

Students' Reading Habit, Writing Interest, and Translation Ability on Indonesian Contextual Phrases

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Abstract: This study was aimed to find out if the students' reading habit and writing interest had a significant correlation as well as gave a significant contribution to their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. One hundred and seventy students of Sriwijaya University, PGRI University and state polytechnic of Sriwijaya took part as the samples. To estimate the correlation among the variables, a quantitative research method including a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression were used. The result showed that the correlation between students' reading habit and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases was 0.082 with the significant level of 0.287 which meant no significant correlation. The correlation between students' writing interest and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases was 0.109 with the significant level of 0.159 indicating also no significant correlation. When both students' reading habit and writing interest were combined, the contribution to their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases was only 1.4% (R^2 0.014) which was too little to be considered significant. Some qualitative explanations for the unexpected results were offered and the implications of the findings were accounted for.

Keywords: reading habit, writing interest, translation ability, Indonesian contextual phrases

Abstrak: Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk mengetahui apakah terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara kebiasaan membaca dan minat mahasiswa dalam menulis terhadap kemampuan mereka dalam menerjemahkan frase-frase Bahasa Indonesia yang memerlukan pemahaman secara kontekstual ke dalam Bahasa Inggris. Seratus tujuh puluh mahasiswa dari Universitas Sriwijaya, Universitas PGRI dan Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya turut ambil bagian sebagai sampel. Untuk menganalisis korelasi antara variabel-variabelnya, metode kuantitatif dengan Pearson Product-Moment Correlation dan multiple regression telah digunakan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa korelasi antara kebiasaan membaca mahasiswa dan kemampuan menterjemahkan frase-frase tersebut adalah 0,082 dengan tingkat signifikansi sebesar 0,287 yang artinya tidak terdapat korelasi yang signifikan. Korelasi antara minat mahasiswa dalam menulis dengan kemampuan mereka dalam menterjemah merujuk pada angka 0,109 dengan level signifikansi sebesar 0,150 yang juga mengindikasikan ketiadaan korelasi yang signifikan. Ketika kebiasaan membaca dan minat menulis digabungkan, kontribusinya terhadap kemampuan menterjemahkan hanyalah 1,4% (R^2 0,014), terlalu kecil untuk dikatakan signifikan. Temuan tersebut juga dijelaskan secara kualitatif berdasarkan data dan hasil survei di lapangan.

Kata kunci: kebiasaan membaca, minat menulis, kemampuan menterjemah, frase bahasa Indonesia dalam konteksnya

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Any logic would agree that the more we read, the more vocabulary we shall have. With a sufficient amount of vocabulary, we shall be able to not only write better but also translate better. To sustain and develop our capacity as writers and translators, we shall need to read constantly until it may become a habit. This, in general, when depicted in a picture, will formulate a perfect triangle where its corners: reading, writing, and translation, support one another in mutual benefit. However, if this triangle were shifted to a condition where more specific values were brought to sight and scrutinized in detail, would the perfect picture remain the same or be contorted? However, before we get to the answer, the following words of the experts on the concerned language skills are worthy of our consideration:

According to Schulte (2014, p. 1), reading is a continuous process of translation. When one starts capturing words from a text, one begins to fill one's mind with information to either add to one's knowledge or to provide certain pleasure to oneself. As reading can reflect the translation of certain data into quite a different form like entertainment or information, reading cannot be separated from translation. In other words, they are correlated. In general, reading habit positively correlates with translation ability. However, in a more specific manner, this study would very possibly come up with quite a different explanation.

As for writing interest, it can put one to work at writing and sustain the motivation to progress on that particular line of interest. As whether or not writing itself may serve as a contribution towards the development of one's translation ability, the following theory has some words to say. Writing is closely related to the ability to translate from L2 into L1 and from L1 into L2 (Kavaliauskienė, 2010, p. 1). Writing helps to smooth the path for better translation as it provides the preliminary requirements which translation demands such as good diction, good management of words, sufficient background information, coherent flows of thoughts, etc. To sum it up, translation ability benefits from writing. No translation would ever be accomplished if writing were to be pushed out of the way or be cut off from translation altogether. This study would analyze

if a more specific kind of translation like translating Indonesian contextual phrases would owe much to writing interest.

In addition, it is common knowledge that reading, writing, and translation are correlated with one another through words. Reading is impossible without words and that goes the same with either writing or translation. That is probably the simplest way of viewing that they are, somehow, interconnected and linked with each other. In line with that, Razmjou (2013, p. 1) stated that translation ability would progress as reading and writing skills were developed. However, the researcher's study was not meant to falsify the statement since any logic would come in full support of it. This study would attempt to look into another possibility when the scope of discussions was focused specifically on reading habit, writing interest, and translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases.

To get to know these Indonesian contextual phrases better, let us put them on the spotlight. These phrases require discourse analysis to decide whether or not the words should be translated verbatim or meaning-basedly. It all depends on their contexts which, accordingly, has made the term "Indonesian Contextual Phrases" come into use. The followings are the examples of the phrases in question (see Table 1).

In the above example, only one phrase (*kehilangan muka*) can be translated verbatim (*lose face*), although its meaning may not be derived literally.

METHOD

A quantitative research method was applied for the sake of finding out the present facts about students' attitude, interest, and habits in reading and writing in relation to their performance in translation. The population consisted of 338 first year students of Sriwijaya University, PGRI University and State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya. The number was reduced to 170 to serve as the sample through Simple Random Sampling Method.

In this study, there were three variables comprised of two predictor variables and one criterion variable. The predictor variables were students' reading habit and students' writing interest; meanwhile, the criterion variable was

Table 1. Indonesian Contextual Phrases

Indonesian Contextual Phrases	The Possible English Equivalent
1. adu domba	1. play one off against another
2. berbadan dua	2. pregnant, (be) expecting
3. campur tangan	3. interfere
4. datang bulan	4. (be) on one's period
5. gagap teknologi	5. technology illiterate
6. kabar burung	6. hearsay
7. kawin lari	7. elope
8. kehilangan muka	8. lose face
9. kelinci percobaan	9. guinea pig
10. kumpul kebo	10. cohabit
11. dll.	11. etc

students' translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. The students' reading habit and their writing interest were indicated by the scores of the questionnaires they were required to fill in, while their translation ability was measured by the scores of their translation test they would have to undergo. The test was made by the researcher himself based on the questions his students loved to ask him about and the Indonesian expressions the researcher had accumulated so far. The research also used several English dictionaries such as Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, Dictionary of Contemporary English, or Online Dictionary to confirm the validity of the answer key to the test.

To find out the validity of the test and the questionnaires, the researcher analyzed the data based on the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient as instructed by Priyatno (2012, p. 118). In the questionnaire validity measure, the *r* Table pointed at 0.312 as it was in line with the number of the try-out participants (38 students). The results revealed that out of 56 items, which the researcher had prepared, 33 items exceeded 0.312 level and therefore were considered valid. As for the test, the 80 questions that the researcher had prepared were reduced to 48 questions which were valid through the same technique of analysis.

To get the reliability, the 33 valid questionnaire items were typed in and processed through Cronbach Alpha technique, 31 items came out as reliable as they exceeded the 0.7 point which

was the acceptable level of reliability (Priyatno, 2012, p. 120). As for the test, with the same technique of analysis, all of the 48 valid items had also been processed and proven reliable with their reliability statistics of .938.

In the translation test, the participants were given the opportunity to determine if the English phrases in the context semantically matched the Indonesian phrases in brackets. If they did match, the students would have to write "correct" in the given column. If they were not equivalent with each other in meaning, the students were to correct them by writing the words closest in meaning to the ones in brackets. In other words, the participants were required to do the translation themselves by analyzing the contexts. There were 48 Indonesian phrases the students had to analyze and translate in not more than 48 minutes.

To analyze the data obtained from the test and questionnaire, the SPSS was used for computing the descriptive data. In order to find out the correlation between one variable to another variable, Pearson – Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Laerd Statistics, 2012) was used. In order to find out the writing interest and reading habit and to analyze the data from questionnaires, data classification and analysis of frequency and percentage analysis were used. Another technique used was Multiple Regression Analysis. This technique was used in order to know to what degree that the two predictor variables influenced the criterion variable. In addition,

to answer the reason why writing interest and reading habit might correlate to students' reading achievement, descriptive analysis was used.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Based on the analyzed data, it was found that students' mean score for translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases was only 20.88, while the median did not go far from 22.00. The maximum score did not reach over 37 while the minimum was not more than 01. All this indicated the students' extreme downfall when faced with the task of translating Indonesian contextual phrases into English. The research also brought us to the fact that 84.1 % of the samples or as many as 143 of them were of the opinion that polysyllabic fixation was agreeable. Polysyllabic fixation means worrying about words of polysyllables and thus treating them too carefully which may lessen reading speed. Furthermore, 41.8 % of the respondents still preferred reading aloud and the majority of them, 88.2% to be exact, chose to avoid guessing word meanings at all costs for fear of making mistakes in comprehending a text. They also showed their preference to read in English than in Indonesian language (71.8%).

However, much to the writer's excitement, 32.4% of the samples agreed that writing was so much fun to do, especially in a sparetime. The other 34.1% had even bigger interest in writing which the writer's could not help but marvel at how those students had been viewing writing as an interesting pastime. When totalled, the percentage reached the number of 66.5, more than enough evident to show how those students perceived writing as something interesting.

In addition, the majority of the correspondents (70%) stated that they tried to make some sentences from the new English words they came across. It showed that the majority of them realized that in order to retain the words longer in their memory, using them was the best thing to do. However, only 37.1% of them texted their friends in English, which indicated that under informal circumstances, they did not find English as much fun to use as they might with their own mother tongue as a means of communication. In line with that, the respondents (48.2%) doubted and disagree

(36.5%) if they knew all about Indonesian and English culture

As for the correlations, it could be presented as follows:

- The correlation between students' reading habit and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases was 0.082 with the significant level of 0.287. It meant there was very little to almost no correlation between the two variables. In other words, the correlation was too little to bear any kind of significance.
- The correlation between students' writing interest and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases was 0.109 with the significant level of 0.159. This revealed very weak to almost non-existent correlation. Under the given circumstances, it was no use talking about its significance as it had clearly not existed.
- Both students' reading habit and writing interest contributed 1.4% (R^2 0.014) to their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. In addition, R referred to the point of 0.120, higher than 0.05 which meant that both variables (X1 and X2) had no significant correlation with the criterion variable.

Based on the findings above, some interpretations to strengthen values of the study were presented below:

First, all of the students participating in the survey had had a very hard time dealing with translating these particular Indonesian phrases into English. If these Indonesian phrasal expressions had been in their English translation tests, they would have been crossed out of the passing list and occupied that sad crowded room planked E at its door. Fortunately, they would not have to endure all that, nor would they have to take the blame. As the first year students, they had not got their translation lecture yet, and those expressions being utilized in the test were merely the collections the writer had for his own passion for both Indonesian and English language. In other words, the chance of their being on the curriculum was very slim to almost unlikely due to their characteristics of being informal, colloquial and indirect. If English curriculum should ever include that kind of words, they

would be the English contextual phrases as it is the English class. Indonesian contextual phrases are more likely to be discussed in Indonesian classes instead of English classes.

Second, As these words would be ridiculous to be translated verbatim, a thorough investigation to the core of the words where the true meanings lie is a must prior to finding the English equivalents which match the sense and meanings of the source language words. This sounds quite time-consuming but that is how to do it. These students are the living proofs of the truth found in the statement made by Larson (1984, p. 22). It stated that a translator who takes the time to study carefully the source language text, to write the symantic analysis of it, and then to look for the equivalent way in which the same message is expressed naturally in the receptor language, will be able to provide an adequate, and sometimes brilliant, translation. In other words, the shorter the time, the less adequate the result of the translation will be. In the test, the students were given less than one minute to translate each of the phrasal expression which apparently was not long enough time to accomplish the maximum results.

Third, the statistics showed that there was no significant correlation between students' reading habit and their translation ability which can be explained as follows:

- Most students involved in the survey were inclined to focus on what appeared on the outside than what was hidden on the inside. They had a tendency to worry about what was visible to their eyes so much that it left them no space to consider that the inside or the invisible could matter the most. This can be seen from the percentage of those who got trapped in polysyllabic fixation who comprised the majority. It indicated their thoughts that the appearance of the English words alone had contributed some considerable problems to them. Consequently, it would be much too hard to find out what lied beyond the words when the facade was too thick a problem for them to get through.
- Almost half of the participants were not quite familiar with English words to the extent that they felt the need to read the words aloud when reading a text just to make sure that they had

pronounced them properly. Again, when the problems were all about the "outer layer" of a word, struggling between the look and the sound of it, it is quite a certainty that the "inner layer" will have to wait for ages before it gets the chance of being touched on by the English learners.

- "Guessing English words can be wrong and not so convincing" was the idea that clung to most of the respondents' mind. This indicated that they would only feel safe by being entirely dependent on dictionaries. They would not venture to seek out the meanings of words from the context for fear of making wrong perceptions. The Indonesian phrasal words we were discussing here would require of them to dare to dive under the surface of the words and guess out the meanings by holding on to the contexts. Feeling unsafe to do this would be like closing the front door towards the possibility of being able to naturally translate these particular Indonesian phrases into English.

Fourth, the statistics did not seem to suggest that there was any significant correlation between students' writing interest and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. The following reasons for that were elaborated based on the factual data taken on the survey:

- When it was found that the majority of the participants loved to write down the new words they stumbled over and build some sentences based on them, some hope might be raised that this, to some degree, would help to increase their vocabulary. However, things were not as easily predicted as it might have seemed at first. There were several elements that might stand in the way and hamper the correlation from happening. The most obvious thing was that what they jotted down and made sentences from was English words. These words were very possibly taken from school, a formal institution which accordingly would rather choose non-colloquial words for its students to learn. So, words such as *kumpul kebo*, *kawin lari*, *mata keranjang*, etc. would definitely not meet the standard of formality or even morality. Their equivalents in English would, therefore, also be considered indecent

and might not find their way to English classroom discussions.

- The researcher had initially thought that texting in English over the phone was a sign of love towards the language. This would have made strong enough motivation to improve one's vocabulary and ease one up in translation eventually. However, the survey seemed to suggest one little fact that the researcher might have overlooked. SMS was meant to be short. Words that gave indirect connotation or required long interpretation would not meet the purpose of what SMS media was trying to serve its customers with.
- It was an undeniable fact that the majority of the respondents had an interest in writing as found in this study. However, this did not significantly influence their translation ability to the point that their answers in the test was satisfactory. To explain this, let us start with the word "interest" itself. Is there a guarantee that an interest would actually be put into action? The researcher believes that an interest can not be put in the same category as the frequency of the actual activities being done. For example, Mr X has an interest in sport. Does it mean that he often does sport? Is it wrong to assume that it is only what he has in mind rather than what he actually does? The same might apply to the respondents. The idea of writing might entertain them enormously, but to say for sure that they did write actively and enthusiastically was quite beyond the issue this research was trying to cover. Suppose they only kept interested but never gave way to their desire to write, what would they need more vocabulary for?

Fifth, both students' reading habits and writing interest did not correlate with their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. The rationale behind this goes as follows: If each of the two predictor variables individually contributed nothing to the criterion variable, they would have no reason to suddenly be correlated to the criterion variable when combined. This mathematic rule stays true: minus plus minus equals minus.

Sixth, in this research, statements from some experts on translation named Schulte (2014, p. 1), Kavaliauskienė (2010, p. 1) and Razmjou

(2013, p.1) were also cited. According to Schulte, reading was a continuous process of translation which indicated how closely related reading and translation were. Kavaliauskienė added that writing was also closely related to the ability to translate from L2 into L1 and from L1 into L2. Razmjou also confirmed that reading and writing were the initial process that one had to go through before being able to claim the title of a good translator. With the findings from his research, the researcher would not carelessly reject the theories at all. He still corroborated them with some additional information based on the condition of his respondents on the field. With the data found it was evident that the students were facing some issues with their reading habit especially reading the English texts. It took quite a particular kind of reading texts that might add to the students' vocabulary to be able to translate those particular Indonesian words. It also took a lot of writing chances or writing activities to ever come across the possibility of using that kind of particular expressions. There was a great distance to cover from reading to translation ability and there might be lots of interruptions and distractions along the way. The same was true with writing interest in relation to translation ability. Everything was perfect in theory, especially when discussing things in general, but there were so many things to consider in practice, especially the one of a more specific nature.

Seventh, as the students of English departments, the respondents seemed to be responsible for the choice that they had made. They showed their preference to read in English than in Indonesian language (71.8%). However, to come to the point that they would be capable translators of those particular Indonesian phrases, they still had a whole lot to read. The fact that those phrases required deep understanding of the hidden meanings and that they were colloquially used would require of the students to sort out reading materials in which their discourse analysis was exercised and frequently put into practice.

Eight, the survey also showed another interesting finding that there was no correlation between students' reading habit and their writing interest. The statistics pointed at 0.300 which was

too close a number to 0 which indicated the non-existence of correlation between those two predictor variables. Suffice to say, having troubles at some point in reading, we would logically assume that the samples should not have an interest in writing, but in fact, they did. This had falsified our assumption at one point but at the other, it accounted for the reason why these two predictor variables were standing aloof from each other. Another thing that we could derive from here was that although they cultivated enough interest in writing, reading did not seem to appeal to them enough to the point that they no longer had some troubles in reading an English text.

Last but not least, the respondents (48.2%) doubted and disagreed (36.5%) if they knew all about Indonesian and English culture. In fact, cultural factor was an essential element to produce a good, a ridiculous or even misleading translation. Unless they aimed to collect those particular expressions in their mother tongue and then try to find the equivalents in English through authentic bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, they really had to deal with these cultural issues. It would be quite a challenge since English was still considered a foreign language in this country.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, there was no significant correlation between students' reading habit and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. The researcher needs to spotlight the phrase "*translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases*". This is a case of cross-cultural understanding plus discourse analysis being put to work to be dealt with at once, and not just a matter of one's vocabulary being enriched to be capable of translating after reading certain texts that bear relation with these particular Indonesian phrases.

Second, there was no significant correlation between students' writing interest and their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. The word *interest* itself has more intangible connotation than practical. Translation requires more of practical matters

than merely being interested in something without the actual application that comes along with it.

Third, there was no significant correlation between both students' reading habit and their writing interest towards their translation ability on Indonesian contextual phrases. This is very much in line with the math calculation that minus plus minus equals minus. Each predictor variable does not correlate with the criterion variable and they remain in that state even when combined.

Fourth, the students in the three colleges had poor translation ability on the Indonesian contextual phrases. However, they were not to take the blame since they had not got their translation lectures yet and the words they had to translate were not quite a model sample for any formal translation classes at school due to their characteristics of being too colloquial and informal.

Finally, the students still fell into traps of undesirable reading habit when it comes to reading English texts. This may discourage extensive reading activities and lessen the chance of enriching their vocabulary. As a result, the ability to translate will also be unsatisfactory.

Learning from the results of the study, a shortcut way can actually be applied in addressing the issue of this problematic translation of Indonesian contextual phrases into English. By deliberately jotting down that kind of expressions we happen to hear or read in our daily dealings, and then using proper English monolingual or bilingual dictionaries to translate them, the job could simply be done, saving us the exertions of having to go over lots of reading stuff which probably has very little or even no connection with the phrasal words we are trying to translate.

Besides, meaning-based translation can also be introduced at the early stage of English classroom lessons. Merely being able to translate a text literally will not be enough as we are dealing here with prospective English teachers. We need to become not only exemplary characters to our prospective students, but we also need to live up to our reputation as knowledgeable teachers, that is to be ready to handle even their most unlikely questions. The test in this research may represent some of the

most unexpected questions the students might want to raise out of curiosity or probably just to test their teachers. Therefore, we, as professional teachers, always have to be well-prepared and well-aware of all possibilities including being suddenly challenged to analyze discourses. Discourse analysis in meaning-based translation is of the utmost importance which the prospective English teachers need to get accustomed to from the early years of their study. Otherwise, they would still end up the way they did in the translation test of this research.

As for reading habit and writing interest, we cannot view these two as being separable from translation ability regardless of the research findings. One way or another, they are still related in support of our English command as a whole. We ought to read a lot to get more vocabulary and our interest in writing should manifest in the form of actual practices.

Last but not least, this research was also made to the benefit of the students and those who chance to read it. They would be made to realize that translation is not just one flip away over the dictionary pages but a whole bunch of experiences requiring a creative thinking process. The researcher also hopes that there will be more of this kind of research on translation in the future, especially those concerning the

possible correlations between cultures and translation ability based on the results of this research. The application of different methods and procedures for that purpose would be very suggestible as to see matters from different angles. All this is for the advantages of our students and ourselves as teachers at all times.

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