



Grammatical equivalence of the translation of the novel “*Laskar Pelangi*” by  
Andrea Hirata into English through *Google Translate*

Magdad Hatim <sup>a 1</sup> , Zuriyati <sup>b</sup> , Aceng Rahmat <sup>c</sup> , Ahdi Hassan <sup>d</sup> ,  
Rusnadi Ali Kasan <sup>e</sup> 

<sup>a,b,c</sup>Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>d</sup>Researcher, Global Institute for Research Education & Scholarship based in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>e</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari, Banjarmasin, Indonesia.

**APA Citation:**

Hatim, M., Zuriyati., Rahmat, A., Hassan, A., Kasan, R.A. (2021). Grammatical equivalence of the translation of the novel “*Laskar Pelangi*” by Andrea Hirata into English through Google Translate. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 2057-2064. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.148

Submission Date:18/06/2021

Acceptance Date:02/09/2021

**Abstract**

Translation is important in understanding foreign cultures, including the ones exposed in novels. This study aims at investigating the grammatical equivalence of the translation of an Indonesian novel “*Laskar Pelangi*” by Andrea Hirata into English through Google Translate, from which the data collected. The method was qualitative with content analysis that covered five grammatical categories of number, gender, person, tense and aspect, and voice. The findings indicated the following points; Since Indonesian language has no category of number, most of nouns are translated as singular nouns in English. The third singular persons in Indonesian language, ‘*dia*’ and ‘*-nya*’ show no sex, the translation depends on the context, otherwise it is translated as a male person. Indonesian words “*kami*” and “*kita*” are translated with “*we/us*”, and the translation indicates no dimensions of familiarity and formality for the first and second singular persons “*saya, aku*” translated by the word “*I/me*”, and “*kau, kamu, anda*” by “*you*.” Indonesian language has no tense and aspect, where the verbs do not conjugate to express temporal or aspectual distinctions. It has the equivalence when the text source is written with time. When the source text is passive, the English verbs are written in a passive voice. The translation distortion is related to semantics and grammar. As the conclusion, the grammatical equivalence of the translation of the novel is low.

**Keywords:** grammatical equivalence; categories; distortion; translation; English

**1. Introduction**

Public interest in reading literary works, such as poetry, short stories, and novels is quite high because reading literature can help readers accept different perspectives. Reading literary results makes readers feel what it feels like to be slandered, loved, punished, mocked, etc. which allows readers to sharpen their social sensitivity and empathic values. One of the literary works that many people enjoy is reading novels. Regarding novels, Anwar (2017:37-52) states that novels are creative

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [magdad\\_7317140339@mhs.unj.ac.id](mailto:magdad_7317140339@mhs.unj.ac.id)

products that have various contents. For a novelist, a novel is a means of aesthetic expression, which expresses thoughts, idealism, and life experiences that he tries to preserve as a historical record.

It is an indisputable fact that at this time novel as one of various literary works has been translated from one language to another. In the era of computerization, translation is not only related to art and knowledge, but also with technology (Battacharyya, 2015:1). With the rapid development of translation technology known as "Machine Translation", nowadays machine translation is one of the options in translating literary works quickly using an application (Baharuddin and Dalle, 2017) that is readily available for free, namely the "*Google Translate*" application. Through the application of "*Google Translate*", a person will easily translate literary results written in a language he does not know into his mother tongue.

This study uses the translation result as the data source, namely the novel "*Laskar Pelangi*" by Hirata (2005), which is translated through an application of *Google Translate*. This novel was published by Bentang Pustaka. The novel "*Laskar Pelangi*" was translated into various languages, including English. This novel has inspired and attracted the attention of many people about the world of education in Indonesia. This novel provides lessons for students to be more diligent in their studies even though with modest educational facilities. It also reveals the sincerity of educators in carrying out their responsibilities (Emzir and Rahman, 2005:25). This study would analyze the grammatical equivalence with the grammatical categories of number, person, gender, tense and aspects, and voice in the translation of that novel through *Google Translate*.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Translation

Translating can be interpreted as an activity in transferring the meaning of written text in one language to another. According to Catford (1965:20), translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) with the equivalent of textual material in another language (TL). Meanwhile, according to Tapilatu (2013:84), in principle, translation is the transfer of meaning or message or message from the source language into the target language, which takes into account the meaning as intended by the author of the source text, uses a reasonable target language form or uses the closest and reasonable equivalent. So in this context, translation can be understood as an activity of expressing the meaning of text from one language to another according to the setting.

### 2.2. Translation Equivalence

In translation, a word or phrase in the source language is not always the same or equivalent to the word or phrase in the target language. According to Emzir (2015:21) the main problem of translation is obtaining a correspondence between the source text (ST) which will be translated and the target text (TT) which becomes the result of the translation process. In other words, achieving the equivalence of ST and TT both in terms of form and content is not an easy task, because it is likely that there are word components in ST that are different from TT.

Furthermore regarding this equivalence, Catford (1965:49) states that the words in TL and SL rarely have 'the same meaning in a linguistic sense; but both can function in the same situation. In the translation, the text of TL and SL are equivalent when they can be exchanged in certain situations. it could be worth it in some situations. Therefore, in translation the translator needs to make a lot of adjustments to achieve comparability. Translators sometimes have to change a lot to keep the meaning equivalent.

### 2.3. Grammatical Equivalence

Baker (2011:92) states that grammar is a set of rules that determines how units such as words and phrases can be combined in a language and the type of information that must be created explicitly regularly in speech. Of course, a language can be used to express all kinds of information that a speaker needs to reveal, but a certain grammatical system of language will determine the ease with which certain definitions such as time or gender references can be made explicit (Bassnett, 2002: 94).

There are five grammatical categories which are covered in grammatical equivalence, they are number, gender, person, tense and aspect, and voice (Baker, 2011: 96-120). The grammar system in one language will be different from other languages. The importance of the explicit expression of those categories will vary from language to language. For example, gender matters in English — we see evidence of this in the English set of pronouns (*he, she, it*) and in the contrast between some nouns (*actor-actress*). In Indonesian, gender is less important. The pronoun set has a form which refers to masculine, feminine, and neutral; for example the word '*suami*' or '*istri*', and the word '*mertua*' which can refer to the sex of a man or a woman, as well as the pronoun '*dia*.' How can we translate the pronoun '*dia*' into English if there is no context to help? Context in translation eliminates ambiguity. It is only in context that we can understand the particular patterns of meaning that the outward form expresses.

The five grammatical categories covered in the grammatical equivalence are described below.

- 1) Number is a grammatical category used for the analysis of word- classes displaying such contrasts as singular, plural, dual (du) ('two'), trial ('three'), etc., as in English *boy v. boys, he walks v. they walk*. (Crystal, 2008:335).
- 2) Gender is a grammatical distinction according to which a noun or pronoun is classified as either masculine or feminine in some languages (Baker, 2011:99), as in English, *son vs daughter, bridegroom vs bride*.
- 3) Person is a grammatical category which determines the choice of pronouns in a sentence according to such principles as whether the pronoun represents or includes the person or persons actually speaking or writing as the first person, e.g. "*I, we*", or being addressed as the second person, e.g. *you*, or someone or something other than the speaker/writer or the listener/reader as the third person, e.g. *he, she, it, they*.
- 4) Tense and aspect are grammatical categories in a large number of languages, which have different types of verbs showing two main types of information: time relation and aspectual differences. Time relations have to do with locating an event in time, such as past, present and future. Aspectual differences have to do with temporal distribution of an event, for instance its completion or non-completion, continuation or momentariness (Baker, 2011:108).
- 5) Voice is a grammatical category which defines the relationship between a verb and its subject. Two sentences can differ in voice and yet have the same basic meaning with a change in emphasis and one type of sentence may be more appropriate.

### 2.4. Application of Google Translate

Rensburg et al. (2012:511) state that, "Language can be a barrier to student success, especially if a student is not proficient in the language of instruction. One way of addressing this problem is to translate study material into a language that the student understands." If they want to use a professional translator, besides it takes a long time and they also have to pay a fee that is not cheap. And this way is rarely used by students, especially now that several online translation applications are available, one of which is the Google Translate application, which is able to translate the reading material they need in a relatively very fast when compared to the translation done by human. In the end, the use of Google Translate is a solution for them to translate reading materials written in foreign languages, including English.

Dealing with the application of Google Translate, ElSheikh (2012:56) writes that “Internet users have the choice between several machine translation services that can automatically translate a given text or website in another language. Google Translate is one of the most popular services of this kind. It allows web users to translate text or websites into 51 languages.”

### 3. Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method, which described and explained the phenomenon as completely and accurately as possible about the grammatical equivalence and shift of the translation of the novel "*Laskar Pelangi*" into English through Google Translate. This qualitative descriptive method uses text-driven content analysis. In this regard, Krippendorff (2004:340) writes that text-based content analysis is motivated by the availability of sufficiently rich texts to stimulate analysts' interest in the text. Text-based analysis started from text, which can be in the form of translated texts, from Bahasa Indonesia to English done by Google Translate. In the study, the text analyzed is in the form of a translation of "*Laskar Pelangi*" in English which is done through Google Translate.

#### 3.1 Data Analysis & Result

The result will deal with the discussion of the translation of the novel “Laskar Pelangi”, especially with grammatical categories of number, gender, person, tense and aspect, and voice.

##### 3.1.1. Equivalence in Grammatical Category of Number

Dealing with grammatical equivalence of number that is related to plural and singular concepts, it was found the translation distortion in using singular and plural forms from Bahasa Indonesia to English. For example:

(1) *Aku juga merasa cemas. Aku cemas karena melihat Bu Mus yang resah dan karena beban perasaan ayahku menjalar ke sekujur tubuhku.*

I was worried because I saw Bu Mus who was restless and because of the burden of my father's **feelings** spreading through my body.

(2) *Meskipun beliau begitu ramah pagi ini tapi lengan kasarnya yang melingkari leherku mengalirkan degup jantung yang cepat.*

Even though he was so friendly this morning but his rough arms that were wrapped around my neck gave off **a rapid heartbeat**.

(3) *Lebih mudah menyerahkannya pada tauke pasar pagi untuk jadi tukang parut atau pada juragan pantai untuk menjadi kuli kopra agar dapat membantu ekonomi keluarga.*

It is easier to leave **it** to the morning market tauke to become a grate or to a beach skipper to become a copra coolie in order to help the family economy.

Based on the three examples above, it was found the translation distortion, In (1) the word ‘feelings’ is written in plural form, meanwhile in Bahasa, it is in singular ‘perasaan.’ In (2) “*detak jantung*” is translated with the phrase “*a rapid heartbeat*” as a singular noun. However, the phrase ‘*detak jantung*’ in Bahasa shows something repeatedly, not only once. In (3) the word ‘nya’ meaning children was translated with “it”, instead of ‘them’.

By finding the translation distortion easily in every paragraph in the translation of the novel, it can be said that for grammatical category of number, a translator should revise the result of the translation by Google Translate carefully.

### 3.1.2. Equivalence in Grammatical Category of Gender

Using gender in a language is closely related to culture. Learning a language means learning culture indirectly. Dealing the grammatical category of gender, English and Bahasa Indonesia have different system, meaning different culture that sometimes creates problems in translation process.

(4) *Namun, senyum Bu Mus adalah senyum getir yang dipaksakan karena tampak jelas beliau sedang cemas. Wajahnya tegang dan gerak-geriknya gelisah. Ia berulang kali menghitung jumlah anak-anak yang duduk di bangku panjang. Ia demikian khawatir sehingga tak peduli pada peluh yang mengalir masuk ke pelupuk matanya*

Bu Mus's smile was a forced, bitter smile because it was obvious that she was worried. **His** face was tense and **his** movements restless. **He** repeatedly counted the number of children sitting on the long benches. **He** is worried so **he** didn't care about the sweat pouring into **his** eyelids.

(5) *Lebih mudah menyerahkannya pada tauke pasar pagi untuk jadi tukang parut atau pada juragan pantai untuk menjadi kuli kopra agar dapat membantu ekonomi keluarga.*

It is easier to leave **it** to the morning market tauke to become a grate or to a beach skipper to become a copra coolie in order to help the family economy.

(6) *Bu Mus yang semakin khawatir memancang pandangannya ke jalan raya di seberang lapangan sekolah berharap kalau-kalau masih ada pendaftar baru*

**Mrs.** Mus, who was increasingly worried, fixed her gaze onto the road across the school field, hoping that there were still new applicants.

When analyzed based on gender, it was found the translation distortion in the result of the translation. In (4) “Bu Mus” is a woman since there is the word “Bu”, but the pronouns for “Bu Mus” are ‘he, his.’ It seems Google Translate has not been programmed for the Indonesian address “Bu” for a woman. In (5) the pronoun “it” is used to translate the word ‘nya’ that should be “him”. In (6) the word “Bu” is translated with “Mrs.”, since “Mrs” indicates a woman’s marital status, but “Bu” doesn’t, the translation is nor correct, especially for an unmarried woman.

### 3.1.3. Equivalence in Grammatical Category of Tense and Aspect

There is a big difference between English and Bahasa Indonesia in grammatical category of tense and aspect. In English Tense and aspect are reflected syntactically, especially in verbs, but in Bahasa Indonesia tense and aspect are expressed lexically. That is why translation distortion happens.

(7) *Di mulut pintu berdiri dua orang guru seperti para penyambut tamu dalam perhelatan. Mereka adalah seorang bapak tua berwajah sabar, Bapak K.A. Harfan Efendy Noor, sang kepala sekolah dan seorang wanita muda berjilbab, Ibu N.A. Muslimah Hafsari atau Bu Mus.*

At the mouth of the door **stood** two teachers who **were** welcoming **guests** to the event. They **are** an old man with a patient face, Mr. K.A. Harfan Efendy Noor, the principal and a young woman wearing a headscarf, Mrs. N.A. Muslimah Hafsari or Bu Mus.

(8) *Para orangtua ini sama sekali tak yakin bahwa pendidikan anaknya yang hanya mampu mereka biayai paling tinggi sampai SMP akan dapat mempercera masa depan keluarga. Pagi ini mereka terpaksa berada di sekolah ini untuk menghindarkan diri dari celaan aparat desa karena tak menyekolahkan anak atau sebagai orang yang terjebak tuntutan zaman baru, tuntutan memerdekakan anak dari buta huruf.*

These parents **have** absolutely no confidence that the education of their children, which they **can** only afford, **is** the highest Junior high school **will be** able to brighten up the future of the family. This morning they **were** forced to be at this school to avoid being criticized by the village officials for not sending their children to school or as people trapped in the demands of the new age, demands to liberate children from illiteracy.

(9) *Aku mengenal para orangtua dan anak-anaknya yang duduk di depanku. Kecuali seorang anak lelaki kecil kotor berambut keriting merah yang meronta-ronta dari pegangan ayahnya. Ayahnya itu tak beralas kaki dan bercelana kain belacu. Aku tak mengenal anak beranak itu.*

I **know** the parents and their children sitting across from me. Except for a dirty little boy with red curly hair struggling from his father's grip. His father **was** barefoot and **was** wearing calico pants. I **do** not know the children.

It is obviously known that Google Translate is not consistent in using tenses. In three examples above, we can find the inconsistency in using tenses. In the same time and the same situation, the tenses are different, sometimes past tenses are used, but simultaneously it also uses present tenses.

#### 3.1.4. Equivalence of Grammatical Category of Person

This grammatical category deals with the notion of participant roles through a closed system of pronouns as the first person, the second person, and the third person. Both English and Bahasa Indonesia have this system.

(10) *Bu Mus semakin gundah. Lima tahun pengabdian di sekolah melarat yang amat ia cintai dan tiga puluh dua tahun pengabdian tanpa pamrih pada Pak Harfan, pamannya, akan berakhir di pagi yang sendu ini.*

Bu Mus was getting more and more upset. **His** five years of devotion to the destitute school he loved so much and **his** thirty-two years of unconditional devotion to Pak Harfan, **his** uncle, would end this sad morning.

(11) *IBU Muslimah yang beberapa menit lalu sembab, gelisah, dan coreng-moreng kini menjelma menjadi sekuntum Crinum giganteum. Sebab tiba-tiba ia mekar sumringah dan posturnya yang jangkung persis tangkai bunga itu. Kerudungnya juga berwarna bunga crinum demikian pula bau bajunya, persis crinum yang mirip bau vanili. Sekarang dengan ceria beliau mengatur tempat duduk kami. Bu Mus mendekati setiap orangtua murid di bangku panjang tadi, berdialog sebentar dengan ramah, dan mengabsen kami.*

The Muslim woman who a few minutes ago was swollen, restless and smudged, has now transformed into a Crinum giganteum. Because suddenly he bloomed happily and **his** tall posture was just like the flower stalk. **Her** veil was also the color of a crinum flower, and so did **her** clothes smell, just like the smell of vanilla. Now he happily arranged our seats. Bu Mus approached each of the students' parents on the long bench, had a friendly dialogue for a while, and took us.

In the grammatical category of person, the same distortion often exists. Google Translate does not use correct pronouns. It is frequently found that “**Bu Mus**” has a male pronouns (**he, him, his**) instead of *she* and *her*.

#### 3.1.5. Equivalence of Grammatical Category of Voice

Grammatical category of voice deals with the use of active and passive forms which have their own function. Passive form is used to avoid specifying the agent and to give an impression of objectivity. When active is translated into passive or vice versa without changing the position or function of the agent, it tends to change the message, such as happens to the following sentences.

(12) *Bagi Lintang, kota kecamatan, tempat sekolah kami ini, adalah metropolitan yang harus ditempuh dengan sepeda sejak subuh*

For Lintang, the sub-district city, where our school **is located**, is a metropolis that has to **be reached** by bicycle since dawn.

(13) *Di dekatnya, aku merasa seperti ditantang mengambil ancang-ancang untuk sprint seratus meter*

Nearby, I felt like I was **being challenged** to square off for the hundred meter sprint The book that was bought was also wrong.

(14) *Ditambah lagi satu perasaan ngilu karena sepasang sepatu baru yang dibelikan ibuku **Plus** one feeling of pain because of a new pair of shoes that **my mother bought**.*

Based on the three examples above, it can be said that in the grammatical category of voice, we can still find the distortion as in (14) the passive construction of the source text is not always grammatically translated in passive too. It is changed into an active construction. In (12) and (13) the sentences are parallel with the passive construction in Bahasa Indonesia.

#### 4. Conclusion

Having discussed the equivalence of grammatical categories of number, gender, person, tense and aspect, and voice of the translation of the novel “Laskar Pelangi” in English through Google Translate, it could be concluded that we as the users of Google Translate should revise the result of its translation. In number, it is frequently found ‘nya’ translated with the pronoun “it” instead of *him* or *her*. Plural in meaning is sometimes translated as singular and vice versa. In gender, it seems Google Translate to mistranslate Indonesian words which do not show gender. In tense and aspect, it is obviously known that Google Translate is not consistent in using tenses. In person, as it happens in gender, Google Translate is not consistent in using correct pronouns. And the last in voice, since Bahasa Indonesia has also the passive-active constructions, the equivalence is acceptable. In general, the result of the translation of the novel “*Laskar Pelangi*” by Google Translate is not satisfactory yet. It needs revising a lot.

#### References

- Anwar, M.S. (2017). “*Novel Siddhartha Karya Herman Hesse: Pencarian Chiffer-Chiffer Transendensi.*” *Metasastra*, 37-52.
- Baharuddin., & Dalle, J. (2017). Interactive courseware for supporting learners competency in practical skills. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 16(3), 87-98.
- Baker, M. (2011). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. 2nd Ed. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bassnett, S. (2002). *Translation Studies*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. New York: Routledge.
- Bhattacharyya, P. (2015). *Machine Translation*. London, New York: CRC Press.
- Catford, J.C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 6th Ed. Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing.
- ElSheikh, A. A. (2012). *Google Translate Service: Transfer of Meaning, Distortion or Simply a New Creation?* *English Language and Literature Studies*, 56-72.
- Emzir, & Rahman, S. (2015). *Teori dan Pengajaran Sastra*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo.
- Emzir. (2015). *Teori dan Pengajaran Penerjemahan*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers
- Hirata, A. (2005). *Laskar Pelangi*. Yogyakarta: Bentang Pustaka
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* London: SAGE Publications
- Rensburg, A. v., Snyman, C., & Lotz, S. (2012). *Applying Google Translate in a Higher Education Environment: Translation Products Assessed*. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 511-525.
- Tapilatu, T. (2013). *Kesepadanan dalam Penerjemahan Verba Bahasa Inggris ke Bahasa Indonesia pada Novel "To Kill a Mockingbird"*. *Wanastra*, 83-93.

**AUTHOR BIODATA**

**Magdad Hatim** is a student of Doctoral Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta and currently is a lecturer at Universitas PGRI Palembang, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

**Zuriyati** is an Professor at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Her research focusses on Teaching language and literature. She completed his Doctoral Degree with Qualification on Language Education at Universitas Negeri Jakarta in 2006 and master degree (M.Pd) on Language Education, graduated from Universitas Negeri Jakarta in 2002.

**Aceng Rahmat** is an Professor at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. His research focusses on Teaching language and literature. He completed his Doctoral Degree with Qualification on Language Education at Universitas Negeri Jakarta in 1998, master degree (M.Pd) on Language Education, graduated from Universitas Negeri Jakarta in 1992, and undergraduate degree (S.Pd) on Arabic Language Education graduated from Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (IKIP) in 1981.

**Ahdi Hassan** is serving as a Researcher at Global Institute for Research Education & Scholarship, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and representative of Imperial English UK-A Trusted British Brand in English Language, Independent Research International [IRI] and Advisor Scholarly Journal Management. He has been Associate or Consulting Editor of numerous journals and served the editorial review board from 2013- to till now. He has several publications and research papers published in various domains. Founder of Pakistani languages corpora and has earned his master's degree in Linguistics from Quaid-i- Azam University, Islamabad in 2013. He has given contribution with the major roles such as using modern and scientific techniques to work with sounds and meanings of words, studying the relationship between the written and spoken formats of various Asian/European languages, developing the artificial languages in coherence with modern English language, and scientifically approaching the various ancient written material to trace its origin. He teaches topics connected but not limited to communication such as English for Young Learners, English for Academic Purposes, English for Science, Technology and Engineering, English for Business and Entrepreneurship, Business Intensive Course, Applied Linguistics, interpersonal communication, verbal and nonverbal communication, cross cultural competence, language and humor, intercultural communication, culture and humor, language acquisition and language in use.

**Rusnadi Ali Kasan** is a Senior English Lecturer at English Education Department of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. He got his bachelor's degree in English Education or English as a Foreign Language. His first MA degree is in Educational Management, while his second MA Degree is in Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky, USA. Currently he is pursuing his doctoral degree in Educational Doctoral (EdD) TESOL Program at Alliant International University in San Diego, California, USA. His research interests are in Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language (TEFL/TESL), Language Learning Strategies, Communicative Competence, and Skills-Based Competences, such as speaking, reading, writing, etc.