

An Analysis on Students' Translation Equivalence in Translating Idiom

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui: (1) jenis kesetaraan terjemahan yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa semester lima Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Tanjungpura pada tahun akademik 2023/2024 dalam menerjemahkan idiom bahasa Inggris ke dalam bahasa Indonesia berdasarkan teori terjemahan Newmark, dan (2) tingkat akurasi serta keterbacaan hasil terjemahan mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif deskriptif, dimana data dikumpulkan melalui tes terjemahan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dari 200 terjemahan yang dihasilkan oleh 20 mahasiswa, 173 terjemahan (86,5%) dikategorikan sebagai kesetaraan terjemahan, dengan 74 terjemahan (37%) termasuk dalam kategori kesetaraan semantik dan 99 terjemahan (49,5%) sebagai kesetaraan komunikatif. Selain itu, berdasarkan tabel kategorisasi, tingkat akurasi dan keterbacaan terjemahan mahasiswa termasuk dalam kategori baik, dengan skor rata-rata 22,35 (74,5%) untuk akurasi dan 23,9 (79,66%) untuk keterbacaan. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa cukup memprioritaskan makna dibandingkan bentuk kalimat, dan masih terdapat tantangan dalam mempertahankan baik akurasi maupun kealamian terjemahan.

The aims of this study are to find out: (1) the types of equivalence translation used by students of the fifth semester of English Language Education Study Program, Tanjungpura University in the academic year of 2023/2024 in translating English idioms into Indonesian based on Newmark's theory of translation, (2) the accuracy and the readability of their translations. This research employed a descriptive quantitative design, with data collected through a translation test. The result of the study showed that out of 200 translations produced by 20 students, 173 translations (86.5%) were classified as translation equivalence, with 74 translations (37%) categorized as semantic equivalence, and 99 translations (49.5%) as communicative translation. Furthermore, based on the categorization table, both the accuracy and readability of the students' translations were rated as good, with average scores of 22.35 (74.5%) for accuracy and 23.9 (79.66%) for readability. These results suggest that while students moderately prioritize meaning over form, challenges remain in maintaining both accuracy and naturalness of the translation.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation is the rendering of information from one language into another. It is intended as a way of transferring and communicating information in the language the target readers understand. Catford (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language)". In translation process, an original text or source text (ST) written in the source language (SL) is reproduced into its equivalent which is target text (TT) written in the target language (TL). Newmark (1988), on the other hand, defines translation as

“rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”, which emphasizes the importance of the nature of the target language, and also the style and purpose of the original author in translation process.

People who are skillful in translation are very important and needed in many fields, especially those that deal with cross cultural and language interaction. One such field is education, especially foreign language education, where teachers are tasked to teach a foreign language to students who are non-native speakers of the language taught. The use of translation is especially important in one of the earliest and most famous methods of foreign language teaching such as Grammar Translation Method. Although currently, with the progress of many new methods, it has become no longer popular and has been criticized by many educators and students who experience classes taught using the method, Grammar Translation method remains widely used in classrooms even today (Laviosa, 2014). More recent language teaching methods, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) also incorporate the use of translation, although not as extensive and crucial as in Grammar Translation Method.

Students of English Language Education study program in Tanjungpura University are given option to take Translation subject in the fifth semester. In this subject, students learn about translation and also training their translating skill. Having good translation skill is very helpful for foreign language teachers in supporting their teaching ability in general and particularly important for those who decide to practice a method of teaching such as Grammar Translation Method or CLT. Being skillful in translation means that the person should be able to produce a translation in which the meaning is intact or as close as possible to its source text. Grossman (2010) states that good translators are those who strive to recreate in the target text, a translation text that sparks the same or at least the closest feelings on the readers as the original one does to its readers. Oftentimes, translators are faced with words, phrases, and sentences that will lose their meaning or do not make sense when translated literally such as figurative language. One of the most common types of figurative languages found in texts is idiom. Baker (2018) defines idiom as “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the case of idioms, often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components.”. Hence, most idioms will lose their meaning when translated literally or word by word, making it challenging for the translators to write in the target language, a proper translation that both conveying the same meaning as well as sounding natural in form. They have to look into context of the sentence as well as learning the culture of the source language in order to fully grasp the ideas behind those idioms. Shojaei (2012) reiterates Baker (1992) classification of some difficulties in translating idiom which are: 1) an idiom in the source language might not have a direct equivalent in the target language; 2) a similar idiom may exist in the target language, but carries a different meaning; 3) an idiom can function both literally and figuratively at the same time; and 4) The usage of idioms varies depending on the context in each language.

As a solution, in effort to hit the closest meaning or style to the source text, translators may consider the concept of equivalence translation when translating. Vinay and Darbelnet, cited in Munday (2016) refer to equivalence as “cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means”. To consider the concept of translation equivalence means that the translators choose to either maintain the style of the source text, with risk of not accurately conveying the meaning, or conveying the meaning accurately in target language but also losing the original style of the source text. To convey the meaning accurately in the target language, translators may use context to help presenting the information as close as possible to its source by giving up preserving the words' form and structure or even adding new words that are not initially present in the source text. Yin-hua (2011) argues that “equivalence is of absolute necessity in and a basic requirement of translation”.

Some previous studies have been done regarding the use of equivalence translation by university students of English education study program in translating idiom. Hanifah (2018) conducted a research aimed to analyze the type of equivalence used by students in translating idiom based on the equivalence principle proposed by Eugene Nida (1964) which divides equivalence into two types: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. The result of the research, only 49.21% of the students successfully translated the idioms. In regards of equivalence translation used, 33.32% students used equivalence to translate the idioms, with 32.56% of them resorted to use dynamic equivalence while the 0.76% used formal equivalence. Another research was conducted by Sari et al (2022) which similarly aimed to find the type of translation equivalence used by students in translating idioms based on Nida equivalence principle.

The result of the research finds that 73.64% of the data analyzed are dynamic equivalence and 5.85% are formal equivalence.

The two previous researches were done based on Nida equivalence translation principle and there has not been a study of analyzing students' translation of idioms based on Newmark's translation equivalence theory. In this study, an analysis was conducted regarding the use of equivalence in translating idiom on the students of the fifth semester of English Language Education Study Program in academic year of 2023/2024 who have taken Translation subject. The information of students' preference of the type of equivalence they chose to use in translating idioms gave insights into their understanding of the source texts, which are the context presented and the importance of meaning, and their approaches to transfer the meaning into the target language. In determining the types of equivalence, the analysis was based on translation theory proposed by Peter Newmark (1988) by using the table of comparison of the theory as found in Munday (2016). The choice to base the analysis on Newmark's translation theory was because the theory is considerably more recent compared to Nida's equivalence principle. The students participating were already familiar with the theory, as it was covered in their course materials. The theory divides equivalence into semantic translation and communicative translation which bear both similarities and differences to Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence, respectively. The primary distinction between Newmark's two types of translation is that semantic translation prioritizes preserving the original meaning, while communicative translation emphasizes the intended impact on the reader. In other words, semantic translation remains closely tied to the source text, striving to maintain its original features. In contrast, communicative translation adapts to the audience's needs, ensuring clarity and effectiveness in conveying the message (Panou, 2013). Similarly, according to Suhartono (2022) the difference between semantic and communicative translation in general is that "semantic translation is accurate, but may not communicate well, whereas communicative translation communicates well, but may not be very precise". Thus, besides determining the type of equivalence, another analysis was also done to determine the accuracy and readability of translations done by the students.

METHODE

Research Method

This research was conducted using quantitative descriptive research design. Mertens (2024) defines quantitative design in the most simplistic sense as when "researchers collect numerical data". Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2022) state that descriptive study aims to give the most complete and detailed explanation of the current situation of something. They also added that descriptive study in education setting is mainly about compiling of information such as skill and preference of individuals or groups of people.

In this research, an attempt was done to explain the current abilities and preferences of the participants in translating English idioms into Indonesian through compiling and then classifying the data gathered into numerical data. The participants of this research were the fifth semester students of Class B of English Language Education of Tanjungpura University in the academic year of 2023/2024 who had taken the Translation subject. The technique of data collection used in this research was measurement, whereas the tool of data collection was a test which according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrision (2018) concerns on the describing achievement, which includes the ability and knowledge of an individual, along with proficiency of students. The test consisted of a worksheet with five short English texts containing ten idioms, taken from English Idioms in Use: Advance and English Idioms in Use: Intermediate, both by McCarthy and O'Dell (2017).

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the process was divided into two sets of steps which first, seek to determine the types of translation equivalence used in the translations produced by the participants, and then also the accuracy and readability of them. The first steps which was to determine the types of translation equivalence used in the translations were as follows:

1. Determining whether the translation of idioms done by the participants were successful/translated or failed/untranslated.
2. The successful translations were then checked to find whether they belong to equivalence translation or literal translation.

- Then, the translations categorized as equivalence were furtherly categorized into two types of equivalence which were semantic equivalence or communicative equivalence by following criteria based on table of comparison of Newmark’s semantic and communicative translation in Munday (2016).

Table 1. Criteria to determine the type of equivalence

| Parameter | Criteria | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| | Semantic translation | Communicative translation |
| Translator-Reader Relation | Translation does not help readers unless crucial for understanding. Only use connotations to help. | Translation helps readers. Make adjustments to fit readers’ language and culture. |
| Culture | Translation does not make adaptation to TL culture | Translation make adaptation to fit TL culture. |
| Quality | Less than ST because of loss of meaning | Equal or better; clearer |
| Form | Replicate ST form as close as the TL allow. More complex, awkward, detailed, concentrated; tendency to overtranslate | Make changes to sound more natural in TL. Smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional; tendency to undertranslate |

- Lastly, calculation was done to find the percentage of the types of translation used by using this formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \tag{1}$$

Where P, and F, and N refer to the percentage of semantic equivalence/communicative equivalence, literal translation, or untranslated, and number of types of translation used, and total number of translation of idioms respectively.

The second set of steps to determine the accuracy and readability of the translations were as follows:

- Firstly, score was given to each translated short text by applying scoring scales which were based on assessment instruments of translation accuracy and readability by Nababan et al (2012).

Table 2. Scale for Scoring Accuracy

| Scale | Definition | Criteria |
|-------|---------------|---|
| 3 | Accurate | The meaning of sentence and idiom is accurate, no change, deletion, or addition in meaning. |
| 2 | Less Accurate | Overall meaning of sentence and idiom is accurate, with minimum change, deletion, or addition in meaning. |
| 1 | Inaccurate | Inaccurate meaning of sentence and idiom, excessive change, deletion, or addition in meaning. |

Table 3. Scale for Scoring Readability

| Scale | Definition | Criteria |
|-------|---------------|--|
| 3 | Readable | The translation of sentence and idiom can be understood easily. |
| 2 | Less Readable | Translation of sentence and idiom can be understood but requires more attention. |
| 1 | Unreadable | Translation is difficult to understand. |

- Then, a calculation was done to get the percentage of students’ accuracy and readability by using this formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \tag{2}$$

Where P, F and N refer to the percentage of accuracy/readability, total score and maximum score respectively.

3. After that, the average score and percentage of students' accuracy and readability were found by using this formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N} \tag{3}$$

Where M, $\sum X$, and N refer to mean score/percentage, total score/percentage of students' accuracy/readability, and number of students respectively.

4. Finally, the classification of the students' ability of accuracy and readability in translating was done, which were based on criteria table by Rushansah in Imandari (2015).

Table 4. Category for Students' Accuracy and Readability in Translating

| Scale | Category |
|----------|-----------|
| 80%-100% | Excellent |
| 60%-79% | Good |
| 50%-59% | Fair |
| 0%-49% | Poor |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 5. The Result of Categorization on Students' Idiom Translations

| No | Source Text | Translated | | | Untranslated | Total Answer |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| | | Equivalence Translation | | Literal | | |
| | | Semantic | Communi-cative | | | |
| 1. | ran out of steam | 1 | 19 | - | - | 20 |
| 2. | gone off the rails | 13 | 6 | 1 | - | 20 |
| 3. | down the line | - | 18 | - | 2 | 20 |
| 4. | back on track | 16 | 2 | 2 | - | 20 |
| 5. | amid mounting calls | 11 | 9 | - | - | 20 |
| 6. | has blood on his hands | 9 | 6 | 5 | - | 20 |
| 7. | all sweetness and light | 2 | 6 | 12 | - | 20 |
| 8. | getting on my nerves | - | 20 | - | - | 20 |
| 9. | taking the law into their own hands | 7 | 11 | 2 | - | 20 |
| 10. | against the clock | 15 | 2 | - | 3 | 20 |
| Total | | 74 | 99 | 22 | 5 | 200 |

From the results in the Table 5, a calculation was done to determine the percentage of each category of translation. The result of the calculation showed that among the 200 translations of idiom, 37% were categorized as semantic equivalence, 49.5% were categorized as communicative translation, 11% were categorized as literal translation, and 2.5% were categorized as untranslated.

Table 6. Scoring Result of the Accuracy and Readability of Students Translations

| No | Name | Accuracy | | Readability | |
|----|------|----------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | | Score | Percentage | Score | Percentage |
| 1 | ASR | 24 | 80.00% | 23 | 76.67% |
| 2 | AW | 23 | 76.67% | 24 | 80.00% |
| 3 | BYO | 24 | 80.00% | 25 | 83.33% |
| 4 | DOOS | 18 | 60.00% | 24 | 80.00% |
| 5 | DY | 20 | 66.67% | 26 | 86.67% |
| 6 | ERP | 24 | 80.00% | 16 | 53.33% |
| 7 | FS | 22 | 73.33% | 28 | 93.33% |
| 8 | IM | 23 | 76.67% | 23 | 76.67% |
| 9 | JE | 24 | 80.00% | 28 | 93.33% |
| 10 | LV | 23 | 76.67% | 24 | 80.00% |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| 11 | NFA | 22 | 73.33% | 25 | 83.33% |
| 12 | P | 20 | 66.67% | 23 | 76.67% |
| 13 | RAH | 20 | 66.67% | 22 | 73.33% |
| 14 | RN | 24 | 80.00% | 21 | 70.00% |
| 15 | RSH | 21 | 70.00% | 24 | 80.00% |
| 16 | SO | 22 | 73.33% | 24 | 80.00% |
| 17 | SS | 22 | 73.33% | 23 | 76.67% |
| 18 | TMP | 23 | 76.67% | 23 | 76.67% |
| 19 | XF | 24 | 80.00% | 28 | 93.33% |
| 20 | ASR | 24 | 80.00% | 24 | 80.00% |
| Total | | 447 | 1490% | 478 | 1.593.33% |
| Average | | 22.35 | 74.5% | 23.9 | 79.66% |

The results in Table 6 showed that among the 20 participants, the average score of accuracy was 22.35 or 74.5%, whereas for readability the average score was 23.9 or 79.66%. Thus, based on the criteria in Table 4, the students' abilities of both the accuracy and readability were categorized as "Good".

Table 7. Accuracy and Readability of Most Common Idiom Translations

| No | Idiom | Most Common Translation | Score | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | | Accuracy | Readability |
| 1 | ran out of steam | kehabisan tenaga (70%) | 2 (Less Accurate) | 2 (Less Readable) |
| 2 | gone off the rails | keluar jalur (55%) | 3 (Accurate) | 2 (Less Readable) |
| 3 | down the line | Kemudian (80%) | 2 (Less Accurate) | 3 (Readable) |
| 4 | back on track | kembali ke jalur yang tepat (55%) | 3 (Accurate) | 3 (Readable) |
| 5 | amid mounting calls | di tengah meningkatnya seruan (50%) | 3 (Accurate) | 3 (Readable) |
| 6 | has blood on his hands | tangannya berlumuran darah (45%) | 3 (Accurate) | 2 (Less Readable) |
| 7 | all sweetness and light | sangat manis dan ringan (30%) | 1 (Inaccurate) | 1 (Unreadable) |
| 8 | getting on my nerves | membuat saya jengkel (65%) | 2 (Less Accurate) | 3 (Readable) |
| 9 | taking the law into their own hands | bertindak sendiri (55%) | 2 (Less Accurate) | 3 (Readable) |
| 10 | against the clock | melawan waktu (75%) | 3 (Accurate) | 2 (Less Readable) |

Analyzing the result of categorization of translations of idiom 1, few things can be inferred. Out of 20 translations, 1 (5%) was categorized as semantic equivalence and 19 (95%) were categorized as communicative translation. Most participants chose to translate the idiom "ran out of steam" into "kehabisan tenaga" which is simpler and more direct in meaning compared to the original idiom. The translation keeps the metaphor of running out of something, but substitutes "steam" with the simpler and easily understood "energy/power" in order to provide more clarity. The translation conveys the idea of exhaustion, albeit more of physical one instead of losing motivation or enthusiasm like in ST.

The majority of participants used semantic equivalence in translating idiom 2. Out of 20 translations, 13 (65%) were categorized as semantic equivalence, 6 (30%) were categorized as communicative translation and 1 (5%) was categorized as literal translation. Most participants chose to translate the idiom "gone off the rails" into "keluar jalur", which is structurally and thematically close as it retains the theme and imagery of the original idiom, but sacrificing clarity in order to preserve metaphorical image of the ST. However, the communicative translation "menyimpang menjadi buruk" or "melakukan hal aneh" are much closer in term of meaning.

In idiom 3, a strong preference for communicative translation is evident. Out of 20 translations of

idiom 3, 18 (90%) were categorized as communicative translation and 2 (10%) were categorized as untranslated. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “down the line” into “kemudian” (later), which while does not preserve the source text’s original structure or theme, is very close to the idiom actual meaning. It is also an under-translated translation, it ignores the nuance of the imagery, which is pointing out a definite point in the future. Some students translated the idiom into ‘berturut-turut’ (in a row) and “di telepon” (on the phone/call), most likely in attempt to preserve the theme of the idiom. However, those two translations are not accurate at all and failed to convey the original idiom’s meaning.

There are some things that can be observed from the translations of idiom 4. Out of 20 translations 16 (80%) fall under semantic translation category, 2 (10%) are classified as communicative translation and 2 (10%) as literal translation. The majority of participants chose to translate the idiom “back on track” into “kembali ke jalur yang tepat” (back on the correct path/track), which is almost a literal translation of the idiom. However, the adding of word “correct” in the translation is actually a necessary move in order to fully convey the meaning to target language. Thus, the translation was categorized as semantic translation as it tried to preserve both meaning and structure of the source text. Thus, the translation retains both the structure and metaphorical imagery of the ST, while also adding additional information in order to fully convey the meaning.

For idiom 5, the categorization result is almost equally divided between the two equivalence type. Out of 20 translations, 11 (55%) were categorized as semantic translation, and 9 (45%) are as communicative translation. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “amid mounting calls” into “di tengah meningkatnya seruan” (amid increasing call). This translation only made little adjustment in meaning, where “mounting” was contextualized into “increasing” and “calls” was translated into its singular form. The structure of the source text is preserved in the translation, as it loosely follows the structure of ST, but the sense of urgency found in ST is slightly reduced due to "seruan" being less forceful than "calls" in this context.

The idiom 6 translations present a more diverse distribution. Out of 20 translations, 9 (45%) were categorized as semantic translation, 6 (30%) were categorized as communicative translation and 5 (25%) were categorized as literal translation. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “has blood on his hands” into “tangannya berlumuran darah” (his hands are smeared with blood). This translation made adjustment structurally but preserved its theme, which made it a semantic translation instead of literal which would be “memiliki darah di tangannya” or the more accurate meaning-wise communicative translation “bertanggung jawab” (being responsible). Preserves the metaphor and visual imagery of the ST by retaining the sense of accusatory and emotional intensity of ST, while also fitting naturally within TL linguistic and cultural norms.

The result of idiom 7 categorization is unique being where the participants exhibits a significant preference for literal translation. Out of 20 translations, 12 (60%) were categorized as literal translation 2 (10%) were categorized as semantic translation, and 6 (30%) were categorized as communicative translation. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “all sweetness and light” into “sangat manis dan ringan” (very sweet and light in weight). The translation was categorized as literal translation as it rendered the two adjectives directly without consideration of contextual meaning. The first half of the translation manages to partially convey the idea of being kind and pleasant, but the second half incorrectly refers “light” as weight instead of illumination/shine.

In contrast, Idiom 8 shows a unanimous preference for communicative translation.. All of the 20 translations fall under communicative translation category. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “getting on my nerves” into “membuat saya jengkel” (makes me feel annoyed) which clearly conveys the intended meaning of irritation in a way that is natural in TL, as the phrase is culturally appropriate and is commonly used. The metaphor of “nerves” is removed for clarity, making it a direct emotional expression rather than a figurative one. None of the participants were trying to preserve the original structure or theme of the source text, as they opted for phrase that were more straightforward in meaning.

The result of categorization of idiom 9 is more varied than the previous one. Out of 20 translations, 7 (35%) were categorized as semantic translation, 11 (55%) were categorized as communicative translation and 2 (10%) were categorized as literal translation. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “taking the law into their own hands” into “bertindak sendiri” (acting on him/her/themselves). This translation does not adapt the source text structure or theme but still faithful meaning-wise while also sounding natural in target language. A slightly undertranslated translation, it correctly conveys the idea of taking independent action, but does not fully capture the legal or vigilante aspect found in ST.

The other translation many participants chose was “main hakim sendiri” (someone who decides to act like judge him/herself) which is also a popular idiom in target language.

Lastly, in idiom 10, the participants show a strong inclination toward semantic translation. Out of 20 translations, 15 (75%) were categorized as semantic translation, 2 (10%) were categorized as communicative translation and 3 (15%) are categorized as untranslated. Most participants chose to translate the idiom “against the clock” into “melawan waktu” (fighting against time). This translation preserves the structure and theme of the source text. The translation of “the clock” into “waktu” (time) instead of “jam” (clock) made it a semantic translation instead of literal one. The translation preserves the figurative meaning of ST. It understandably conveys urgency and struggle against time, although it is actually not the most commonly used expression in TL for this situation. The communicative translation “secepat mungkin” is the closest in term of meaning. The other translations were missing the mark in term of meaning, thus are considered untranslated.

KESIMPULAN

This study was meant to know the types of translation equivalence used by the students the fifth semester of the English language education study program at Universitas Tanjungpura in translating idioms, as well as the accuracy and readability of their translations. The results of the research showed that from the 200 translations of idioms analyzed in this research, the students managed to successfully translated 195 idioms or 97.5%. The remaining 2.5% or 5 translations are considered untranslated/unsuccessful translations due to the meanings in TT being too inaccurate or do not match/align with the ST meanings. Out of the 97.5% successful translations, 173 translations or 86.5% are categorized as translation equivalence, whereas 22 translations or 11% were categorized as literal translation. Furthermore, out of the 86.5% translations categorized as equivalence, 74 translations or 37% were categorized as semantic equivalence, and 99 translations or 49.5% were categorized as communicative translation. Thus, from the result, it can be inferred that the students employed both semantic translation and communicative translations in their translations of idiom, with communicative translation being the type of equivalence translations used by the students the most. Furthermore, other than translation equivalence, the students also used literal translation to translate the idiom. In regard of the accuracy and readability of the translations, the results of the analysis to the translations done by the 20 participants shows that the average score for accuracy was 22.35 or 74.5%, which based on the categorization table was categorized as Good. As for the readability, the average score was 23.9 or 79.66% which was also categorized as Good. Thus, it can be concluded that the translations done by the students are good enough to be considered accurate and readable.

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