

EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH-INDONESIAN TRANSLATION

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<p data-bbox="119 600 296 627"><i>Article History:</i></p> <p data-bbox="119 651 373 678">Submitted: 18/03/2026</p> <p data-bbox="119 687 363 714">Accepted: 23/03/2026</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="119 770 236 797"><i>Keywords</i></p> <p data-bbox="119 822 411 1025"><i>translation equivalence, English-Indonesian translation, lexical equivalence, grammatical equivalence, translation shifts</i></p>	<p data-bbox="477 600 1473 1292">Translation plays an important role in transferring meaning across languages and cultures. One of the key concepts in translation studies is equivalence, which refers to the relationship between a source text and its translated version in conveying similar meaning. This study examines equivalence in English-Indonesian translation from a linguistic perspective, focusing on lexical equivalence, grammatical equivalence, and linguistic shifts occurring during the translation process. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using sentence-level translation pairs taken from bilingual texts as the primary data. The analysis was conducted by comparing English source sentences with their Indonesian translations to identify patterns of equivalence and translation shifts. The findings indicate that lexical equivalence is achieved through direct translation, paraphrasing, and contextual adaptation depending on the availability of equivalent lexical items in the target language. Grammatical equivalence is commonly realized through structural adjustments due to differences between English and Indonesian grammatical systems, particularly in tense, sentence structure, and voice. The results also show that linguistic shifts, including structural and lexical shifts, frequently occur as translators adapt the source text to the linguistic norms of the target language. These shifts function as necessary strategies to maintain functional equivalence and ensure naturalness in the translated text. Overall, the study highlights the dynamic nature of translation in balancing semantic accuracy and linguistic appropriateness.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Translation plays an essential role in facilitating communication across languages and cultures in today's increasingly interconnected world. The expansion of global interaction in areas such as education, business, media, and technology has significantly increased the demand for effective translation. Through translation, information, knowledge, and cultural values can be transmitted from one linguistic community to another. However, translation is not merely the substitution of words from a source language into a target language. Instead, it is a complex process that involves transferring meaning while maintaining the communicative intention of the original text (Munday et al., 2022). Because languages differ in structure, vocabulary, and cultural background, translators must carefully consider linguistic and contextual factors to produce translations that are both accurate and natural.

One of the most fundamental concepts in translation studies is equivalence. Equivalence refers to the relationship between the source text and the translated text in which the target text conveys meaning comparable to that of the original. It has long been

considered a central goal of translation because translators aim to reproduce the meaning of the source language as faithfully as possible in the target language (Baker, 2018). Nevertheless, achieving equivalence can be challenging due to differences in grammatical systems, lexical choices, and cultural conventions across languages. As a result, translators must make strategic linguistic decisions to ensure that the intended meaning of the source text can be effectively communicated in the target language (House, 2018).

Over time, perspectives on equivalence have evolved within translation studies. Earlier approaches often emphasized formal correspondence between the linguistic elements of the source and target languages. However, more recent perspectives view equivalence as a dynamic relationship rather than a strict one-to-one correspondence between words or structures. According to Pym (2018), equivalence should be understood in terms of communicative effectiveness rather than purely linguistic similarity. This view highlights the importance of considering context, audience, and communicative purpose when evaluating the success of a translation. To explain the complexity of translation, several scholars have proposed different levels of equivalence. Baker (2018), for instance, identifies equivalence at the word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence. Word-level equivalence concerns the translation of individual lexical items, while grammatical equivalence involves differences in grammatical categories such as tense, number, and voice. Textual equivalence relates to the organization and cohesion of information within a text, whereas pragmatic equivalence refers to how meaning is interpreted within a specific communicative context. These levels illustrate that translation involves multiple linguistic dimensions and requires careful analysis across different layers of language.

The issue of equivalence becomes particularly significant when translating between languages with substantially different linguistic systems, such as English and Indonesian. These languages differ in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and discourse patterns. For example, English relies heavily on tense and aspect markers to express temporal relations, while Indonesian often conveys such relations through contextual information or adverbial expressions (Sneddon et al., 2018). Additionally, lexical and cultural differences may create challenges when certain expressions in English do not have direct equivalents in Indonesian. In such cases, translators frequently apply strategies such as paraphrasing, borrowing, or adaptation to convey the intended meaning (Chesterman, 2016). Idiomatic expressions, in particular, often require modification because literal translation may fail to communicate the intended meaning (Ahdillah et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the growing use of machine translation has influenced discussions about equivalence in translation studies. Although machine translation systems are widely used because of their speed and accessibility, research indicates that they often struggle to achieve semantic and pragmatic equivalence, especially when translating complex or

culturally nuanced expressions (Kenny, 2020). Therefore, human translators remain crucial in ensuring that translated texts accurately convey both meaning and context.

Despite extensive theoretical discussions of equivalence, empirical research focusing on linguistic equivalence in English, Indonesian translation remains limited. Many studies concentrate on translation strategies or translation quality rather than detailed linguistic analysis of how equivalence is achieved. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how equivalence is realized at the lexical and grammatical levels and to identify the linguistic shifts that occur in English–Indonesian translation in the process of achieving meaning equivalence.

Based on background of the study, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is equivalence realized at the lexical level in English–Indonesian translation?
2. How is grammatical equivalence achieved in the translation of English texts into Indonesian?
3. What types of linguistic shifts occur in English–Indonesian translation in the process of achieving equivalence?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate equivalence in English–Indonesian translation from a linguistic perspective. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study focuses on analyzing linguistic features and translation patterns rather than measuring numerical variables. Qualitative analysis allows researchers to explore how meaning is transferred across languages and to identify the types of equivalence and translation shifts that occur in the translation process (Munday et al., 2022). Through detailed examination of translated texts, this study aims to understand how translators manage linguistic differences between English and Indonesian while maintaining semantic equivalence.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive qualitative design that emphasizes textual analysis of translated materials. In translation studies, qualitative methods are commonly used to analyze translation phenomena such as equivalence, translation shifts, and translation strategies because they enable researchers to interpret linguistic data within its context (House, 2018). The present study focuses on identifying patterns of lexical and grammatical equivalence as well as linguistic shifts in English–Indonesian translation. The analysis is guided by theoretical perspectives on equivalence proposed by Baker (2018) and further supported by translation theories discussed by Pym (2018) and Chesterman (2016).

Data Sources

The primary data for this study consist of English source texts and their Indonesian translations. The texts were selected from bilingual written materials that are publicly

available, such as translated articles, bilingual educational materials, and published translations. These types of texts were chosen because they provide authentic examples of English–Indonesian translation used in real communicative contexts. The unit of analysis in this study is sentence-level translation pairs consisting of an English sentence and its Indonesian translation. Sentence-level analysis was selected because it allows the researcher to examine lexical choices, grammatical structures, and meaning relationships more clearly. A total of approximately 50–70 sentence pairs were collected as the primary dataset for analysis. These sentence pairs represent a range of linguistic structures, including declarative sentences, descriptive passages, and sentences containing idiomatic or complex expressions.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted in several stages. First, English texts and their Indonesian translations were identified from bilingual sources. The selection of texts was based on their relevance to the research objectives and the clarity of the translation relationship between the source and target texts. Second, sentence pairs from the selected texts were extracted and compiled into a bilingual corpus for analysis. Third, each English sentence and its Indonesian translation were aligned to form translation pairs. This alignment allowed the researcher to directly compare the source text and target text in order to identify linguistic features related to equivalence. The compiled dataset was then organized into a data table containing the following elements: the English source sentence, the Indonesian translated sentence, and notes regarding lexical and grammatical features observed in the translation.

Analytical Framework

The analysis of the data was guided by the concept of equivalence proposed by Baker (2018), which includes equivalence at different linguistic levels. The study focuses specifically on lexical equivalence and grammatical equivalence, as well as the identification of translation shifts that occur during the translation process. The analytical framework also draws on the concept of translation shifts proposed in translation studies, which refers to changes in linguistic structure that occur when transferring meaning from the source language to the target language (Chesterman, 2016). Lexical equivalence analysis focuses on how individual words or phrases in English are translated into Indonesian. The researcher examines whether the translated lexical items convey similar meaning and whether any translation strategies such as paraphrasing or adaptation are used to achieve equivalence. Lexical analysis is important because lexical choices significantly influence the accuracy and clarity of translation (Baker, 2018).

Grammatical equivalence analysis focuses on how grammatical structures in English are represented in Indonesian. This includes examining differences in tense, voice, number, and word order between the two languages. Because English and Indonesian differ in their

grammatical systems, translators often modify sentence structures in order to produce natural translations (Sneddon et al., 2018). The analysis therefore investigates how such grammatical differences are managed in the translation process. In addition to lexical and grammatical analysis, the study also examines translation shifts that occur in the data. Translation shifts refer to changes in linguistic form that occur when translating from the source language to the target language while maintaining similar meaning (Chesterman, 2016). Identifying these shifts helps reveal how translators adapt linguistic structures in order to achieve equivalence between English and Indonesian.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis was conducted through several systematic steps. First, each sentence pair was examined to identify lexical correspondences between the English source text and the Indonesian translation. Words or phrases that demonstrate equivalent meaning were identified and categorized as examples of lexical equivalence. Second, the grammatical structures of the source and target sentences were analyzed to determine how grammatical equivalence was achieved. This involved comparing sentence structures, verb forms, and syntactic patterns between the two languages. Third, instances of translation shifts were identified and classified according to the type of linguistic change observed. These shifts include structural shifts, lexical substitutions, and changes in word order that occur during the translation process.

Finally, the findings from the lexical and grammatical analyses were interpreted in order to explain how equivalence is realized in English–Indonesian translation. The results of the analysis were then organized according to the three research questions of the study, namely lexical equivalence, grammatical equivalence, and translation shifts. This approach allows the study to provide a comprehensive understanding of how translators achieve equivalence when transferring meaning between English and Indonesian.

Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a systematic linguistic analysis of English–Indonesian translation and to contribute to the broader discussion of equivalence in translation studies. The findings are expected to offer insights into how linguistic differences between the two languages influence translation practices and how translators negotiate meaning in order to produce equivalent translations.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of English–Indonesian translation data. The analysis focuses on three main aspects corresponding to the research questions: lexical equivalence, grammatical equivalence, and linguistic shifts that occur in the process of translation. The findings are based on the examination of sentence pairs taken from English source texts and their Indonesian translations. Through linguistic comparison, the study identifies how meaning is transferred from the source language to the target language while maintaining equivalence.

Lexical Equivalence in English–Indonesian Translation

The analysis shows that lexical equivalence plays a significant role in ensuring that the meaning of the source text is accurately conveyed in the target language. Lexical equivalence refers to the relationship between words or expressions in the source language and their counterparts in the target language that carry similar meanings (Baker, 2018). In the analyzed data, several patterns of lexical equivalence were identified, including direct lexical equivalence, paraphrased lexical equivalence, and culturally adjusted lexical equivalence.

Direct lexical equivalence occurs when a word in the source language has a clear and commonly accepted equivalent in the target language. For example, the English word *information* is translated into Indonesian as *informasi*, and *education* is translated as *pendidikan*. These lexical pairs demonstrate straightforward equivalence because the terms exist in both languages and carry similar semantic meanings. Such direct equivalence often occurs when translating commonly used vocabulary or internationally recognized terms. However, the data also reveal instances where lexical equivalence cannot be achieved through direct translation. In such cases, translators apply paraphrasing strategies to convey the meaning of the source text. For instance, an English expression such as *make a decision* may be translated into Indonesian as *mengambil keputusan*. Although the individual lexical items differ structurally, the meaning conveyed in the target language remains equivalent to the source expression. According to Baker (2018), paraphrasing is a common strategy used when direct lexical equivalence is not available in the target language.

Another pattern identified in the data involves lexical adaptation related to cultural context. Certain English expressions refer to concepts that are more familiar in English-speaking contexts and may require adjustment when translated into Indonesian. In such cases, translators may modify lexical choices in order to maintain the communicative intent of the source text. This finding supports the view that translation involves interpretative decisions rather than simple word substitution (Pym, 2018).

The findings also indicate that lexical equivalence is closely related to contextual meaning. Words that appear equivalent at the dictionary level may convey slightly different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. Therefore, translators must consider semantic nuances and textual context when selecting appropriate lexical equivalents. This observation aligns with previous studies suggesting that lexical choices significantly influence the accuracy and clarity of translation (Chesterman, 2016).

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that lexical equivalence in English–Indonesian translation is achieved through a combination of direct equivalence, paraphrasing, and contextual adaptation. These strategies enable translators to convey meaning effectively while accommodating linguistic differences between the two languages.

Grammatical Equivalence in English–Indonesian Translation

In addition to lexical choices, grammatical structure also plays a crucial role in achieving equivalence in translation. Grammatical equivalence refers to how grammatical categories in the source language are represented in the target language (Baker, 2018). Because English and Indonesian differ significantly in their grammatical systems, translators often modify grammatical structures in order to produce natural and comprehensible translations. One of the most prominent grammatical differences observed in the data concerns the expression of tense and aspect. English verbs typically indicate temporal information through tense markers such as past, present, and future forms. In contrast, Indonesian verbs generally do not change form to indicate tense; instead, temporal relations are expressed through context or time markers such as *sudah*, *sedang*, or *akan* (Sneddon et al., 2018). As a result, English sentences containing explicit tense markers are often translated into Indonesian using contextual or lexical indicators rather than morphological changes.

Another grammatical difference identified in the data relates to sentence structure and word order. English sentences often follow a rigid subject–verb–object structure, while Indonesian allows more flexibility in sentence construction. During the translation process, translators sometimes reorganize sentence elements in order to produce more natural Indonesian sentences. This structural adjustment ensures that the translated text follows the grammatical norms of the target language. Voice construction also illustrates grammatical differences between English and Indonesian. In some cases, English passive constructions are translated into active forms in Indonesian. This shift occurs because Indonesian tends to favor more direct and concise sentence structures in certain contexts. Such grammatical adjustments do not necessarily alter the meaning of the sentence but rather improve readability and clarity in the target language.

These findings highlight that grammatical equivalence does not always involve reproducing the same grammatical forms found in the source text. Instead, translators often adapt grammatical structures in order to convey meaning more naturally in the target language. This supports the view that translation equivalence is functional rather than purely formal (House, 2018).

Linguistic Shifts in Achieving Translation Equivalence

The analysis also reveals various types of linguistic shifts that occur during the translation process. Linguistic shifts refer to changes in form or structure that occur when transferring meaning from the source language to the target language while maintaining equivalent meaning (Chesterman, 2016). These shifts are a common phenomenon in translation because languages differ in their grammatical systems and lexical patterns. One type of shift observed in the data is structural shift, which occurs when the grammatical structure of the translated sentence differs from that of the source sentence. Structural shifts

often arise because the grammatical patterns of English and Indonesian are not always directly compatible. For example, English noun phrases may be translated into Indonesian using different word orders or additional explanatory elements.

Another type of shift identified in the analysis is lexical shift. Lexical shifts occur when translators select different lexical items to convey the meaning of the source text. Such shifts may involve paraphrasing, generalization, or the use of more contextually appropriate vocabulary in the target language. These lexical modifications help ensure that the translated text remains clear and meaningful for the intended audience. The analysis also reveals instances of semantic adjustment in which translators modify expressions slightly in order to maintain coherence and naturalness in the target language. These adjustments demonstrate the flexibility required in translation, as translators must balance fidelity to the source text with the linguistic norms of the target language.

Overall, the findings indicate that linguistic shifts are an integral part of the translation process. Rather than indicating translation errors, these shifts often represent necessary adaptations that allow translators to achieve functional equivalence between the source and target languages. This observation supports the argument that translation involves negotiation between languages rather than strict replication of linguistic forms (Pym, 2018). In summary, the results show that equivalence in English–Indonesian translation is achieved through a combination of lexical strategies, grammatical adaptation, and linguistic shifts. Lexical equivalence ensures that key meanings are preserved, grammatical equivalence allows sentences to conform to the structural norms of the target language, and linguistic shifts enable translators to reconcile differences between the two languages. Together, these processes contribute to the production of translations that are both accurate and natural.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings presented in the previous section by relating them to existing theories and previous studies in translation studies. The discussion focuses on three main aspects: lexical equivalence, grammatical equivalence, and linguistic shifts in English–Indonesian translation. By interpreting the results through established theoretical frameworks, this section aims to explain how equivalence is achieved in translation and how translators manage linguistic differences between English and Indonesian.

Lexical Equivalence in English–Indonesian Translation

The findings indicate that lexical equivalence plays a fundamental role in transferring meaning from the source language to the target language. The analysis demonstrates that translators often rely on direct lexical correspondence when equivalent terms are available in both languages. This pattern supports Baker's (2018) argument that word-level equivalence is one of the most basic forms of equivalence in translation. When a source-

language word has a well-established counterpart in the target language, translators can reproduce meaning with minimal modification.

However, the results also reveal that direct lexical equivalence is not always possible. In many cases, translators must apply paraphrasing or contextual adaptation to convey the intended meaning. This finding aligns with the perspective that translation involves interpretative decision-making rather than mechanical substitution of words (Pym, 2018). Translators must evaluate the semantic and contextual aspects of the source text before selecting appropriate lexical items in the target language. The presence of paraphrased lexical equivalents in the data reflects the linguistic differences between English and Indonesian. Some English expressions consist of fixed collocations or idiomatic combinations that do not have exact equivalents in Indonesian. As a result, translators often restructure these expressions into more natural Indonesian phrases while maintaining the intended meaning. According to Baker (2018), paraphrasing is a widely used strategy when direct lexical equivalence cannot be achieved.

The findings also highlight the importance of contextual meaning in lexical translation. Words that appear equivalent in dictionaries may carry slightly different connotations depending on the context in which they are used. Therefore, translators must interpret the meaning of lexical items within the broader textual context. This observation is consistent with the view that translation involves semantic interpretation and contextual adaptation (Chesterman, 2016). Through careful lexical selection, translators can ensure that the translated text accurately represents the meaning of the source text while remaining natural in the target language. Overall, the discussion of lexical equivalence suggests that translators employ a combination of direct translation, paraphrasing, and contextual adaptation in order to maintain semantic accuracy. These strategies demonstrate the dynamic nature of equivalence in translation, where linguistic choices are influenced by both semantic meaning and contextual factors.

Grammatical Equivalence in English–Indonesian Translation

The findings related to grammatical equivalence highlight the structural differences between English and Indonesian and their implications for translation. The analysis shows that translators frequently modify grammatical structures in order to produce translations that conform to the grammatical conventions of the target language. This observation supports Baker's (2018) concept of grammatical equivalence, which emphasizes that translation often involves adjustments in grammatical categories such as tense, number, and voice. One of the most prominent grammatical differences observed in the data concerns the expression of tense and aspect. English uses a complex system of verb inflections to indicate temporal relations, whereas Indonesian typically relies on contextual markers or temporal expressions rather than morphological changes. As noted by Sneddon et al. (2018), Indonesian verbs generally remain unchanged regardless of tense. Consequently, when

translating English sentences into Indonesian, translators often omit tense markers or replace them with contextual indicators such as adverbs or auxiliary expressions.

The analysis also demonstrates that sentence structure may change during the translation process. English sentences often follow a relatively fixed subject–verb–object structure, while Indonesian allows greater flexibility in word order. Translators sometimes rearrange sentence elements to produce more natural Indonesian expressions. Such structural adjustments illustrate how grammatical equivalence focuses on preserving meaning rather than replicating the exact grammatical form of the source text. Another important aspect of grammatical equivalence involves voice construction. The findings show that English passive constructions are sometimes translated into active forms in Indonesian. This shift occurs because Indonesian discourse often favors simpler and more direct sentence structures. According to House (2018), such grammatical modifications are common in translation because languages differ in their preferred patterns of expression. Translators therefore adapt grammatical forms in order to achieve functional equivalence between the source and target texts.

These findings demonstrate that grammatical equivalence is achieved not by replicating the same grammatical structures but by conveying the same meaning through structures that are appropriate for the target language. This supports the view that translation equivalence should be understood in functional rather than purely formal terms.

Linguistic Shifts in Achieving Translation Equivalence

The analysis also identifies several types of linguistic shifts that occur in the translation process. Linguistic shifts refer to changes in linguistic form that occur when meaning is transferred from the source language to the target language (Chesterman, 2016). These shifts are a natural consequence of the structural and lexical differences between languages. One common type of shift observed in the data is structural shift. Structural shifts occur when the grammatical structure of the translated sentence differs from that of the source sentence. Such shifts often result from differences in sentence patterns between English and Indonesian. For example, English noun phrases may be reorganized in Indonesian to follow different modifier–head relationships. These structural changes enable translators to produce sentences that are grammatically acceptable in the target language.

Another type of shift involves lexical substitution, in which translators select different lexical items to represent the meaning of the source text. Lexical shifts may occur when direct equivalents are unavailable or when certain words would sound unnatural in the target language. By selecting alternative lexical items, translators can maintain semantic meaning while adapting the text to the linguistic norms of the target language. The presence of linguistic shifts in the data confirms that translation is a process of negotiation between languages rather than simple linguistic replication. As argued by Pym (2018), translation requires balancing fidelity to the source text with the communicative effectiveness of the

target text. Linguistic shifts allow translators to bridge structural differences between languages while preserving the essential meaning of the original text. Furthermore, the findings suggest that linguistic shifts contribute to the naturalness and readability of translated texts. Without such shifts, translations might appear rigid or unnatural because they would closely mirror the structure of the source language. By adapting linguistic structures, translators ensure that the translated text functions effectively within the grammatical and stylistic conventions of the target language.

In summary, the discussion highlights that equivalence in English–Indonesian translation is achieved through a combination of lexical selection, grammatical adaptation, and linguistic shifts. These processes reflect the dynamic and interpretative nature of translation, in which translators actively negotiate meaning between languages. The findings reinforce the theoretical perspective that translation equivalence should be understood as a functional relationship rather than a strict correspondence between linguistic forms. Through careful linguistic analysis, translators can successfully convey meaning across languages while respecting the structural and cultural characteristics of the target language.

CONCLUSION

This study examined equivalence in English–Indonesian translation from a linguistic perspective, focusing on lexical equivalence, grammatical equivalence, and linguistic shifts. The findings indicate that achieving equivalence in translation involves more than direct word-for-word correspondence. Translators employ various linguistic strategies to ensure that the meaning of the source text is accurately conveyed while maintaining naturalness in the target language.

The analysis shows that lexical equivalence is achieved through direct translation when equivalent terms are available, as well as through paraphrasing and contextual adaptation when direct equivalents are not possible. These strategies enable translators to preserve semantic meaning while addressing differences in vocabulary between English and Indonesian. In addition, grammatical equivalence is often realized through structural adjustments, particularly in relation to tense, sentence structure, and voice. Because English and Indonesian have different grammatical systems, translators frequently adapt grammatical forms to produce more natural expressions in the target language (Baker, 2018; Sneddon et al., 2018).

The findings also reveal that linguistic shifts are a common and necessary aspect of the translation process. Structural shifts and lexical substitutions allow translators to reconcile differences between the two languages while maintaining the intended meaning of the original text. Rather than indicating translation errors, these shifts represent adaptive strategies that support functional equivalence between source and target texts (Chesterman, 2016; Pym, 2018).

Overall, the study highlights that equivalence in English–Indonesian translation is achieved through a dynamic process involving lexical selection, grammatical adaptation, and linguistic shifts. These findings contribute to the understanding of translation practices and emphasize the importance of linguistic analysis in translation studies. Future research may further explore

equivalence in translation by examining larger datasets or different text genres in order to gain deeper insights into the complexities of English–Indonesian translation.

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