meaning is still conveyed and there are no ambiguous terms in this case, adding extra information is not necessary.

#### h. Other Errors

Additional errors identified include spelling, addition, omission, untranslated text, and stylistic errors. These reflect issues such as negligence, inadequate proofreading, and a lack of familiarity with TL conventions. For example:

ST: *KOLONEL INF. TNI (PURN) DRS. SANTOSA*

TT: - (no translation)

As observed in the target text (TT) above, the translator failed to provide a proper translation for a crucial part of the sentence, leaving a gap in the translation where important information should have been included. Specifically, the space that was left blank was meant to be filled with the phrase "Infantry Colonel of Indonesian Army Forces (Ret.) Drs. Santosa." This omission can create significant confusion for readers, particularly those unfamiliar with the original source text, as they are left without context or understanding of the missing information. Without a clear translation, readers cannot properly interpret the meaning or significance of the reference, which may compromise the effectiveness of the translation and hinder the intended message.

This type of translation error is especially problematic in cases where specific names, titles, or credentials are involved, as they often carry important context or authority within the communication. The absence of this information leaves the target audience with an incomplete or ambiguous understanding of the original text. The failure to translate or provide equivalent information can also undermine the credibility and professionalism of the translation.

There are several potential causes for this error, which can be attributed to the translator's negligence or carelessness during the translation process. Negligence refers to a lack of attention to detail, leading to the inadvertent omission of essential elements in the translation. The translator may have been distracted or overlooked this specific portion of the text in their haste or failure to carefully proofread. Carelessness is another possible explanation, where the translator might have simply failed to recognize the importance of fully conveying all the elements of the source text, thus leaving gaps in the translation. Moreover, the absence of double-checking the translated text or reviewing it for completeness may have contributed to the oversight. A lack of revision or quality control can result in errors that could have easily

been caught if the translation had been reviewed more thoroughly.

Such errors underscore the importance of a careful, methodical approach to translation, which involves not only linguistic accuracy but also a deep understanding of context and an attention to detail. The translator must ensure that every element, especially culturally or contextually significant information such as titles, names, and positions, is properly conveyed to avoid any miscommunication or confusion for the target audience.

#### i. Omission

An omission error occurs when some elements are missing from the ST in the TT.

ST: Dikenal sebagai ASFAM-7, mesin ini adalah mesin berbasis rotor elektro-mekanis, yang dikembangkan oleh National Security Agency (NSA) Amerika Serikat.

TT: Known as ASFAM-7, this machine is an electro-mechanical rotor developed by the National Security Agency.

The phrase "...(NSA) Amerika Serikat" has not been translated in the target text. This omission can affect the writer's tone and the meaning of the sentence in the TT, which can confuse the readers. The translator fails to translate the NSA's specific information which shows her carelessness and negligence. The translator appears to have been ignorant that not all readers are familiar with the National Security Agency. To ensure that the content is easily understandable for all readers, it is important to include the details regarding the NSA from the ST.

Theoretically, Omission is similar to one of translation procedures proposed by Newmark (1988) called Reduction. It is the procedure when the translator is more likely to reduce the number of elements that make up the SL by not eliminating important information in the translation. It is applied also, for example, to avoid redundancy and repetition of a word or phrase in a text. However, the translator has to be thoughtful in using this procedure, otherwise, it will result in target language inaccuracy.

#### j. Style

When the grammatical structure or other components are unsuitable for the intended publication, it is known as a style error. This can happen when there are differences in the forms and methods of expressing ideas between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT).

Example:

ST: Pada tahun 1948, beliau merampungkan kursus sandi setelah belajar langsung kepada dr. Roebiono Kertopati di kantor Jl. Batanawarsa No. 32, Yogyakarta.

TT: In 1948, he completed his course on cryptography upon learning directly under dr.

Roebiono Kertopati in his office on Batanawarsa no. 32 Yogyakarta.

The error in the writing style above indicates that street name in the TT is incorrect. It should match the names of roads in the target language with their classification, for example, Wilshire Boulevard, 22nd Street, Mill Road, etc. Depending on its kind, each road has a unique name. To preserve the writing style used in the TT, the translation text should be written as "Batanawarsa Street / Batanawarsa St." This mistake occurred as a result of the translator's lack of study and ignoring the rules about how to write street name in the target language.

The similar style error is found in research conducted by Lestari and Chojimah (2023) as follows:

ST: It has been the primary need of our daily life.

TT: "Itu sudah menjadi kebutuhan utama dalam kehidupan kita sehari-hari"

It shows that based on the datum above, the pronoun 'it' is a subject that should be written with the correct noun to avoid misunderstanding.

The findings highlight the importance of training translators to adhere to linguistic and stylistic norms of the TL. Emphasizing research, proofreading, and awareness of TL conventions can significantly reduce errors. Translators must also develop a deep understanding of both ST and TL cultural and grammatical nuances to ensure high-quality translations.

## CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that the English translations of Museum Sandi's exhibition labels exhibit 10 distinct types of translation errors. Out of a total of 87 instances, usage and punctuation errors are the most frequent, each appearing 18 times, while style errors are the least frequent, with only two occurrences. Regardless of their severity, the overall number of translation errors can influence the level of translation accuracy. To produce high-quality translations, translators need to enhance their language proficiency as well as improve their technical competence in using the tools.

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