

THE TRANSLATION STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Chairunisa Sastrawinata¹, Esti Junining^{1*}, Sugeng Hariyanto², Intan Zainuddin³

¹Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia

²Politeknik Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

³Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

esti@ub.ac.id

Abstract

Legal translation requires students to transfer linguistic meaning while also recognizing the legal function of specialized terms, archaic connectors, foreign expressions, and system-bound concepts. This study examines how undergraduate and postgraduate students at *Universitas Brawijaya* handled these problems by answering three research questions: whether their overall legal translation quality differed significantly, what translation techniques appeared in their renderings, and why they chose particular translation strategies. Using a mixed-methods comparative design, 34 undergraduate students and six postgraduate students completed a 26-sentence English-Indonesian legal translation task drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English and structured around Haigh's legal-text peculiarities. The final statistical comparison included 33 undergraduate and six postgraduate participants. Translation quality was assessed by two evaluators using an adapted rubric based on Nababan et al. (2015), translation techniques were classified using Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) taxonomy, and six participants were interviewed to examine reported decision-making. The postgraduate group achieved a higher overall mean score ($M = 224.750$, $SD = 12.7701$) than the undergraduate group ($M = 209.788$, $SD = 16.8741$), and the Mann-Whitney U test showed a significant difference between the groups ($p = 0.009 < 0.05$). Six techniques were identified: literal translation, amplification, borrowing, modulation, established equivalent, and adaptation, with literal translation occurring most frequently. Interview data showed that students' choices were shaped by familiarity with legal terminology, contextual checking, and limited exposure to authentic legal translation practice. The study's distinctive contribution lies in linking statistical quality differences, micro-level technique selection, and students' reported reasoning within the same legal translation task. This combined perspective shows that literal translation is not inherently weak or strong; it is appropriate when it preserves legal meaning, but insufficient when legal expressions require contextual or legal adjustment.

Keywords: legal translation; translation quality; translation techniques; translator training; decision-making

INTRODUCTION

Legal translation plays a crucial role in communicating legal concepts across languages and systems. Unlike general translation, it involves not only linguistic transfer but also legal terminology, legal reasoning, and culture-bound concepts that may not have direct equivalents in the target language (Prieto Ramos, 2024; Sofyan and Rosa, 2021). Legal language is also predominantly prescriptive, directive, and imperative (Brashi and Abdel Latif, 2024), so an inaccurate rendering may alter the intended legal meaning or effect of the text (Zeifert & Tobor, 2022; Sofyan and Rosa, 2021).

One recurring problem in legal translation is the tension between fidelity to the source text and contextual appropriateness in the target language (TL). Literal translation is often used to avoid deviation from the original meaning; however, specialized legal terms, archaic expressions, doublets and triplets, and ordinary words used in unusual legal contexts may require translators to consider meanings beyond the surface form. Translation quality therefore depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on whether the target text remains readable, acceptable, and appropriate in its legal context (Brashi and Abdel Latif, 2024; Nababan et al. 2015; Sofyan and Rosa, 2021).

Previous studies have approached this problem from various perspectives. Prieto Ramos (2024) emphasizes the importance of understanding and interpretation in legal translation competence. Lesznyák and Balogh (2019) reported differences in legal translation quality between students with and without legal qualifications, while Lesznyák et al. (2024) highlighted the roles of language competence and subject knowledge in legal translation. More recent student-based research has also reported variations in legal translation performance across academic levels (Hamed and Alqurashi, 2025). Taken together, these studies suggest that legal translation performance is related to the translator's linguistic, contextual, and domain knowledge; however, they do not directly examine how translation quality, translation techniques, and the reasons for technique selection appear together among undergraduate and postgraduate translation students within the same educational setting.

The present data are worth examining because the two groups came from the same faculty but had different forms of translation course exposure. The undergraduate participants had completed an Introduction to Translation course, whereas the postgraduate participants had completed a Business and Legal Translation course. Both groups translated the same legal text task, allowing their translation products to be compared under the same source-text material. This comparison does not assume that postgraduate students are legally qualified translators; rather, it examines two student cohorts with different academic and curricular exposures to translation.

Accordingly, this study has three objectives: to determine whether there is a significant difference in legal translation quality between undergraduate and postgraduate students, to identify the translation techniques used in translating the selected legal expressions, and to explore the reasons students report for choosing particular translation strategies.

This study addresses the following research questions: (1) Is there a significant difference in the quality of legal translations produced by undergraduate and postgraduate students at Universitas Brawijaya? (2) What translation techniques were used by the two groups when translating legal texts? (3) Why do students choose particular translation strategies when translating legal texts? By answering the research questions addressed, the study is expected to contribute to legal translation education by showing how student translators handle specialized English legal language and by linking their performance, techniques, and decision-making, without claiming that academic level alone determines expertise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To systematically analyze the translation behavior of undergraduate and postgraduate students, this study combined three frameworks, each of which addresses a different level of data. Haigh's classification of legal-text peculiarities was used to identify the source-text features that may create translation problems. Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy was then used to classify the translation techniques observable in the students' target texts. Finally, the PACTE Group's (2005) model provides a competence-oriented perspective for interpreting the reasoning reported by participants in the interviews. The frameworks are therefore connected sequentially: Haigh identifies the type of legal-language problem encountered, Molina and Albir classify how the problem is rendered in the target text, and PACTE helps explain how knowledge and strategic decision-making may relate to those choices. This distinction is important because a single translation technique cannot be treated as direct proof of a particular level of translation competence.

The Nature of the Source Text: Haigh's (2009) Legal Text Peculiarities

Legal language is not merely a specialized register; it is a system-bound, archaic, and highly prescriptive discourse type (Brashi and Abdel Latif, 2024; Sofyan and Rosa, 2021). To evaluate how student translators navigate these textual constraints, this study employs the taxonomy established by Haigh (2009), which isolates the key linguistic anomalies, collectively referred to as "legalese, that complicate the translation of English legal texts. This study focuses on the specific categories encountered within the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), including Terms of Art: Words or expressions that possess highly specific, technical meanings within the legal domain (e.g., common law, absolute discharge, consideration) and cannot be replaced by general

synonyms. Polysemous Legal Terms: Everyday words that take on entirely unexpected meanings when used within a legal instrument (e.g., party, execute, perform, instrument). Legal Doublets and Triplets: Stylistic relics where two or three words are joined to convey a single legal concept (e.g., null and void, fit and proper, rest, residue, and remainder). Archaisms and Formal Syntactic Links: Frequent use of Old and Middle English words (e.g., hereinafter, thereto, wherefore) and formal structures that lack modern parallel structures in daily communication.

Molina and Albir's (2002) Taxonomy of Translation Techniques

When faced with Haigh's legal peculiarities, translators must apply functional adjustments at the sentence and word levels. This study utilized Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy of 18 translation techniques to classify the micro-strategies adopted by the participants. In contrast to macro-strategies (the global approach to a text), translation techniques are dynamic functional tools applied to visible linguistic units to achieve local equivalence. The primary micro-techniques evaluated in this study included the following:

1. Literal Translation: Translating a word or expression word-for-word while retaining the source text structure where target constraints permit.
2. Calque: Literally translating a foreign word or phrase, which often introduces structural elements from the source language into the target language.
3. Established Equivalent: Utilizing terms or expressions recognized by common legal usage or target language conventions to represent an equivalent concept (e.g., translating "null and void" directly into the Indonesian statutory formula "*batal demi hukum*").
4. Modulation: Changing the point of view or cognitive category in the target text to maintain a natural flow while preserving semantic impact.
5. Description: Replacing a specialized legal term with a description of its function or characteristics, particularly useful when dealing with system-bound cultural gaps.
6. Reduction and Amplification: Suppressing or introducing informational details to accommodate the target text structure (e.g., compressing a doublet into a single target term through reduction).

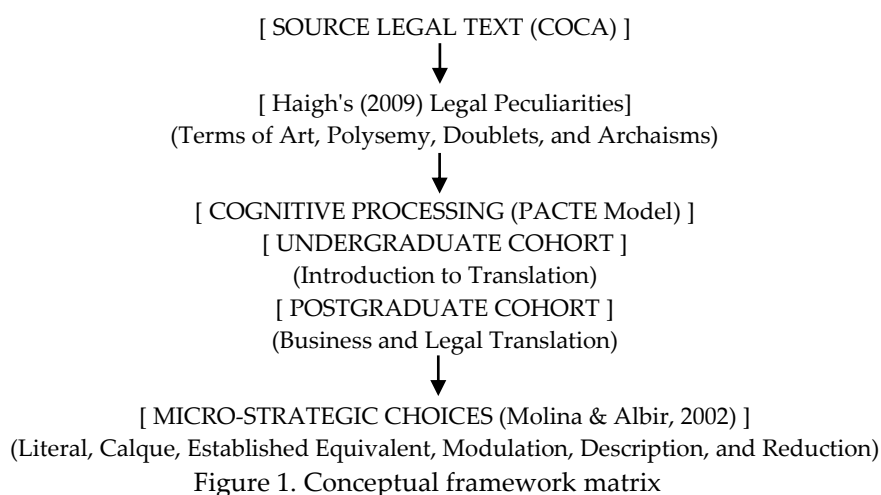
Cognitive Dimension: PACTE Model of Translation Competence (2005)

To interpret the differences in technique selection and reported reasoning between the two cohorts, this study uses the PACTE Group's (2005) model of translation competence. This competence-oriented perspective is also consistent with more recent competence-based approaches to translator training (Hurtado Albir et al., 2020). According to PACTE, translation competence consists of several interdependent subcompetences:

1. Bilingual subcompetence: Pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and textual knowledge of both languages.

2. Extralinguistic subcompetence: General, thematic, and domain-specific knowledge (which, in this study, corresponds to structural legal knowledge).
3. Knowledge about Translation: Knowledge of how translation works and the professional standards expected.
4. Instrumental subcompetence: The ability to use information sources and digital translation technologies (CAT tools, online legal dictionaries).
5. Strategic Sub-competence: The overarching cognitive mechanism that detects problems, coordinates the other sub-competences, and selects the appropriate micro-techniques to resolve specific textual obstacles.

The PACTE model describes translation competence as dynamic and composed of interacting subcompetences. In the present study, however, undergraduate and postgraduate statuses were not treated as direct equivalents of novice and expert competence. Instead, the model was used cautiously to interpret whether the participants' reported problem-solving reflected differences in the activation of bilingual, extralinguistic, instrumental, and strategic resources. Therefore, academic level and course exposure provide contextual information for interpretation rather than predetermined competence labels. The framework matrix is shown in Figure 1.



METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate student translators' legal translation strategies. This combination of perspectives is consistent with multiperspective and mixed-method approaches in legal translation research (Biel, 2017). The quantitative phase evaluated the differences in translation quality between student cohorts. The qualitative phase employed comparative text analysis and semi-structured interviews to identify the strategies applied and the cognitive motivations underlying the strategic choices. Using purposive sampling, the study selected participants from the Faculty of Cultural Studies at Universitas Brawijaya who had passed formal translation training. The participants were 34 undergraduate students from the English Education major who had completed the

Introduction to Translation course and six postgraduate students from the Master's Study Program in Linguistics who had completed the Business and Legal Translation course.

The participants completed a 26-sentence English-to-Indonesian translation task administered via Google Forms. Sentences were extracted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and vetted for their validity by expert supervisors. The source text was structured around ten categories of Haigh's (2009) legal text peculiarities: (a) terms of art, (b) foreign terminology, (c) doublets and triplets, (d) here-, there-, and where-words, (e) -ever words, (f) phrases meaning "from then on," (g) -er, -or, and -ee names, (h) unfamiliar pronouns, (i) ordinary words in unusual contexts, and (j) deeming terms.

To investigate the cognitive reasons behind strategic choices, semi-structured interviews (15–30 minutes) were conducted in Indonesian with a purposively selected subset of six participants. Participants were ranked according to their translation-task results and approached to represent low, middle, and high performance positions; the final interview sample consisted of one undergraduate and five postgraduate students. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and post-edited for the thematic coding. The classification of translation techniques was supported by the translation-strategy identification rubric developed in the study: the key legal expression in each item was first located within the relevant legal-text category, the students' renderings were compared with the prepared answer key, and the source-target relation was then matched to the definitions in Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy. This procedure provided an explicit basis for assigning technique categories rather than relying only on the researcher's impression.

Quantitatively, the target texts were evaluated through inter-rater triangulation by two independent evaluators using Nababan et al.'s (2015) Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model, which assesses accuracy, readability, and acceptability of translations. The quantitative assessment followed three parameters:

1. Accuracy (1–4 scale): Verifies if the source message is faithfully transferred.
2. Readability (1–4 scale): Assesses structural clarity and target reader comprehension ease.
3. Acceptability (1–3 scale): Evaluates the naturalness and adherence to the target language's legal registers.

These scores were then statistically processed using SPSS. Given that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated a non-normal distribution in the undergraduate data, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was run to determine the statistical significance of quality differences between the two cohorts as illustrated in Figure 2.

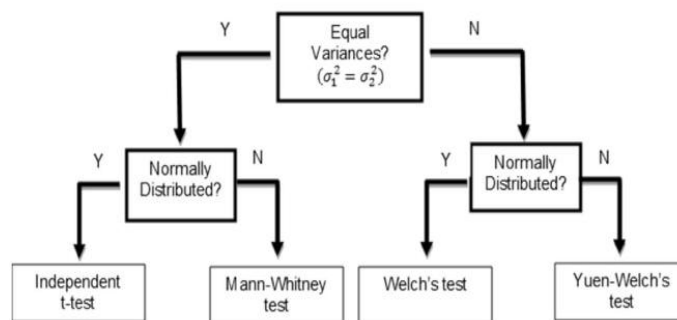


Figure 2. Two-step testing procedure with preliminary tests of equal variances and normality (Pearce, 2019)

Qualitatively, the practical methods applied by the participants were categorized at the micro-textual level using Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy of translation strategies, which are the 18 translation techniques, mapping frequency patterns across six primary strategies that emerged during analysis: Adaptation, Amplification, Borrowing, Literal Translation, Modulation, and Established Equivalent. Finally, to contextualize these findings, the semi-structured interview transcripts underwent thematic content analysis, wherein segments were coded to extract recurring themes regarding the students' decision-making processes, cognitive rationale, and perceived competence boundaries.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings revealed three connected patterns. First, the postgraduate group obtained a higher overall legal translation quality score than the undergraduate group, and this difference was statistically significant. Second, six translation techniques were identified in the analyzed data, with literal translation being the most frequent. Third, the interviews showed that familiarity with legal terminology, contextual understanding, and previous translation training influenced the participants' approach to difficult legal expressions. These three findings are presented in sequence so that the statistical result is interpreted together with textual and interview evidence rather than as a stand-alone comparison of academic levels.

Before the between-group comparison was conducted, the distribution of the translation quality scores was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The undergraduate group produced a significance value of 0.000, indicating that its scores were not normally distributed, whereas the postgraduate group produced a significance value of 0.200, indicating a normal distribution of scores. Because the assumption of normality was not met in one of the groups, subsequent comparisons were conducted using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test.

The statistical test was based on the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the overall translation quality between the undergraduate and postgraduate groups. The Mann-Whitney U analysis yielded an asymptotic significance value of 0.009. Since this value was below the predetermined alpha level of 0.05, the null

hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the statistical findings confirm that the difference observed descriptively between the undergraduate mean score of 209.788 (SD = 16.8741) and the postgraduate mean score of 224.750 (SD = 12.7701) was statistically significant in the present sample. These results establish quantitative findings before the analysis proceeds to the specific legal expressions and translation techniques represented in the students' target texts.

For translation quality, the descriptive analysis in the study reported an average score of 209.788 (SD = 16.8741) for the undergraduate group and 224.750 (SD = 12.7701) for the postgraduate group. The Mann-Whitney U test produced a significance value of 0.009, indicating a statistically significant difference in the overall translation quality between the two groups. Within this sample, the postgraduate group achieved a higher overall score; however, the result identifies an association between group membership and performance and does not establish that academic level caused the difference.

For translation techniques, the analysis identified six of Molina and Albir's (2002) categories: adaptation, amplification, borrowing, literal translation, modulation, and established equivalents. Table 1 presents the frequency of each technique identified in the analyzed material. Literal translation occurred most frequently, followed by amplification, borrowing, modulation, established equivalents, and adaptation.

Table 1. Frequency of Translation Techniques Identified in the Study

Translation Technique	Frequency
Literal translation	19
Amplification	7
Borrowing	4
Modulation	4
Established equivalent	3
Adaptation	2

As shown in Table 1, literal translation was the most frequently used technique, with 19 occurrences. Amplification occurred seven times, whereas borrowing and modulation were each identified four times. Established equivalent occurred three times, whereas adaptation was the least frequently identified technique, occurring twice. The distribution indicates that literal translation constituted the largest proportion of the techniques identified in the analyzed legal texts.

The second stage examined how the legal-text peculiarities represented in the source items were rendered in the students' translations. Each target legal expression was first located within the relevant legal-text category and then compared with the variations produced by the undergraduate and postgraduate participants. The source-target relationship was subsequently classified using Molina and Albir's translation technique categories. This procedure showed that different legal peculiarities generated different rendering patterns rather than a single uniform translation solution.

Table 2. Examples of Legal-Text Peculiarities and Translation Techniques Identified in the Data

Legal-Text Pecularity	Source Expression	Examples of Indonesian Renderings	Identified Technique
Deeming term	<i>deem</i>	<i>dianggap</i> ("considered"); <i>dianggapnya</i> ("considered by him/her")	Literal translation
Foreign terminology	<i>corpus juris</i>	<i>corpus juris</i> ; <i>korpus juris</i> ("body/collection of law")	Borrowing
Foreign terminology	<i>a posteriori</i>	<i>dari posteriori</i> ("from posteriori"); <i>sebuah posteriori</i> ("a posteriori"); retention of <i>a posteriori</i> with explanation	Literal translation / borrowing with explanation
Doublet/legal formula	<i>signed and sealed</i>	<i>ditandatangani dan disegel</i> ("signed and sealed"); <i>ditandatangani dan dicap resmi</i> ("signed and officially stamped")	Literal translation
Ordinary word in unusual legal context	<i>redemption</i>	<i>penebusan</i> ("redemption"); <i>penebusan debitur</i> ("debtor's redemption")	Literal translation / amplification
Here-/there-/where-word	<i>hereafter</i>	<i>selanjutnya</i> ("hereafter"); <i>yang selanjutnya</i> ("which follows/hereafter")	Established equivalent / modulation
Here-/there-/where-word	<i>wherein</i>	<i>dengan konsep</i> ("with the concept"); <i>yang menggunakan</i> ("which uses"); <i>yang menampilkan</i> ("which presents"); <i>di mana ada</i> ("where there is")	Modulation
Here-/there-/where-word	<i>whence</i>	<i>dari mana</i> ("from where"); <i>dari situ</i> ("from there"); <i>dari situlah</i> ("from there"); <i>maka</i> ("therefore/then")	Literal translation / modulation

Table 2 above provides a clear example of this classification process. In the sentences containing the legal term *deem*, 22 undergraduate responses rendered the term as *dianggap* ("considered"), while nine used *dianggapnya* ("considered by him/her"); two responses did not provide an equivalent for the target term. Among the six postgraduate responses, four used *dianggap* ("considered") and two used *dianggapnya* ("considered by him/her"). Because these forms directly transferred the basic meaning of *deem* into Indonesian without a substantial change in perspective or additional information, they were categorized as literal translations. This item illustrates how the analysis proceeded from the identification of a legal-text peculiarity in the source text to the classification of the translation technique observable in the target text.

Greater variation was observed when participants encountered foreign terminology and expressions without straightforward Indonesian equivalents. For *corpus juris*, participants retained the expression as *corpus juris* or used the naturalized form *korpus juris* ("body or collection of law"), which was classified as a borrowing. The expression *a posteriori* also generates different renderings. Some undergraduate responses included *dari posteriori* ("from posteriori") and *sebuah posteriori* ("a posteriori"), whereas

postgraduate responses included retention of a *posteriori* accompanied by explanatory information. These variations indicate that the same type of legal peculiarity can generate different translation solutions across participants.

Amplification was identified when participants added information that was not explicitly expressed in the source term but provided additional contextual specifications in Indonesian. For example, *redemption* was rendered as *penebusan* ("redemption") as well as *penebusan debitur* ("debtor's redemption"). The latter contains the additional *element debitur* ("debtor") and was therefore categorized as an amplification. Other examples included *abatement*, which appeared as *pengurangan* ("reduction") and *penanggulangan* ("mitigation"), illustrating the variation in how participants interpreted legal terms with context-dependent meanings.

Literal translation was also observed in the treatment of legal formulae in the TT. The expression *signed and sealed*, for example, was rendered as *ditandatangani dan disegel* ("signed and sealed"). Another variant, *ditandatangani dan dicap resmi* ("signed and officially stamped"), retained the two-part structure while modifying the rendering of seal. The occurrence of these forms shows that the participants frequently preserved the lexical and structural organization of the source expression when an apparently direct Indonesian rendering was available.

Variations were also found in the translation of archaic and formal linking expressions. The term *hereafter* appeared as *selanjutnya* ("hereafter/subsequently") and *yang selanjutnya* ("which follows/subsequently"). The former was identified as an established equivalent, whereas the latter involved a structural change and was categorized as a modulation. For *wherein*, participants produced forms such as *dengan konsep* ("with the concept"), *yang menggunakan* ("which uses"), *yang menampilkan* ("which presents"), and *di mana ada* ("where there is"). These renderings changed the perspective or grammatical realization of the source expression and were therefore identified as modulations. Similarly, *whence* generated several forms, including *dari mana* ("from where"), *dari situ* ("from there"), *dari situlah* ("from there"), and *maka* ("therefore/then").

The technical findings also show why frequency must be interpreted cautiously. The frequency table in the study reports the techniques identified across the analyzed translations but does not provide a complete participant-level distribution for each cohort. Therefore, frequency counts are used to describe which techniques appeared in the data, while group-related interpretations are based on the translation examples and interview accounts rather than on the pooled frequencies alone.

The textual examples indicate that the appropriateness of a technique depends on the legal expression being translated. Literal translation could preserve the basic meaning of terms such as *deem* when a direct Indonesian rendering was available, whereas other items required amplification, borrowing, modulation, adaptation, or an established equivalent to preserve their contextual meaning. Therefore, the findings do not treat non-literal techniques as automatically superior; the relevant issue is whether

the chosen technique transfers the intended legal meaning appropriately in the target text.

The interview findings provide an explanatory layer to these textual results. Participants repeatedly referred to unfamiliar legal terminology, the need to check dictionaries or contextual sources, differences between legal cultures, and limited practical exposure to legal documents. Postgraduate interviewees described more systematic checking procedures in several excerpts, whereas the undergraduate interviewee reported a more limited experience. Because the interview sample consisted of one undergraduate and five postgraduate participants, these accounts were interpreted as qualitative explanations rather than numerical evidence of group prevalence.

The interview analysis further identified three recurring areas in the participants' accounts: unfamiliarity with specialized legal terminology, contextual checking during problem solving, and limited exposure to authentic legal translation practice. These themes provide descriptive evidence of how participants approached the translation problems identified in the textual analysis.

Unfamiliar legal registers were repeatedly mentioned as a difficulty. One postgraduate participant explained that "the influencing factor is the unfamiliar register because I have little experience in translating legal texts" (PG/01). Another participant similarly referred to unfamiliar structures involving repeated words with similar meanings, indicating that legal expressions such as doublets and related constructions could create uncertainty during strategy selection. These responses show that difficulty was not limited to general English vocabulary but also involved recognition of the legal register and structure.

The second finding concerned the use of external and contextual information when a direct solution was not immediately available. One postgraduate participant described a sequential procedure of first consulting a dictionary, including legal dictionaries, then examining the surrounding context and previously translated material, and, when necessary, consulting discussion forums before deciding whether borrowing was appropriate (PG/02). Another participant emphasized the need to compare the legal context of the source country with Indonesian legal and cultural conventions before matching source expressions with Indonesian legal terminology (PG/04). These accounts indicate that some translation decisions involve several checking activities rather than immediate word-for-word substitutions.

The interviews also revealed limited practical exposure to the subject. Most participants reported that their experience with legal translation was largely connected to coursework, although one postgraduate participant had previously assisted with short legal documents, such as divorce papers, marriage certificates, and birth certificates. Participants also expressed a need for more complete legal documents and case-based exercises, rather than isolated excerpts. Because the interview sample included only one undergraduate and five postgraduate participants, these findings are treated as

illustrative accounts of decision-making processes and not as evidence of the prevalence of particular behaviors within either group.

Taken together, the findings answer the research questions by showing a significant difference in overall translation quality between the undergraduate group ($M = 209.788$, $SD = 16.8741$) and the postgraduate group ($M = 224.750$, $SD = 12.7701$). The Mann-Whitney U test produced an asymptotic significance value of 0.009; because this value was lower than the predetermined alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings also identify the translation techniques present in the legal-text task, namely literal translation, amplification, borrowing, modulation, established equivalent, and adaptation, and describe the reasons participants provided for their choices, including unfamiliar legal terminology, contextual checking, and limited exposure to authentic legal translation practice. Their contribution lies in connecting these three forms of evidence within the same student dataset, rather than treating postgraduate study as equivalent to professional legal-translation qualifications.

Peculiarities Translation Quality and Educational Exposure

The significant difference in overall peculiarities translation quality is consistent with previous research showing that legal and domain knowledge can affect translation performance. Lesznyák and Balogh (2019) found quality differences between students with and without legal qualifications, while Lesznyák et al. (2024) further highlighted the roles of language competence and subject knowledge in legal translation. Recent evidence also indicates differences in legal translation performance across academic levels (Hamed and Alqurashi, 2025), while specialized legal translation training has been associated with differences in translation quality performance (Prieto Ramos, 2024). The present study adds a different comparison: both groups are student translators, but they have different academic levels and translation-course exposure.

This distinction is important. The higher postgraduate group mean cannot be attributed only to postgraduate status because the groups also differed in terms of course content, prior learning, and possibly individual experience. Therefore, the result is better understood as evidence that the two cohorts performed differently on the same legal translation task, not as proof that postgraduate education automatically produces professional legal-translation competence.

Translation Techniques and Legal-Text Peculiarities

Literal translation was the most frequent technique used in the analyzed data. This finding is relevant because literal translation remains one of the strategies used in legal translation, although its appropriateness depends on the legal meaning and context (Sofyan and Rosa, 2021). Nevertheless, the examples in this study show that literal translation is useful only when direct rendering preserves the intended legal meaning. When legal terminology or archaic expressions did not correspond naturally to

Indonesian usage, other techniques such as amplification, borrowing, modulation, adaptation, or established equivalents were also used.

Haigh's (2009) legal-text peculiarities help explain why more than one technique is needed. Terms of art, foreign terminology, doublets and triplets, here-/there-/where-words, and ordinary words used in unusual legal contexts create different translation problems for the translator. Molina and Albir's (2002) taxonomy is useful at this stage because it describes the observable relationship between the source expression and its target rendering. However, the technique itself should not be ranked as inherently advanced or weak; its appropriateness depends on the legal meaning and context of the item.

The pooled technique frequencies also limit the extent to which the two cohorts can be contrasted. Although the translation examples discussed in this study suggest differences in contextual handling, the frequency table does not, by itself, demonstrate that one group used a broader or more sophisticated repertoire. This limitation is important for avoiding biased interpretation of the results.

Reported Decision-Making and Pedagogical Implications

The interview data help explain some of the difficulties that are visible in the translations. Participants referred to unfamiliar legal registers, the need to consult dictionaries and contextual information, cultural differences, and limited practical exposure to the language. These observations are compatible with the PACTE model's view that translation competence involves the interaction of bilingual, extralinguistic, instrumental, and strategic subcompetences (PACTE Group, 2005). Similar competence-oriented perspectives have been discussed specifically in relation to legal translation and translator training (Parra-Galiano, 2021; Prieto Ramos, 2024). In this study, PACTE was used as an interpretive framework for reported problem-solving rather than as evidence that either cohort represented a professional novice or expert category.

The pedagogical implication is that legal translation training may benefit from making contextual checking, legal terminology, and strategy selection more explicit. Recent studies support structured, authentic, and specialized practice in translator education (Al-Tarawneh et al., 2024; Brashi and Abdel Latif, 2024; Hariyanto et al., 2026; Klabal, 2024), while Massey et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of adapting translator training to professional tools and practices. The present findings support the idea of providing opportunities for students to work with fuller legal texts, compare alternative renderings, and justify why a particular technique is appropriate for a specific legal expression.

Simultaneously, these implications should remain proportional to the evidence. The participant groups were unequal in size, and the interview sample was strongly weighted toward postgraduate students. Accordingly, this study supports a pedagogical interpretation of the observed patterns but does not establish a causal developmental pathway from undergraduate to postgraduate translation competence.

CONCLUSION

This study answers the three research problems by showing that undergraduate and postgraduate students differed significantly in overall legal translation quality, that six translation techniques appeared in the legal-text task, and that students' choices were shaped by terminology familiarity, contextual checking, and limited exposure to authentic legal translation practice. The postgraduate group obtained a higher mean score than the undergraduate group, and the Mann-Whitney U result confirmed that the difference was statistically significant. However, this difference should be read cautiously as a cohort-based finding, because the two groups differed in educational exposure and the study did not test professional legal expertise.

The specific insight offered by this study is that legal translation performance among students is best understood through the relationship between product quality, observable technique selection, and reported decision-making. Previous studies have often emphasized legal knowledge, academic level, or translation competence more separately; in contrast, this study links statistical quality differences with micro-level translation techniques and interview evidence from the same legal translation task. This combined view shows that literal translation was not simply a weak or strong strategy in itself: it was appropriate when it preserved legal meaning, but insufficient when legal terminology, archaic connectors, foreign expressions, or system-bound concepts required amplification, borrowing, modulation, adaptation, or established equivalents.

For translator education, the findings suggest that legal translation training should not only ask students to produce a target text, but also require them to justify the technique selected for each legal-text peculiarity. Classroom activities can therefore focus on comparing literal translation, established equivalents, borrowing, amplification, modulation, and adaptation against the legal function of the source expression. This would help students develop a more reflective strategy for deciding when literal transfer is acceptable and when contextual or legal adjustment is necessary.

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