

THE FUNCTION OF TRANSLATION AS A TOOL FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE GLOBAL AGE

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Abstract

In an increasingly globalized society, translation plays a vital role in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers and facilitating effective cross-cultural communication. This article examines translation not only as a linguistic process but also as a form of intercultural mediation that enables the transfer of meaning across diverse cultural contexts. The study aims to explore how translation contributes to global understanding by analyzing major translation theories and practical challenges encountered in academic translation. A qualitative descriptive research methodology was employed to investigate translation as a means of intercultural communication within the context of globalization. This approach is particularly suitable for examining contextual meanings, cultural adaptation strategies, and translation techniques used in intercultural exchanges. Data were collected through document analysis of translated academic texts and supported by insights from professional translators. The findings highlight the importance of translation competence in achieving communicative goals, emphasizing the balance between linguistic equivalence and cultural adaptation. The study concludes that despite advancements in translation technology, human translators remain essential in contexts where cultural sensitivity, contextual understanding, and nuanced interpretation are required to produce accurate and meaningful translations.

Keywords: translation; intercultural communication; equivalence; translator competence; globalization

Abstrak

Dalam masyarakat global yang semakin terhubung, penerjemahan memegang peranan penting dalam mengatasi hambatan linguistik dan budaya serta memfasilitasi komunikasi lintas budaya yang efektif. Artikel ini mengkaji penerjemahan tidak hanya sebagai proses linguistik, tetapi juga sebagai bentuk mediasi antarbudaya yang memungkinkan transfer makna di antara konteks budaya yang beragam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana penerjemahan berkontribusi terhadap pemahaman global dengan menganalisis teori-teori penerjemahan utama serta tantangan praktis yang dihadapi dalam penerjemahan akademik. Metodologi penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif untuk mengkaji penerjemahan sebagai sarana komunikasi antarbudaya dalam konteks globalisasi. Pendekatan ini dinilai tepat untuk menganalisis makna kontekstual, strategi adaptasi budaya, serta teknik penerjemahan yang digunakan dalam pertukaran lintas budaya. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen terhadap teks akademik yang diterjemahkan dan didukung oleh wawancara dengan penerjemah profesional. Hasil penelitian menegaskan pentingnya kompetensi penerjemahan dalam mencapai tujuan komunikatif, khususnya dalam menyeimbangkan kesepadanan linguistik dan adaptasi budaya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun teknologi

penerjemahan terus berkembang, peran penerjemah manusia tetap sangat penting dalam konteks yang menuntut kepekaan budaya, pemahaman konteks, dan penafsiran makna yang mendalam.

Kata Kunci: *penerjemahan; komunikasi antarbudaya; kesetaraan; kompetensi penerjemah; globalisasi*

1. Introduction

Effective intercultural communication has become increasingly vital in the twenty-first century as globalization intensifies interactions among people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this context, translation plays a central role in bridging communicative gaps and facilitating mutual understanding. No longer viewed merely as a mechanical process of transferring words from one language to another, translation is now widely recognized as a form of intercultural negotiation that involves meaning-making, cultural interpretation, and communicative intent. Within the framework of globalization, translation has emerged as a key mechanism for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and cultural values across linguistic boundaries. It functions as a medium through which academic knowledge, social discourses, and ideological perspectives circulate globally. Scholars argue that translation is a complex activity shaped by cultural norms, power relations, and audience expectations, rather than a purely technical linguistic operation (Bonvillain, 2019). As societies become increasingly multilingual and multicultural, translators are expected not only to ensure linguistic accuracy but also to demonstrate intercultural sensitivity and promote meaningful cross-cultural understanding (Khan, 2025).

The significance of translation is particularly evident across various disciplines, including science, education, literature, journalism, religion, and diplomacy. In academic contexts, translation enables the international dissemination of research findings, theories, and scholarly debates, allowing knowledge produced in one linguistic community to be accessed and evaluated by others worldwide (Waisbord, 2016). Without translation, access to global scholarship would remain fragmented and limited by language barriers. Similarly, in literary and media contexts, translation fosters cultural dialogue by introducing narratives and perspectives that reflect diverse human experiences, thereby enriching global cultural discourse (Bassnett, 2018). From a theoretical perspective, contemporary translation studies increasingly integrate both linguistic and cultural dimensions. Influential frameworks such as Nida's concepts of dynamic and formal equivalence, Vermeer's Skopos Theory, and Venuti's discussions on translator visibility and the strategies of domestication and foreignization have shaped current understandings of translation practice (Hashemipour & Soyly, 2023). These theories emphasize that translation is a purposeful, audience-oriented activity that involves ideological positioning and cultural decision-making rather than neutral linguistic transfer (Al Awdi, 2025). Consequently, translators are positioned not only as language experts but also as cultural mediators who must continuously balance fidelity to the source text with the communicative needs and cultural expectations of the target audience (Asadova, 2024).

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on academic texts translated from English into Indonesian to examine how translation functions as a tool of intercultural communication. Translation choices related to terminology, sentence structure, and cultural references are shaped by both linguistic constraints and broader sociocultural factors (Bassnett, 2018; Khudaverdiyeva, 2024). By analyzing authentic translated academic texts and incorporating insights from experienced translators, this research seeks to uncover the strategies, challenges, and intercultural dynamics involved in academic translation.

The urgency of this research is further heightened by the rapid development of machine translation and artificial intelligence technologies. While such tools offer efficiency and accessibility, they often lack the cultural awareness, contextual sensitivity, and ethical judgment required for high-quality academic translation. Therefore, this study underscores the continued importance of human

translators in ensuring accurate, culturally appropriate, and meaningful intercultural communication in academic settings (Mohamed et al., 2024).

2. Method

This study aims to investigate the role of translation as a medium of intercultural communication within the context of globalization. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed, as this approach is particularly effective for examining contextual meanings, translation practices, and intercultural exchanges. Qualitative description allows for an in-depth exploration of how translation functions across different cultural settings and communicative purposes.

The data used in this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of analyses of translated texts drawn from various domains, including academic, religious, and popular texts. Secondary data included theoretical and scholarly literature related to intercultural communication, translation studies, and translation techniques. These materials were collected from books, peer-reviewed journals, and relevant previous studies.

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research objectives. Document analysis was conducted by examining source texts and their corresponding target texts to identify translation strategies, cultural adaptations, and shifts in meaning. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with three to five professional translators or scholars in translation studies to gain insights into real-world translation practices and cultural considerations. Furthermore, a literature review was undertaken to gather and synthesize relevant theories and models concerning translation and intercultural communication.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis methods. This analytical process enabled the identification of recurring patterns related to cultural adaptation strategies, translation techniques, and challenges encountered by translators. The findings were interpreted in relation to established translation theories, including Dynamic Equivalence (Nida), Skopos Theory (Vermeer), and the concepts of overt and covert translation (House). The analysis involved coding data based on emerging themes, classifying translation techniques according to theoretical frameworks, and interpreting the results by comparing empirical findings with theoretical expectations (Foster-Johnson & Kromrey, 2018; Kaindl, 2019; Miyaoka et al., 2023).

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed peer review and source triangulation. Peer review involved consulting translation experts to evaluate the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing findings across different types of texts and scholarly literature, thereby enhancing the credibility of the research results (Renz et al., 2018).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

This section integrates the findings from the document analysis of five academic texts translated from English into Indonesian and interviews with three professional academic translators with relevant translation theories. The discussion demonstrates how translators' practical decisions reflect established theoretical principles in translation studies, particularly in relation to equivalence, purpose, and cultural mediation.

a. Dynamic Equivalence and Reader-Oriented Translation

The analysis revealed a strong preference among translators for dynamic equivalence, as proposed by Nida. Rather than maintaining strict formal correspondence with the source text, translators prioritized readability and audience comprehension. Complex syntactic structures in English were frequently simplified, and culturally accessible terminology was selected to ensure that the translated texts conveyed equivalent meaning and impact for Indonesian academic readers. This practice aligns with Nida's emphasis on producing a natural and meaningful response in the target audience, indicating that effective academic translation prioritizes communicative function over literal accuracy (Laribi, 2024; Nida, 1964).

b. Skopos-Oriented Cultural Adaptation

The use of cultural adaptation strategies, particularly through explanatory footnotes, reflects the application of Skopos Theory. According to Vermeer, translation strategies should be determined by the purpose of the target text. In this study, the primary goal was to ensure conceptual clarity for Indonesian academic readers. For instance, the term "*Liberal Arts*" was adapted into "*Perspektif Dosen dalam Pendidikan*" with an explanatory note rather than being translated literally. This decision illustrates how translators adjusted content to meet the communicative purpose of the translation, reinforcing the role of translation as purposeful action within a specific sociocultural context (Diki-Kidiri, 2022; Vermeer, 1989).

c. Overt and Covert Translation in Structural Shifts

Shifts in sentence structure, particularly the transformation of passive constructions into active forms, demonstrate the translators' inclination toward covert translation, as conceptualized by House. Indonesian academic writing tends to favor active constructions for clarity and directness, prompting translators to modify the grammatical structure while preserving the original meaning. These adaptations contributed to the naturalness and acceptability of the target text, suggesting that translators aimed to produce texts that function independently within the target culture rather than foregrounding their translated status (Harahap et al., 2025; House, 2015).

d. Terminological Consistency and Theoretical Tensions

Despite the application of established translation strategies, maintaining terminological consistency remained a persistent challenge. This difficulty was particularly evident in newly emerging academic fields where standardized Indonesian equivalents are not yet available. In such cases, translators often retained English terminology, typically italicized, to prevent semantic ambiguity. This practice reflects a tension between dynamic equivalence and formal accuracy, highlighting the limits of domestication when precision is critical. From a theoretical perspective, this finding suggests that academic translation often requires a hybrid approach that balances communicative effectiveness with terminological fidelity (Rakhmawati, 2024).

e. Machine Translation as a Support Tool

The findings also revealed that machine translation tools were commonly used during the initial stages of the translation process. However, translators emphasized that these tools functioned primarily as supportive resources rather than authoritative solutions. Extensive post-editing was necessary to refine stylistic elements, ensure syntactic accuracy, and address cultural nuances. This reliance on human intervention underscores the continued relevance of translation theory and professional expertise, particularly in academic contexts where accuracy, tone, and cultural sensitivity are essential (Vishwakarma, 2023).

Overall, the integrated findings demonstrate that academic translation functions as a complex intercultural practice shaped by theoretical principles, linguistic constraints, and communicative goals. The translators' reliance on dynamic equivalence, purpose-driven strategies, and covert translation approaches highlights the relevance of Nida's, Vermeer's, and House's theories in contemporary translation practice. At the same time, challenges related to terminology and machine translation limitations emphasize the need for critical judgment and theoretical awareness in academic translation.

Table 1 Summary of Finding from Document and Interview Analisis

No.	Aspect Observed	Findings	Example / Notes
1	Translation Strategy	Dominant use of <i>dynamic equivalence</i> to ensure readability and audience understanding.	"Liberal arts" → <i>Perspektif Dosen dalam pendidikan</i>
2	Cultural Adaptation	Addition of footnotes or paraphrasing for culture-specific terms.	"Thailan's social contexts" explained as <i>Adaptasi budaya diaspora Indonesia</i> .
3	Sentence Structure Adjustments	Passive voice in English frequently rendered as active voice in Indonesian.	"It is believed that..." → <i>Banyak ahli meyakini bahwa...</i>
4	Terminology Consistency	Inconsistencies in translating new/technical terms; some terms left in English.	"Hybrid learning" sometimes translated, sometimes italicized as <i>hybrid learning</i>
5	Use of Machine Translation (MT) Tools	MT used only for early drafts; extensive post-editing needed for academic tone & cultural fit.	"This finding highlights..." was poorly translated without adjustment in tone.

Table 2 *Inter view Respondent Profile*

Code Name	Role	Experience	Specialization
R1	Professional Translator	8 years	Academic & scientific texts
R2	University Lecturer	12 years	Translation studies & linguistics
R3	Freelance Translator	5 years	Education and humanities

Key Insights from Respondents:

- **R1:** “Translating academic texts requires understanding both the subject and the cultural background of the readers. Literal translation often leads to confusion.”
- **R2:** “Some concepts in English academia don’t have direct equivalents in Bahasa Indonesia. We must find the nearest term or explain it.”
- **R3:** “I use machine translation only to speed up the first draft. But 60–70% of the work is still editing for clarity, flow, and tone.”

3.2 Discussion

The result of this study confirms that translation in academic contexts functions not merely as a linguistic activity but as a form of intercultural mediation. Translators do not simply transfer meaning between languages; rather, they actively interpret, adapt, and negotiate meaning to ensure that academic knowledge is accessible and meaningful to readers from different cultural and intellectual backgrounds. The frequent use of dynamic equivalence observed in this study demonstrates translators’ awareness of the cognitive and cultural frameworks of the target audience. By prioritizing readability and conceptual clarity over formal linguistic correspondence, translators aim to evoke a response in the target readers that is functionally equivalent to that of the source audience. This practice strongly supports Nida’s principle that successful translation should generate a similar communicative effect across cultures, reinforcing translation as a reader-oriented and meaning-driven process (Fengling, 2017).

Furthermore, the translators’ role as cultural mediators is clearly reflected in the application of cultural adaptation strategies, such as paraphrasing culturally bound expressions and providing explanatory footnotes. These techniques are particularly crucial when translating institutional, ideological, or abstract concepts that lack direct equivalents in the target culture. Rather than preserving foreign elements in a way that may hinder comprehension, translators consciously intervene to bridge cultural gaps and facilitate understanding. This mediating role aligns with the view of translation as a negotiated act between cultures, where meaning is reconstructed rather than merely reproduced. The strategic modification of passive constructions into active forms further illustrates this point; as such decisions are guided not only by linguistic differences but also by the communicative norms and expectations of the target academic community. These findings resonate strongly with Skopos Theory, which emphasizes that translation strategies are shaped by the intended function and purpose of the target text within its sociocultural context (Suo, 2015).

At the same time, the study highlights practical challenges that continue to affect academic translation, particularly the issue of terminological consistency. In multidisciplinary and rapidly evolving fields, the absence of standardized translation equivalents often forces translators to make individual terminological choices. While these decisions may be justified in specific contexts, a lack

of coordination across publications can lead to inconsistency, ambiguity, and reduced academic coherence. This problem underscores the urgent need for the development of standardized academic translation glossaries and collaborative terminological databases to support consistency and clarity in scholarly communication (Diki-Kidiri, 2022).

In addition, the findings indicate that although machine translation tools can significantly improve efficiency during the initial stages of translation, they remain insufficient for producing high-quality academic texts. Machine translation systems generally lack sensitivity to academic tone, disciplinary conventions, and contextual nuance, which are essential in scholarly writing. As a result, extensive human intervention is required to revise, refine, and culturally adapt machine-generated drafts. This reinforces the notion that academic translation is a purpose-driven and context-sensitive practice that demands a high level of professional competence. As Venuti (2017) argues, translators must possess not only linguistic expertise but also cultural literacy, subject-matter knowledge, and a strong sense of ethical responsibility. Consequently, academic translation extends far beyond mechanical language transfer, positioning the translator as an active agent in the production and circulation of knowledge across cultures.

4. Conclusion

Translation is a crucial medium for cross-cultural communication in an increasingly interconnected world. It functions not only as a linguistic process but also as an act of intercultural mediation that enables the effective transfer of knowledge across cultural and academic boundaries. As global interaction expands, the role of human translators becomes increasingly important due to their ability to interpret cultural nuances, contextual meanings, and disciplinary conventions.

While technological tools such as machine translation can support efficiency and initial drafting, they remain limited in addressing the complexities of tone, register, and cultural context required in academic translation. Therefore, human expertise and judgment are essential to ensure translations are accurate, culturally appropriate, and meaningful. Overall, effective translation depends on the translator's linguistic competence, cultural literacy, and ethical responsibility, highlighting the continued relevance of professional translators in facilitating genuine cross-cultural understanding.

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