

A Case Study on a Translation of a Defective Source Text

Gullit Tornado Taufan¹, Titik Ismailia², Rizqi Febrian Pramudita³, Degita Danur
Suharsono³

*gullittaufan@polije.ac.id¹, titik@polije.ac.id², rizqi.febrian@polije.ac.id³,
danur@polije.ac.id⁴*

*Affiliation: Language, Communication, and Tourism Department
Politeknik Negeri Jember^{1,2,3,4}*

Abstract

Translating defective or flawed source texts can be very challenging for translators. Defective texts are often characterized by spelling and grammatical errors, inappropriate uses of punctuations, unclear messages and expressions, incomplete and ambiguous information, etc. In translation such texts require careful analysis that may lead to corrections and revisions of the source texts before the translation process occurs. This case study highlights how a translator handled defective source texts, in this case a tourism booklet. The aim of the study was to investigate the errors found in the booklet, how the translator dealt with the challenges, and how the defective text influenced the whole process of the translation. The findings show that the errors found were structural and substantial ones, the translator needed to undergo several strategies to handle solve the problems, and the defective source text influenced the overall process of the translation especially in the initial step.

Keywords: Translation, Defective Source Text, Translation Process

Introduction

For centuries, translation activities have connect people from different part of the globe to share ideas, information, and exchange knowledge. Translation makes it possible for people with different language and cultural backgrounds to get informed about various discoveries, historical events, as well as cultural and ideological values. For sure, translation is not merely about changing words, it is also related to carrying meanings and spirits of one culture to another, enabling people to understand and collaborate. In the context of English and science, for instance, Montgomery (2009) states that translation plays a significant role in scientific knowledge, enabling non-native English speakers—who form a significant part of the global scientific community—to engage in diverse forms of knowledge transfer, thus reflecting the social and human dimension of their work.

The development of technology, especially IT, has influenced translation activities, allowing them to be faster, more accurate, and accessible. Advanced tools such as machine translation engines and computer-assisted translation (CAT) software have significantly helped people translate any volume of texts with ease and better efficiency. For example, popular platforms like Google Translate and DeepL now allow instant translations. Yue et al. (2019) explains that, in the era of big data, the rapid development of tools has influenced both translation industry and education significantly. Undoubtedly, as technology continues to evolve, translation activities are becoming an integral part of our interconnected world, facilitating communication, education, and cultural exchange like never before.

Even though translation technology has advanced greatly, the human touch is still essential for creating translations that are accurate and meaningful. Tools like neural machine translation (NMT) can process large amounts of text quickly, but they often miss the context, tone, and cultural details of a language. Language is not just about lines words, it includes emotions, culture, and specific situations. When facing those issues, human translators have the knowledge needed to understand both the source and target languages, which machines may never achieve (Braha, 2020). Even though machine translation has developed significantly, it still deals with difficulties in comprehending context and lacks the cultural awareness required for good translations. This makes human translators irreplaceable when it comes to capturing the true meaning and spirit of the original text.

In certain contexts, human translation is seen to be better than machine translation especially when it comes to texts with certain issues like idioms, figurative languages, cultural matters, etc. that machines may be difficult to understand. Human translators are able to understand textual, syntactic, semantic, and social aspects of a language, enabling them to analyze and translate messages that are conveyed by the source texts accurately. In contrast, machine translation, even though it may be faster and more efficient, tends to miss the aspects mentioned previously so that the results of the translation process may not be deep enough and even irrelevant to certain requirements such as the cultural ones. This is in line with what Sadia and Aslam (2014) explain that machine translation often lacks the reliability and dependability necessary for nuanced translation tasks, making human translation the preferred choice for situations where precision and authenticity are essential.

Nevertheless, instead of viewing machine translation as direct competitor of human, it is more acceptable today to believe that both can complement each other simultaneously. Ehrensberger-dow and Massey (2015) state that translation is a complex cognitive and organizational activity where the integration of language technologies plays a crucial role. By combining the strengths of machines, including speed and efficiency, with the nuanced understanding and cultural sensitivity of humans, translation workflows can be optimized. Professional translators, by actively engaging with and taking ownership of these tools, can enhance the overall quality and reliability of translation processes. This collaboration not only bridges the gaps in machine capabilities but also underscores the evolving nature of translation as a dynamic partnership between humans and technology.

One area that may be difficult for machine translation to deal with is the translation of defective texts. Defective texts are often characterized by spelling and grammatical errors, inappropriate uses of punctuations, unclear messages and expressions, incomplete and ambiguous information, etc. Such texts may not provide understandable patterns and rules for machines along with their inconsistencies and ambiguities. In this case, human translator is much needed due to the fact that human may have the abilities to understand the problematic issues by employing critical thinking and logical reasoning. With the cognitive flexibility human translator has, the purpose of producing expected results can be achieved. Typically, human touch is essential in the initial stage of the translation process, related analysis of meaning (Hatim & Munday, 2004), in which machine translator may struggle to do so.

Traditionally, translation process consists of three main steps. They are source text analysis, transfer from source text to target, and production of the completed translation results. However, in more complex view, as propose by Carl et al. (2020), translation process may involve dynamic and non-linier process that requires certain

decisions. In this case, human involvement is undoubtedly critical especially in the analysis stage where analysis of meanings, contexts, and structures should be conducted. As expected, defective source texts may lead to unexpected efforts for any translators in this stage.

In this context, the analysis of the source text becomes significant when dealing with defective or flawed texts, such as those with grammatical errors, unclear references, or ambiguities. This is where the human translator's role becomes crucial. As stated previously, human translators have the cognitive flexibility to face the problematic source texts, using their knowledge of both languages and cultures to infer meaning, correct errors, and provide a relevant interpretation. Due to the fact that defective source texts may lead to longer analysis with greater efforts, the translators are required to make adjustments and corrections of the source text prior to the transfer and following stages. This is because the analysis stage is not just about understanding the texts as they are. This involves a deeper cognitive process, especially when the text contains errors or ambiguities, making the human touch critical in ensuring a meaningful and accurate translation.

This study examines how a translator, as the subject of this study, approached the challenge of translating a defective source text as part of a translation project. The translator encountered a variety of issues in the source text, including grammatical errors, unclear expressions, and ambiguous references that posed significant problematic issues to the translation process. By analyzing these challenges, the study explores the strategies the translator employed to address the flaws in the text. The translator's ability to navigate these difficulties highlights the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in translation, particularly when dealing with defective texts.

Research Method

This is a case study that examines how a translator dealt with a defective source text in her translation project. The translator was a student who had to conduct a translation project for academic purpose. The project is an Indonesian-to-English translation of a tourism booklet chosen by the translator. The tourism booklet was poorly structured and underdeveloped and contained some quality issues. As defined by Ary et al. (2010), a case study is an in-depth, detailed examination of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context. By selecting this particular booklet for translation, the translator's experience provides valuable insights into how one individual navigated the complexities and challenges posed by a flawed source text. This case study allows for a comprehensive investigation into the strategies employed by the translator, offering a deeper understanding of the issues encountered during the translation process and contributing to the broader field of translation studies.

The tourism booklet selected for translation was published by a local government institution responsible for promoting tourism in the region. Despite its official nature, the booklet contained several problematic issues, as mentioned previously, that led to poor text quality. These issues included grammatical errors, inappropriate word choices, irrelevant information, and various ambiguities throughout the text. Such flaws not only affected the clarity and accuracy of the content but also made it challenging for the reader to fully grasp the intended message. These problems in the source text presented significant obstacles for the translator, who had to navigate and resolve these issues in the process of translating the booklet from Indonesian to English.

The aims of this study are: 1) to investigate the specific errors identified by the translator in the source text, including grammatical inaccuracies, poor word choices,

irrelevant information, and ambiguities, 2) to examine the strategies and solutions employed by the translator to address these issues, including her application of the translation steps proposed by Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016), and 3) to reveal how these problems influenced the overall translation process, particularly in terms of the time, effort, and adjustments required at each stage. By addressing these objectives, the study provides a deeper understanding of the challenges posed by defective source texts and the critical role of human judgment in resolving them effectively.

To collect the data, this study utilized a combination of methods, including document analysis, interviews, and consultation logs. The document analysis involved a detailed examination of both the source text and the translator's translated version of the tourism booklet. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the translator to gain deeper insights into her translation process, strategies, and the challenges she encountered. Consultation logs, which is similar to what Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain about the field note, which documented the ongoing supervisor-student interactions during the translation process, were also used to capture the advice and guidance provided throughout the project. This combination of methods provided a comprehensive understanding of how the translator addressed the issues in the source text and developed a more structured translation.

Results and Discussion

The translator employed the translation process proposed by Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016) throughout her project. She began with the analysis stage, where she carefully analyzed the source text to understand its meaning, context, and any problematic aspects. Following this, during the transfer stage, the translator translated the content into English, focusing on accurately conveying the original meaning. In the restructure stage, she adjusted the translated text to ensure it was fluent and appropriate for the target audience. Finally, in the evaluation and revision stage, the translator refined her translation by checking for accuracy, coherence, and clarity, ensuring the final version was well-constructed and effective. This structured approach guided her in overcoming the challenges posed by the defective source text.

Errors Found in the Source Text

In analyzing the source text, two primary types of errors were identified: structural and substantial errors. Structural errors refer to issues related to the organization and coherence of the text, including problems with sentence construction, paragraphing, and logical flow. These errors can hinder the clarity of the message and make the text harder to follow. On the other hand, substantial errors relate to the content and meaning of the text, such as inaccuracies, inconsistencies, or ambiguities in the information provided.

The structural errors in the source text that the translator identified were varied and included issues with incomplete sentence structures, repetitive phrasing, nonstandard words and slang, and problems with capitalization and punctuation. Some sentences lacked essential components, such as a subject, making them grammatically incomplete and difficult to understand. There were also issues of redundancy, where the same idea was repeated unnecessarily, leading to a lack of conciseness and clarity. Additionally, the use of nonstandard words and slang posed challenges for the translator in finding

appropriate equivalents in the target language, while incorrect capitalization and punctuation disrupted the text's formal structure. Errors in the use of prepositions and conjunctions further contributed to the awkwardness of the sentence flow. These structural issues required the translator to carefully analyze and revise the text to ensure proper grammar and coherence in the translation. A table of examples illustrating these errors can be found below.

Table 1. Examples of Structural Errors

No.	Aspects	Original Text	Revision
1.	Incomplete sentence structure (no subject)	<i>Merupakan sebuah kawasan pantai pasir putih yang indah berpadu...</i>	<i>Pantai Tanjung Papuma merupakan sebuah kawasan pantai pasir putih yang indah berpadu ...</i>
2.	Repetitive sentences	<i>Yang tidak boleh dilewatkan adalah Festival Egrang setiap bulan Desember... Yang tidak boleh dilewatkan adalah Festival Egrang setiap bulan September...</i>	<i>Yang tidak boleh dilewatkan adalah Festival Egrang yang diselenggarakan setiap bulan September...</i>
3.	Nonstandard words and slang (according to Indonesian dictionary/ KBBI)	<i>... Cafe yg unik bisa <u>nongky nongky</u> d pinggir <u>kali</u></i>	<i>Kafe unik yang cocok dijadikan tempat bersantai menikmati pemandangan sungai</i>
4.	Capitalization	<i>Sementara dibidang <u>Kesenian dan Kerajinan</u> terdapat...</i>	<i>Sementara di bidang <u>kesenian dan kerajinan</u> terdapat...</i>
5.	Punctuation	<i>Menurut cerita rakyat pada jaman <u>dahulu</u> kala ada <u>se-ekor</u> ular...</i>	<i>Menurut cerita rakyat pada zaman <u>dahulu</u>, ada <u>seekor</u> ular...</i>
6.	Preposition	<i>Agrowisata Gading Asri terletak kawasan selatan kota Jember</i>	<i>Agrowisata Gading Asri terletak <u>di</u> kawasan selatan Kota Jember</i>
7.	Conjunction	<i>...semangat pluralitas, kebersamaan, kegotongroyongan, pelestarian lingkungan...</i>	<i>...semangat pluralitas, kebersamaan, kegotongroyongan, <u>dan</u> pelestarian lingkungan...</i>

The table above, taken from the translator's original report, highlights the structural errors found in the source text. In order to solve the problems, the translator needed to carefully analyze and revise the source text. This process involved identifying incomplete sentence structures, such as sentences without a subject, as well as repetitive sentences that made the text unclear. Additionally, the translator had to correct nonstandard words and slang, adjust capitalization and punctuation, and revise the use of prepositions and conjunctions to ensure grammatical accuracy and clarity. These revisions were essential to creating a more coherent and well-constructed translation.

After addressing the structural errors in the source text, the translator shifted focus to the content of the tourism booklet. Several pieces of incomplete information were identified, which required updating for relevant accuracy. The booklet's elements, including photographs, descriptions, and addresses of tourist destinations, were analyzed. The descriptions were expected to include details such as available facilities and activities for visitors; however, several destinations lacked these essential pieces of information.

The translator considered the issues as the sections that contained incomplete information. In addition to missing details, incorrect information was found in the descriptions of certain tourist destinations. Irrelevant content, particularly between the title and description, was also noted. Furthermore, the translator identified instances of informal writing style, which did not suit the formal tone expected in a tourism brochure. As a result, the translator revised the content to ensure that the information was complete, accurate, and presented in a manner that would provide a clearer and more informative experience for readers. A table of examples illustrating these content revisions is provided below.

Table 2. Examples of Substantial Errors

No.	Aspects	Original Text	Revision
1	Incorrect information	<i>PUNCAK SJ 88 (Belum ada tarif tiket masuk untuk menikmati pemandangan yang indah di tempat ini, hanya akan dikenakan. tarif parkir Rp 3.000.)</i>	<i>Tarif tiket masuk untuk menikmati pemandangan yang indah di tempat ini sebesar Rp5.000, ditambah tarif parkir Rp5.000 per sepeda motor dan Rp10000 untuk pengguna mobil.</i>
2	Incomplete information	<i>Pemandian Kimo</i> (element missing: address)	<i>Pemandian Kimo berlokasi di dalam kota, tepatnya di Jl. Pangeran Limboro, Sumber Salak, Kecamatan Summersari.</i>
3	Irrelevant content	1. The content of <i>Agrowisata Cerutu</i> explained the company that built the tourist spot instead of describing the tourist spot itself.	1. <i>Agrowisata Cerutu berlokasi di Jl. Brawijaya No.3 Krajan, Desa Jubung, Kecamatan Sukorambi, berjarak sekitar 15 menit dari pusat Kota Jember. Untuk menemukan lokasi ini di Google Maps, ketik kata kunci "BIN CIGAR". Tak seperti tempat wisata lain, pengunjung harus membuat reservasi kunjungan terlebih dahulu sebelum mengunjungi wisata ini. Aktivitas yang dapat dilakukan pengunjung yaitu mengunjungi perkebunan tembakau dengan dipandu oleh tour guide, berkeliling pabrik untuk melihat proses pembuatan cerutu, serta mengunjungi toko souvenir untuk membeli oleh-oleh.</i>
4	Informal writing style	<i>Glantangan Golf: "Kami melaju ke arah selatan sekitar Mobil kami melaju sekitar 20 kilometer dari pusat kota, melewati pedesaan dan sebuah perkebunan karet. Matahari tidak terasa menyengat, sinarnya menerabas di antara dedaunan. Kami memasuki wilayah perkebunan PT. Perkebunan Nusantara XII (persero)."</i>	<i>Glantangan golf berada di wilayah perkebunan milik PT. Perkebunan Nusantara XII. Padang golf ini terletak di Desa Pondokrejo, Kecamatan Tempurejo, sekitar 20 km dari pusat Kota Jember.</i>

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that the source text presented various errors, both structural and content-related, that required significant attention before the translation process could proceed. The translator needed extra time to carefully analyze and revise the text to ensure that it was accurate, complete, and coherent. The incomplete information, incorrect content, and grammatical errors obviously provided challenges in the translation process. As a result, the translator was unable to immediately move on to the next steps until the necessary corrections were made. This aligns with the view of Jabak (2022), who suggests that it is the ethical and professional responsibility of translators to correct any grammatical mistakes in the source text they are working on before proceeding with the translation. In line with that, Molnár (2012) states that a translator may improve the original text with certain considerations. Thus, the translator's revisions were not only essential for the accuracy of the translation but also reflected her professional responsibility in delivering a faithful and reliable translation.

Strategies and Solutions Employed to Solve the Problems

To solve the problems in the source text, the translator employed several strategies to ensure a more accurate and complete translation. First, she carefully analyzed the source text, identifying and understanding the errors in both structure and content. To resolve these issues, she communicated with several parties including the representative of the local government department who was responsible for the booklet, seeking clarification and additional details. Additionally, she contacted external informants, including a staff member from a tourist destination mentioned in the booklet, to verify the accuracy of the information. The translator also searched for information on the internet to gather additional information that would help fill in the gaps in the descriptions. Finally, she engaged in discussions with her lecturers to get feedback and guidance on how to improve the content. The combination of the strategies enabled the translator to solve the problematic issues found in the source text and produce a more reliable and coherent translation.

In analyzing the source text, the translator spent significant time and efforts to deal with non-standard words and grammatical issues. One of the first steps was checking the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), the authoritative dictionary of the Indonesian language, to correct non-standard words and ensure that the language used in the source text met formal standards. This helped eliminate slang or colloquial expressions that might have been inappropriate for the booklet regardless of its nature as a promotional catalogue of tourism. In addition, the translator did consultation with lecturers to discuss and resolve the issues found, including grammatical issues, to ensure that the sentences in the source text were structurally appropriate and understandable. These efforts were considered essential by the translator, especially for refining the text, before moving on to the translation phase. This was to make sure that the source text was substantially accurate and linguistically appropriate for translation into English.

Regarding the content of the booklet, the translator decided to take proactive steps by contacting several parties in order to ensure that the information was accurate and

complete. One of the key contacts was a staff member from a relevant government office. As the translator explained,

"I confirmed this problem to a staff of the department. The staff admitted that the tourism booklet was not perfect and contained many errors. Therefore, the staff gave full permission to me to adjust and revise it."

From the external informant, she also reached out a contact person of a destination. It was related to the information regarding entrance fee. In this case, the translator said,

"The writer then asked for confirmation from the contact person at the destination regarding this entrance fee. The contact person stated that there was an update information regarding this entrance fee for the visitors."

Another effort made by the translator was searching from the internet for further information related to the content of the booklet. One of which was by accessing a media information site providing complete information of various tourism destinations in Indonesia.

After completing the necessary corrections and revisions during the analysis stage, the translator was prepared to move on to the next steps in the translation process. As discussed earlier, this involved transferring the revised source text into the target language, ensuring that the meaning and message were faithfully conveyed. Following the transfer, the translator would proceed with the restructuring stage, where the translated text would be adapted to fit the linguistic and cultural norms of the target language, maintaining clarity and fluency. Finally, the evaluation and revision steps would follow to ensure that the translation was not only accurate but also coherent and appropriately adapted for the target audience.

How the Translation of Defective Source Text Influence the Overall Process

The translation of the defective tourism booklet had a significant impact on the overall translation process, especially during the analysis stage. The translator needed to spend extra time to identify and correct errors in the booklet, such as structural issues, non-standard words, and incomplete or incorrect information. This careful analysis was essential to ensure that the text was accurate and clear before moving on to the next steps in the translation. Because of this, the translator could not proceed with the transfer stage until the necessary revisions were made. The problems in the tourism booklet required a detailed examination, which affected the timing and flow of the entire translation process. This emphasizes the importance of addressing errors in the source text early on, as failing to do so can delay the process and lead to mistakes in the final translation.

In the next stages, including transfer, restructure, and evaluation and revision, the translator did not work with the original or defective source text. Instead, the text she translated was the revised version that the translator had corrected and refined. This revised text served as the basis for the transfer of meaning into the target language. During

the restructuring phase, the translator re-organized the content to ensure clarity and coherence in the translation, adapting it to the conventions of the target language. Finally, in the evaluation and revision stages, the translator reviewed the translated text for accuracy, fluency, and cultural relevance, ensuring that it conveyed the intended meaning while maintaining the messages being conveyed of the original content. By working with the revised version of the source text, the translator could ensure that the final translation was both accurate and well-structured. The whole process addressed by the translator is likely related to what Kubánek (2012) explains,

“... that ST quality is indeed an important concern in the translation process. Even though they are analysed at the initial stage by TAs, technical issues and lower linguistic level related defects in STs are less likely to negatively affect the quality of target texts (TTs).”

However, it is important to note that the translator was not specifically trained to deal with defective source texts, such as the tourism booklet in this case. While the translator demonstrated a great ability to identify and correct errors, the lack of formal training in addressing issues like incomplete or inaccurate content posed challenges. This reflects a broader issue in translation education, as many trainees, including the translator in this study, may not be adequately prepared for the complexities of working with defective source texts. For instance, Ruiz-Cortés (2024) highlights the challenges legal translators face when dealing with defective source texts in their professional practice, where they are expected to produce effective translations despite these quality issues. These insights could be valuable in enhancing training programs for translators, including students who are interesting in learning translation, working with defective texts, as it emphasizes the need for systematic methods to handle such situations and produce more accurate translations.

As a result, the final translated version of the booklet, the English version, was quite different from the original source text in terms of its structure and several contents. This was due to the extensive revisions made during the analysis stage, where the translator corrected structural and content-related errors, added missing information, and ensured grammatical accuracy. Consequently, the translation was based on the revised and more coherent version of the source text rather than the original one which was defective. While the final translation accurately conveyed the intended message, it differed significantly from the initial source, reflecting the necessity of addressing the errors before proceeding with the translation process.

In conclusion, translating the defective booklet significantly influenced the entire translation process, including the final result of the project. The issues in the original text, such as grammatical errors, incomplete information, and structural inconsistencies, required thorough analysis and revision before the translation could proceed. As a result, the translator worked on a revised version of the source text, which obviously led to a translation that was quite different from the original. The revisions made during the analysis stage ensured the translated booklet was accurate, complete, and coherent, but

the process highlighted how addressing defects in the source text is essential for producing a high-quality translation.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the considerable influence that defective source texts can have on the translation process. The translator's work with the tourism booklet illustrates the challenges faced when dealing with a source text that is structurally flawed and content-deficient. The translator had to invest significant time and effort in correcting the errors before moving on to the translation stages. The process involved not only grammatical and structural revisions but also substantial content adjustments to ensure the text conveyed complete and accurate information. The revised version of the source text became the foundation for the subsequent stages of translation, including the transfer of meaning, restructuring of content, and final revision to ensure clarity and coherence in the target language.

However, the study also highlights a gap in the translator's training, particularly in dealing with defective source texts. Although the translator was able to apply necessary revisions, the lack of formal preparation in handling problematic texts made the process more challenging. This reveals the importance of incorporating specific training on managing imperfect or defective source texts within translation programs. Such training could provide translators with the necessary tools and strategies to approach these types of texts more effectively, ensuring they can deliver translations that are both accurate and culturally relevant. Ultimately, the study underscores the crucial role of human translators in overcoming the challenges posed by defective texts, ensuring that the final translation maintains the integrity of the original message.

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