

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's interconnected global society, effective communication across languages is essential. Translation enables this by connecting people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As a concept, translation can be understood in three interrelated ways. First, it refers to the academic study of converting meaning between languages. Second, it describes the careful, detail-oriented process of transferring words and ideas from one language to another. Third, it denotes the end product that results from this process (Munday et al., 2022). Beyond its functional purpose, translation facilitates the sharing of knowledge, perspectives, and cultural values across diverse linguistic communities (Pym, 2014).

The process of translation requires more than knowledge of vocabulary and grammar; it also involves interpreting multiple layers of meaning. Polysemy—words that possess multiple related meanings (Kroeger, 2018; Haber & Poesio, 2024)—poses challenges for translators. Polysemic words introduce ambiguity that complicates translation. Therefore, accurate interpretation depends on careful contextual analysis. As Kroeger (2018) explains, linguistic, cultural, and situational contexts often determine the intended meaning of an ambiguous word. For translators, handling polysemic words necessitates going beyond literal meanings to identify the word's function and connotation in its specific context. Neglecting these contextual factors can lead to translations that distort the original message.

This challenge is amplified for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, as evidenced by studies conducted over the past decade. Research by Salem (2014), Wei and Lou (2015), Alnamer (2017), Abdulaal (2019), Haddad and Guechi (2019), Jalali and Rad (2020), Abdulsafi and Al-Sa'adi (2020), Al-Jarf (2022), and Li (2022) collectively highlight the difficulties EFL students face when translating polysemic words. While their findings vary in scope and context, a common thread across these studies is the role of limited vocabulary and insufficient lexical awareness as major barriers. Many EFL students tend to default to a word's most familiar or primary meaning, often without recognising alternative or context-dependent senses.

Although Salem (2014), Wei and Lou (2015), Alnamer (2017), Abdulaal (2019), Haddad and Guechi (2019), Jalali and Rad (2020), Abdulsafi and Al-Sa'adi (2020), Al-Jarf (2022), and Li (2022) have stressed the importance of vocabulary acquisition and expansion in addressing the challenges of polysemy translation for EFL students, there remain notable gaps that require further exploration. Firstly, there is limited research on the predominant types of translation errors encountered by EFL students when translating polysemic words. Examining these errors can provide a clearer understanding of the challenges students face in translating polysemy.

Secondly, limited attention has been given to the ways in which EFL students perceive and navigate the complexities of translating polysemic words. Understanding their perspectives is crucial, as it offers valuable insights into their thought processes, problem-solving strategies, and coping mechanisms when handling ambiguous vocabulary. Such insights can inform the development of targeted interventions to better support EFL students in addressing challenges related to polysemy and improving their overall translation skills.

Lastly, while most studies have focused on Chinese and Arab EFL students, research on the challenges of polysemy translation among Indonesian EFL students is limited, despite searches over the past decade on platforms such as Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar, Open Knowledge Maps, Connected Papers, and ResearchGate. This scarcity presents an opportunity to contribute significantly to existing knowledge in polysemy translation. Consequently, the researcher is motivated to investigate the challenges faced by EFL students at University of LIA, considering the institution's long-standing reputation in language education in Indonesia.

1.2 Statements of Problems

1. What are the predominant types of translation errors produced by EFL students at University of LIA when dealing with polysemy in translation?
2. What challenges do EFL students at University of LIA report when dealing with polysemy in translation?
3. What translation strategies do EFL students at University of LIA employ to address the challenges of polysemy in translation?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the predominant types of translation errors produced by EFL students at University of LIA when dealing with polysemy in translation.
2. To examine the challenges reported by EFL students at University of LIA when dealing with polysemy in translation.
3. To explore the translation strategies employed by EFL students at University of LIA to address the challenges of polysemy in translation.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The scope and limitations of this study are defined to provide clarity and prevent misinterpretation. This study examined the challenges of translating polysemy among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at University of LIA. Following Creswell and Creswell's (2022) recommendation of a minimum sample size of 20 participants for qualitative research, the study involved 20 fifth-semester EFL students enrolled in the Translation Workshop course.

Data collection was conducted in a single session using two instruments: a translation test and a questionnaire. Both instruments were designed by the researcher and underwent a content validity review through expert judgment, in line with the procedures suggested by Almanasreh et al. (2019). Due to logistical and resource constraints, only one expert was consulted to assess the instruments for alignment with the study's objectives and suitability for eliciting the intended data.

In the translation test, each polysemic word was restricted to two meanings. This approach was intended to keep the task manageable for participants and to reduce cognitive load, as including all possible meanings could have overwhelmed students and complicated the assessment of their translation performance. The polysemic words were selected for their relevance to the theme and flow of the text, ensuring contextual appropriateness. Limiting the scope in this manner allows the study to focus on how students manage polysemy while maintaining a realistic task.

The study adopted Popović's general error typology (Moorkens et al., 2018) to categorise the translation errors produced by students. The PACTE model of translation competence (PACTE, 2003) was also used to interpret the underlying causes of errors and identify competence gaps. However, because students were prohibited from using dictionaries during the translation test, the study did not examine instrumental sub-competence.

To examine how students handled the translation of polysemic words, this study uses the terms systematic strategy and linear strategy to describe two patterns observed in their responses. These terms are not formal theoretical constructs but serve as analytical labels to categorise and interpret students' behaviour in this study. They are informed by theoretical perspectives from Petho (2001), Newmark (1988), Kroeger (2018), Nord (2018), and Haber and Poesio (2024), which discuss meaning derivation, semantic processing, and the role of context in translation.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a descriptive qualitative approach. Quasi-experimental designs, akin to experimental designs, manipulate one or more variables to determine an outcome. However, two key distinctions set quasi-experimental designs apart. Firstly, unlike experimental designs, quasi-experiments do not incorporate random assignment for their respondents. Instead, they rely on pre-existing groups. Secondly, whereas experimental designs entail intentional manipulation by the researcher, quasi-experimental studies observe changes in variables prompted by external factors or events (Rasinger, 2013).

In the context of this study, participants were grouped based on their enrolment in the Translation Workshop course rather than through random allocation. This design choice aligns with the research objectives, as it allowed for a focused analysis of how naturally existing differences among Indonesian EFL students contribute to variations in the challenges they encounter when translating polysemic words.

On the other hand, a qualitative research approach entails interpreting the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings of individuals or groups to gain rich insights into social phenomena, behaviours, and processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Patton, 2015). Creswell and Creswell (2022) highlight the descriptive method

in qualitative research, emphasising its analytical approach that prioritises proximity to the data while minimising the imposition of extensive frameworks or interpretations. Instead of imposing preconceived notions or theories onto the data, researchers adopt a more open-minded stance, allowing the data to reveal its insights. This approach involves meticulously examining the details and nuances within the data to understand the investigated phenomena from the participants' perspectives. Employing techniques such as coding, categorisation, and organisation unveils underlying patterns, themes, and meanings within the data.

In the context of this research, the descriptive qualitative approach aligns with the study's objectives. It enables a thorough exploration of the subjective experiences and perspectives of the participants, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered by Indonesian EFL students when translating polysemic words and the strategies they employed to overcome them.

1.5.1 Sample

This study employed purposive sampling, or judgmental sampling, as quasi-experimental designs do not use randomised grouping (Rasinger, 2013). Purposive sampling involves intentionally selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research (Etikan et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher deliberately selected fifth-semester EFL students taking the Translation Workshop course at University of LIA. To capture a diverse range of perspectives but also ensure feasibility, the researcher adhered to Creswell and Creswell's (2022) minimum sample size requirement for descriptive qualitative research, which is 20 participants. This selection aimed to gather insights from individuals most likely to encounter polysemy translation in their coursework.

1.5.2 Data Collection Techniques

The researcher developed two instruments to capture and analyse the phenomenon under study. To ensure content validity, both instruments underwent expert judgment, which is the process of obtaining evaluations from qualified professionals to determine the relevance and representativeness of an instrument's elements for the targeted construct and purpose (Almanasreh et al., 2019). According to the criteria outlined by Almanasreh et al. (2019), an expert is an individual who possesses both theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the domain under investigation, with a clear understanding of the conceptual and operational definitions of the constructs being evaluated. In this study, the expert reviewer was a translation lecturer from the University of LIA with over 19 years of teaching experience and a formal educational background in translation.

1. Translation Test

The translation test was administered in written format during a single 120-minute session with 20 selected EFL students. It featured a text containing 20 polysemic words for translation (see Appendix 1A and 1B). To ensure appropriateness for the participants, the text's readability and grade level were assessed using the Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL) formulas. Previous studies have validated these formulas across different contexts, demonstrating their reliability in assessing text readability and comprehension levels (Paasche-Orlow et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2013; Wrigley Kelly et al., 2021). The Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) score ranges from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating

greater readability. Scores between 90–100 are considered very easy, 80–89 easy, 70–79 fairly easy, 60–69 standard, 50–59 fairly difficult, 30–49 difficult, and 0–29 very confusing. The Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL) complements this by expressing readability in terms of U.S. school grade levels, where a score of 1.0 corresponds to first grade, 6.0 to sixth grade, 12.0 to twelfth grade, and so forth, with higher scores reflecting texts suited for college-level readers. The text in the translation test scored 72.9 on the FRE, which falls in the “fairly easy” range, and 6.4 on the FKGL, indicating a level appropriate for 6th–7th grade readers in the U.S. system. This suggests that the text was accessible for students with intermediate English proficiency. The test also included open-ended questions to explore students’ understanding of polysemy.

To accurately assess students’ mental lexicon and comprehension of polysemic words, the use of dictionaries and machine translation tools was prohibited. The researcher supervised the session directly, maintaining a standardised and controlled environment to minimise external influences and enhance the reliability of the results. The evaluation of the translation test focused specifically on the polysemic words in the text rather than the text as a whole.

2. Questionnaire

Following the translation test, the researcher administered a supplementary questionnaire to all 20 selected EFL students within the same session. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, designed to capture students’ personal perspectives on the specific

challenges they encountered during the translation process and the strategies they employed to overcome them. To enhance the credibility of the qualitative findings, the researcher implemented a member-checking process, allowing students to review summarised interpretations of their responses and confirm that they accurately reflected their experiences and insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

1.5.3 Data Analysis Techniques

This study employed Creswell and Creswell's (2022) descriptive method for data analysis. A descriptive method involves closely engaging with the data while using limited frameworks to explain the findings. The data analysis process followed several steps:

1. Organise the collected data from translation tests and questionnaires for analysis.
2. Review the translation test results and questionnaire entries to comprehensively understand the content.
3. Code the data by systematically categorising recurring themes and patterns identified in the translation test results and questionnaire responses.
4. Identify overarching themes by examining the coded data to detect commonalities and variations across participants.
5. Represent and interpret the data by synthesising the identified themes to provide meaningful insights into the predominant types of translation errors made by EFL students at University of LIA when translating polysemic words, the challenges they perceived during the translation process, and the strategies they employed to navigate them.

1.6 Organisation of Writing

This thesis is organised into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the study by providing a comprehensive background, articulating the research problems, and outlining the study's purpose, objectives, scope, limitations, and methodological framework. The chapter concludes by presenting the organisation of writing, offering a clear roadmap for the reader.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework. This section explores theories, concepts, and models that form the study's foundation. Critical engagement with the relevant literature provides context for the research problems and offers a conceptual guide for analysing the findings. This chapter ensures that the study is grounded in existing scholarship while addressing gaps or new perspectives.

The research findings are presented and analysed in the third chapter. The chapter begins by outlining the study's results, followed by a detailed discussion that interprets these findings. The researcher identified key patterns, themes, and trends and compared them with previous research to highlight the study's significance and contributions.

Finally, the fourth chapter concludes the thesis by synthesising the main findings and drawing conclusions. This chapter reflects on the implications of the research, offering recommendations for both practice and future studies. Additionally, it addresses any limitations encountered during the research process. Together, these chapters create a coherent narrative that guides the reader through the research journey from its conceptual foundations to its conclusion.