



ERROR ANALYSIS IN TRANSLATING INDEFINITE ARTICLE ON MODIFIED AND NON-MODIFIED NOUN

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Abstract

Indefinite article in the surface may seem unimportant but it has uniqueness. Indefinite article “a” or “an” in a noun phrase can differentiate the number of noun without using plural mark. Besides, it cannot be used with certain nouns. Regarding this rule, it should be easy because there is a clear border. However, students of this research still could not acknowledge the rule of use of indefinite article. In another word, the goal of this research is to reveal the translation of indefinite article followed by noun or noun phrase and the classification of errors they make. The respondents are the fifth semester students of English Education Department in IAIN Bone. The sample of this research is 20 students from English education department who have been taught the material of article as registered in 2019/2020 academic year. The sentences translated by respondents are retrieved from book *A Practical English Grammar* (Thomson & Martinet, 1986) and from website <https://www.vedantu.com/english/omission-of-article>. Sentences are shared through Whatsapp text as well as the answers from the students. The data are analyzed by using descriptive qualitative method. The result of this research is that students still make error in translating the noun phrase in which they are still not able to differentiate the translation of noun or noun phrase with article or they should omit it.

Keywords: English Article, Noun Phrase, Incorrect Translation

INTRODUCTION

English is like other languages which has system of use. This system is called grammar. Talking about it, there is a huge discussion and explanation about grammar. According to Swan (1996), grammar is the rules arranging how words are combined and changed to show different aspect of meaning. The materials of grammar are underlying principle and guideline of how to use English in appropriate way for its speaker.

One of the materials discussed in grammar is article. Article is a part of speech which accompanies noun in phrase, clause, or sentence. Article can be divided into two types namely indefinite article and definite article. Each of these types is used accordingly. Furthermore, meaning of the article relies on the noun following it whether nouns are person, animal, or thing. It does not seem actually complicated unless it is for the students who learn English as a foreign language. According to Germanna Community College (2014) students from non-native English countries are still confused in using article. The non-native English speakers may create various meanings or even incorrectness in translating noun or noun phrase with the articles. So that, the comprehension of using article in a correct way is basic knowledge that students must master in composing sentence or making utterance. As a result, this research has to be conducted to reveal sentential mistranslations done by the fifth semester students at IAIN Bone focused on the use of indefinite article and its noun or noun phrase.

Issue on article translation has drawn researchers' attention to conduct inquiry and investigation. Plenty of researches have been undergone to discuss the problem of article translation. Some of researches are problems of translating definite and indefinite articles from English into Arabic by Dr. Misbah M. D. al-Sulaimaan and Ahmed R. Kh Alsinjari (2018). Their research focused on the difficulty of specifying the type of reference of each article involves in its co-text and context. They compared the article systems in both language and specified the method of article translation. Next, Florentina Suharjati (2011) made a research to

find out how articles are translated into Indonesia in the novel namely "A Child Called It". Along with this, another research of translation strategy was undergone by Alfi (2018). She investigated the changes of derived nouns as head of noun phrase when translating from English into Indonesia and the strategies used. In addition, in the aspect of English as a second language or L2, Lee (2020) investigated how abstract nouns particularly less familiar are accompanied by article. In the same topic of L2, Nickalls (2010) focused his research on overuse and underuse of English articles by Mandarin learners using a small error-tagged learner corpus during three months preessional university program. He examined his samples in their way of article interlanguage and their reaction to explicit grammar teaching. In another aspect, the process of translation by using machine instead of manual way was investigated by some scholars. They found out the accuracy level of Google translator in translating English noun phrases into Indonesian (Nainggolan et al, 2020).

Unlike those recent studies, this current research focuses only the translation of indefinite article on modified and non-modified noun done by the fifth semester students at IAIN Bone. Some nouns are capable of being independent from their modifier and the rest could be accompanied by modifier. Based on this dichotomy, the rules of article usage follow this pattern. According to Thomson and Martinet (1986: 15-16) indefinite article can be accompanied countable nouns or other classifications and also it can be omitted for three reasons which are before plural and uncountable nouns and also before name of meals except those are preceded by an adjective. This exceptional condition is still out of student's knowledge so that the potency of doing error in translation highly occurs. This research intends to reveal this phenomenon.

METHOD

Research Design

The researcher applied the qualitative method in this investigation. Qualitative research emphasized on process and meaning of social reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Such phenomenon did not aim to be counted in terms of quantity, intensity, or frequency. It stressed on the relationship of the researcher and what she or he studied. This method would give answer of what was being happened in situational condition and how social condition was created and given meaning. This method was suitable with this research in which it tried to investigate the errors of translating indefinite article done by students.

Research Time and Subject

This research was undergone in the early of 2022 and its subject was the students of English education department as registered in 2019/2020 academic year in IAIN Bone. The author purposively chose the sample because they had to have prior knowledge about indefinite article. As these students on this semester have studied basic English grammar on the former semester. According to Creswell (2012) purposive sampling is when researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. This kind of sampling is conducted because the respondents are rich for information.

Research Procedure

In collecting the data, the author faced several steps as follows;

1. The researcher collected the texts of source language from two references. The sentences retrieved from book *A Practical English Grammar* (Thomson & Martinet, 1986) and from website <https://www.vedantu.com/english/omission-of-article>.

2. Sentences were shared through text in Whatsapp group and then students answered and finally sent their answers via private chat of WhatsApp.
3. The researcher took notes of all the answers to find out the types of translation that students apply. She focused only on the noun and noun phrase translation. Then, to support the analysis, she looked up in the English Indonesian online dictionary to clarify the literal meaning of the nouns.

Research Instrument

The author employed textual instrument in this investigation. For the sake of effectiveness, the sentences which would be translated were shared in social media group which is Whatsapp and the answers from students were sent to private chat in Whatsapp too. Then, the author wrote the sentences along with their translations one by one as the students answered.

Research Analysis

Data analysis was described qualitatively in which it was done as follows:

1. The whole raw data was written as the number of respondents.
2. After that, author read and tried to detect the error in the noun phrases made by respondents and gave underline marker below the errors.
3. The author made analysis according to the concept of indefinite article as can be seen on the books of Thomson & Martinet (1986) and Aik & Hui (1999)..

FINDINGS

The data of English sentences along with their translation in bahasa received from students were displayed in the followings.

Datum no.1:

“They live in a flat” has been translated into bahasa Indonesia as:

6 students from 20 students or 30% answer *mereka tinggal di sebuah flat*.

14 students from 20 students or or 70 % answer *mereka tinggal di sebuah apartemen*.

According to Cambridge English Indonesian online dictionary, “flat” means *apartemen* or *dataran*. The former meaning looks like more acceptable in context of this sentence than the later version. The sentence “they live in flat” indicates someone’s residence or a place to live rather than biological environment for instance “mud flats”. So, “flat” can be converted into bahasa Indonesia as *apartemen*. In addition, the lexeme “flat” is also comprehensible as *flat* in bahasa Indonesia if the source language is British English. In addition, 100% students put the translation of indefinite article in their sentences which is *sebuah* before *apartment* or *flat* as the translation of “flat”. It is grammatically correct even though the translation of indefinite “a” is not obligatory.

Datum no.2:

“They live in flats” is translated into bahasa Indonesia as:

6 students from 20 students or 30% answer *mereka tinggal di flat*.

2 students from 20 students or 10% answer *mereka tinggal di apartemen-apartemen*.

7 students from 20 students or 35% answer *mereka tinggal di apartemen*.

4 students from 20 students or 20% answer *mereka tinggal di banyak apartemen*.

1 student from 20 students or 5% answer *mereka tinggal di beberapa apartemen*.

35% is the highest percentage of all. However, this majority creates distinct semantic perception about the same source language. 35% students convert “they live in flats” in bahasa

Indonesia as *mereka tinggal di apartemen*. The message from source language tends to deviate in the noun phrase because if *mereka tinggal di apartemen* is reconverted into English, the sentence is “they live in flat/a flat” which is different in singular and plural number of noun phrase in both of language. Furthermore, “they live in flats” indicates the meaning that everyone is living in each apartment whereas *mereka tinggal di apartemen* or “they live in flat” indicates that one apartment is for all. This is obviously distinctive and both of them refer to different conditions. It is understandable that the best comprehensible meaning should be *mereka tinggal di apartemen-apartemen* indicating that everyone has a flat to live not a shared flat for everyone. This message of the meaning is only got by 10% students.

Datum no.3:

The sentence “we have breakfast at eight” is translated as *kami sarapan pukul delapan*. 20 from 20 students or 100% answer the source language into target language as mentioned above. The translation in target language clearly matches with the source language. All of the students can comprehend the message in source language and then convert them to the target language.

Datum no.4:

“He gave us a good breakfast” is translated as:

17 students from 20 or 85% answer *dia memberi kami sarapan yang enak*.

1 student from 20 or 5% answers *dia memberi kami sebuah sarapan yang bagus/enak*.

1 student from 20 or 5% answers *dia memberi kami sarapan yang baik*.

1 student from 20 or 5% answers *dia memberi kami sarapan pagi yang enak*.

The word “breakfast” is separated into two sentences. First, it stands alone or it has not modifier (as you can see on datum no. 3) and the second one as the head of the phrase (datum no. 4). Grammatically, if the latter sentence is translated, the article has to appear in the target language because this kind of meal has been modified by the adjective “good”. Certainly, the word “breakfast” in the first sentence does not have the article because it mentions kind of meal except of which has been preceded by an adjective (Thomson & Martinet, 1986).

All students have correctly done translation of the first noun phrase on datum no. 3 but only 1 student from 20 students has correctly translated the noun phrase in datum no.4. Grammatically, the phrase “a good breakfast” and the word “breakfast” have to be distinguished in translation since the rule mentions so. In spite of the fact that it is only the matter of article, students still do error. This phenomenon displays the significant difference of correctness in translating a noun phrase with or without an article.

Datum no. 5:

“I was invited to dinner” is translated *saya diundang untuk makan malam*.

20 from 20 students or 100% translate the noun phrase in source language into the target language correctly. According to Thomson & Martinet (1986) omission of article is used before names of meals except of those preceded by an adjective or it is a special meal given to celebrate something or someone’s honor.

Datum no. 6:

The sentence “I was invited to a dinner given to welcome the new ambassador” is translated as follows:

14 students from 20 or 70% answer *saya diundang makan malam yang diberikan untuk menyambut duta besar yang baru*.

5 students from 20 or 25% answer *saya diundang makan malam untuk menyambut duta besar yang baru.*

1 student from 20 or 5% answers *saya diundang makan malam sebagai acara selamat datang duta baru.*

The noun phrase “a dinner given to” in a sentence “I was invited to a dinner given to welcome the new ambassador” is slightly different with “I was invited to dinner”. The former mentions specific occasion for the dinner which is to welcome or to celebrate new ambassador and the latter mentions the usual dinner which is not specially purposed. The article in the first sentence should be put in translation since it is a special occasion of something. In other words, it should be *saya diundang pada sebuah acara makan malam untuk menyambut duta besar yang baru.* All of the respondents in this research omit the translation of the article where they should put it.

Datum no. 7:

The sentence “I have a brown and black dog” is translated as follows:

14 students from 20 or 70% answer *saya memiliki anjing coklat dan hitam.*

4 students from 20 or 20% answer *saya memiliki seekor anjing coklat dan anjing hitam.*

2 students from 20 or 10% answer *saya memiliki seekor anjing berwarna coklat dan hitam.*

Semantic aspect of this sentence indicates that there is only one dog whose colors are brown and black. It can be seen that 2 students of 20 comprehend this meaning while other 18 students still make unclear translation of the noun phrase “a brown and black dog”. It is because the presence of the word *berwarna coklat dan hitam* indicating there is only one dog whose colors of its fur are brown and black. This translation is clear and unambiguous.

Datum no.8:

The sentence “I have a brown and a black dog” is translated as follows:

17 students from 20 or 85% answer *saya memiliki seekor anjing coklat dan seekor anjing hitam.*

1 student from 20 or 5% answers *saya memiliki anjing coklat dan hitam.*

2 students from 20 or 10% answer *saya memiliki seekor anjing berwarna coklat dan seekor anjing berwarna hitam.*

Unlike the sentence in datum 7 that there is only one dog whose colors are brown and black, this linguistic configuration indicates that there are two dogs which speaker refers to. First is a brown dog and second is a black one. From this research only 1 student whose answer is the same as the meaning of the former sentence (datum 7) which is *saya memiliki anjing coklat dan hitam.* Other students have translated the sentence correctly.

DISCUSSION

Article is under the big umbrella called part of speech (Aik & Hui, 1999) and it also belongs to the group of determiner (Swan, 1996). Articles are broadly divided into two classes namely indefinite and definite article. *A* and *An* are indefinite articles signaling noun in general speaking while *the* is the signal of definitive noun to mean the particular noun. Articles which is going to dig more here is only indefinite article. It is the marker to indicate a single unspecific noun. It is positioned before noun so that it is classified also as adjective (Aik & Hui, 1999).

The use of indefinite article has long been known that it is accompanied by singular countable noun as in “a dog is an animal” (Azar, 2001). Whether it is *A* or *An*, it can be decided by the sound of the first word has. In other word, it is decided phonetically but not

- I live in Makassar now.
- c) Before names of subjects or fields of study;
Mathematics is my favorite subject.
He is carrying out some research in sociolinguistics.
- d) Before certain set of fixed phrases
“John is in prison” means John is prisoner.
“John is in the prison” means that John visits someone in prison.
- “I visited Jack in hospital” means Jack is sick.
“Jack is working in a hospital in New York” means certain hospital is referred to.
- “He is going to college” means he will be a college student.
“He is going to a good college” means certain college is referred to.
- e) Before certain names of illnesses as follows;
Acne, appendicitis, cancer, cholera, diphtheria, influenza, malaria, pneumonia, typhoid, tuberculosis, toothache.

This rule of article should be obeyed by non-native English speaker both in writing and speaking so that they produce correctness. If they do not do so, error as consequence might occur. Although the presence of article in meaning is not so crucial because it does not change the meaning, competence of knowing the usage of article is really helpful and basic need for mastering the whole aspects of grammar. Furthermore, article might be still confusing for non-native English speakers especially students for instance the presence of “a” followed by “few” (Priyasudiarja, 2006);

“I have *a few friends* in Yogyakarta” versus “I have *few friends* in Yogyakarta”

Both of sentences are correct syntactically and structured accordingly. In spite of it, each of these represents different meaning. As the writer have said before, the presence and absence of article in a sentence might not be significant in the aspect of syntax or it does not much change the core meaning of the sentence but still it creates dissimilar meaning in the sentence. One may presents positive meaning but the other may not (Priyasudiarja, 2006).

In this research, the error mostly happens in the omission. Article in target language is not translated which in this case, the translation of the different noun phrase becomes the same as can be seen in the following table (the article along with its translation is designated in bold):

Table 1. Data of Research

Datum 1	A flat	<i>Sebuah flat</i>	6 students
		<i>Sebuah apartemen</i>	14 students
Datum 2	Flats	<i>Flat</i>	6 students
		<i>Apartemen-apartemen</i>	2 students
		<i>Apartemen</i>	7 students
		<i>Banyak apartemen</i>	4 students
		<i>Beberapa apartemen</i>	1 student
Datum 3	Breakfast	<i>Sarapan</i>	20 students
Datum 4	A good breakfast	<i>Sarapan yang enak</i>	17 students
		<i>Sebuah sarapan yang bagus/enak</i>	1 student
		<i>Sarapan yang baik</i>	1 student
		<i>Sarapan pagi yang enak</i>	1 student
Datum 5	Dinner	<i>Makan malam</i>	20 students
Datum 6	A dinner to celebrate	<i>Makan malam yang diberikan</i>	14 students
		<i>Makan malam untuk menyambut</i>	5 students
		<i>Makan malam sebagai acara</i>	1 student

selamat datang duta baru

Datum 7	A brown and black dog	<i>Anjing coklat dan hitam</i>	14 students
		<i>Seekor anjing coklat dan anjing hitam</i>	4 students
		<i>Seekor anjing berwarna coklat dan hitam</i>	2 students
Datum 8	A brown dog and a black dog	<i>Seekor anjing coklat dan seekor anjing hitam</i>	17 students
		<i>Anjing coklat dan hitam</i>	1 student
		<i>Seekor anjing berwarna coklat dan seekor anjing berwarna hitam</i>	2 students

Basically, the data are delivered in pairs between the noun phrase with article and without article in order to analyze the students' comprehension in differentiating the translation of both noun phrases. If the data are seen qualitatively as above, there is still error in translating article in bahasa. Besides, if they are seen quantitatively, the number of correctness is still low. It can be seen, for instance, in datum number 4 where only 1 student who translate the article. Surprisingly, the article in datum number 6 does not translate in bahasa Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on this research, respondents which are in this case students still do incorrectness in translating English article into Bahasa Indonesia. At a glance, indefinite article seems give weak effect in translation. It does not give change the core meaning if it does not translate in a noun phrase. However, at certain condition, indefinite article has to be appeared in translation. This indicates that the importance of comprehending part of speech especially the use of indefinite article following modified and non-modified noun.

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