An Analysis of the Students' Ability to Translate Short Text

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how well fourth- and sixth-semester students at UPMI Medan can translate short stories as part of their assignment in the Indonesian-English Interpretation subject study. The translation used five methods: Borrowing, Literal Translation, Transcription, Modulation, and Adaptation. The text analysis was based on the acceptability rating instrument and readability rating instrument theories. To determine the final score, the translation assessment guidelines by Machali (2000: 119-120) were used. The results show that the students' translation skills are at a moderate level, with their ability, their direct translations are acceptable, and the overall quality of their translation is also acceptable. The benefit of this study is to determine the extent of students' abilities in translating texts, so that they can be followed up and directed to areas where they are lacking in translation.

Keywords: Ability, Translation, procedures

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti seberapa baik mahasiswa semester empat dan enam di UPMI Medan dapat menerjemahkan cerita pendek sebagai bagian dari tugas mata kuliah Interpretasi Bahasa Indonesia-Inggris. Penerjemahan menggunakan lima metode: Peminjaman, Penerjemahan Harfiah, Transkripsi, Modulasi, dan Adaptasi. Analisis teks didasarkan pada teori instrumen penilaian penerimaan dan instrumen penilaian keterbacaan. Untuk menentukan skor akhir, digunakan pedoman penilaian penerjemahan oleh Machali (2000: 119-120). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan penerjemahan mahasiswa berada pada tingkat sedang, dengan kemampuan mereka, terjemahan langsung mereka dapat diterima, dan kualitas keseluruhan terjemahan mereka juga dapat diterima. Manfaat dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menentukan sejauh mana kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menerjemahkan teks, sehingga dapat ditindaklanjuti dan diarahkan ke area yang masih kurang dalam penerjemahan.

Kata kunci: kemampuan, terjemanah, prosedur

A. Introduction

Different scholars have outlined diverse interpretations regarding what constitutes translation. In Bell's work, published in 1993, he asserts that translating involves conveying meanings across languages by rendering them into their equivalent expressions within the receiving language (target language), thereby preserving both semantic connections and stylistic elements found in the originating text (source language). Simultaneously, Catford (1965) asserts that translation is understood as replacing textual content within an originating language (the source language) using identical wording in a different language (the target language). According to Munday (2008: 5): Translation encompasses multiple concepts; it may denote the broader discipline, the final output of translating work, or the act performed during this process.

In Yaqub's work (2014: 226), he defines translation broadly as any process wherein the intended message conveyed by expressions within one linguistic system (source language) becomes equivalent across different languages (target language)— whether through oral, textual, or non-verbal communication channels. According to Oxford in 1990, translating involves

rendering expressions of the target language into their equivalent forms within the speaker's mother tongue at different stages, ranging from individual terms through entire passages until complete sentences have been translated.

The research employs six methodologies, specifically including borrowing, literalism, transcription, modulation, and adaptation as techniques for translating texts. As per studies conducted by Rachmadie et al. In the year nineteen eighty-eight, pages thirteen-fourteen-seven of the document mention five methods used in translating texts: borrowing, literal rendering, transcription, modulation, and adaptation. The initial step involves obtaining resources through lending. Various forms of translation occur between different languages.

When there's no direct match between target language terms and source language expressions, frequently employing these unfamiliar elements involves either leaving them unchanged or modifying only their spellings or pronunciations accordingly. To illustrate, "*durian*" in Indonesian would remain unchanged during translation. Newmark asserts in his work published in (1988: 45) that the secondary literal rendering involves translating both syntactic structures closely aligned with those found in the source text into equivalent forms within the target language while retaining individual word meanings without regard for surrounding contexts. This suggests an issue requiring resolution as part of preliminary translation steps.

The third type is translation or transcription, which involves converting the sounds of a source language into the target language. For instance, the Indonesian word "*Jawa*" becomes "Java" in English. According to Rachmadie et al. (1988: 134-137), transcription, as defined by Molina (1998), involves altering the original word class or grammatical structure of the source language to make the target language version more natural. That means changing the original word class or grammatical structure of the source language to achieve a comparable effect in the target language.

The fourth type is modulation, which changes the point of view or emphasis in the text when a direct translation isn't possible (Molina: 1998). The last type is adaptation, which is the most flexible form of translation and is often used for plays and poetry. In adaptation, the themes, characters, and plots are generally kept, the source language is converted into the target language, and the text is rewritten.

According to Newmark (1988:45), adaptation is used when other methods are not sufficient. It involves modifying the concept or using a situation similar to the source but not the same. An adaptation may combine modulation and transposition. It goes beyond language, as it replaces a cultural element from the source with an equivalent in the target culture. Molina (1998) stated that adaptation involves replacing a cultural element from the source language with one that's familiar in the target language.

B. Research Method

The research design used was descriptive. According to Gay (1987:189), descriptive research involves analyzing data to test research questions or answer questions about the current state of a subject. In this study, the analysis was conducted on eleven students from UPMI Medan, specifically those in their fourth and sixth semesters majoring in English Education. These students were translating short stories from Indonesian into English as part of their Indonesian-English Interpretation course. Gay (1987:101) defines a population as the group that is of interest to the researcher, to which the study's findings are intended to be generalized.

In this research, only one class was involved, and the sample consisted of 11 students-six from the sixth semester and five from the fourth. According to Gay (1987:101), sampling involves selecting a number of individuals in a way that they represent the larger group from which they are drawn. The purpose of sampling was to gather information about the population. In this case, total sampling was used because only one class existed, which included students from both the fourth and sixth semesters. Surahmad (1986: 100) stated that

total sampling involves selecting the entire population when the population size is limited.

For data collection, a translation test was used. Students were given three short Indonesian stories and ask to translate them into English. The test had content validity because it was designed to measure the aspects relevant to the student's study and translation skills. The data analysis was based on theoretical methods from the acceptability rating instrument and readability rating instrument. Additionally, the final scores were determined using the Translation Assessment Signs method, as proposed by Machali (2000:119-120).

Translation Assessment

Translation assessment is important for two key reasons: (1) it helps build a relationship between translation theory and practice; and (2) it establishes criteria and standards for evaluating translator competence, especially when comparing multiple translations of the same source text. Therefore, three main aspects will be discussed: (1) factors to consider in translation assessment; (2) assessment criteria; and (3) assessment methods. It should be noted that the assessment framework discussed here is general and is based on semantic and communicative translation methods, which are the two most commonly used approaches in translation (Newmark: 1988). Other specific translation methods may require different assessment techniques. Additionally, what is being assessed here is the final product, not the translation process itself. The focus is on the outcome of the translation.

Translation is no longer a new activity, especially for those working in academia. Many reference materials are in foreign languages, and when reading these, people often translate the content subconsciously to understand its meaning. During translation, students may not be aware of the many processes happening behind the scenes, such as searching for appropriate equivalents, making decisions, and restructuring sentences. These activities ultimately help in achieving a deeper understanding of the course text, in this context, translation assessment and evaluation are essential to identify and reduce errors in both the translation process and its outcome. This study explains the various forms of assessment and evaluation used.

Quality of Translation Outcomes

In this study, the quality of translation results is closely tied to how well the message from the source language is conveyed to the target language, along with how acceptable and easy to read the translated text is. Equivalence of meaning plays a key role in translation because achieving equivalence in both meaning and style shows how good the translation is. The main goal of translation is to get the meaning across accurately.

This idea was also shared by Nida (1969:12), who said, "Translation involves reproducing i the receptor language the closet natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." Nida also explained that equivalence involves three important areas: contextual equivalence, naturalness, and closeness of meaning. Contextual equivalence means that the translator should not just look at the literal meaning of the source text but also consider its practical meaning, relating it to the topic of the translation.

Another important point is that the meaning in the target language should be as close as possible to the meaning in the source language to avoid mistakes in how the message is delivered. In this context, the translator should not try to find an exact match in the target language, because no two words in a language have the same meaning. This is because each language represents meaning in its own way. Acceptability refers to how natural and suitable the translated text is. It means the text should be smooth and grammatically correct in the target language, but it should not change the message from the source language. The next area of focus is readability. Translation experts have given several definitions of reliability, including:

(1) "How easily written materials can be read and understood." (Richard et al., 1985: 238).

(2) "Readability, or ease of reading and understanding determined by linguistic difficulty, is one aspect of comprehensibility. Presently, the concept is also understood to cover speak ability." (Hornby: 1995:62).

(3) "Readability refers to the degree to which a piece of writing is easily understood." (Sakri in Nababan: 2003: 62).

From these three definitions, we can conclude that a translate text is considered to have high readability if it communicates the message from the source text clearly and is easy for have target audience to understand. In this case, the reader's understanding is a key factor in determining the level of readability.

Translation Quality Assessment

Translation quality assessment is a method used to evaluate the quality of a translate text. It focuses on three main areas: equivalence, acceptability and readability. This type of assessment does not determine if a translation is right or wrong, but rather evaluates how good it is. According to Nababan et al. (2004), there are several techniques to measure the quality of a translation, such as cloze techniques, reading aloud techniques, knowledge tests, performance tests, translation, equivalent-based approaches, accuracy rating instrument, and readability rating instrument.

In this study, the translation quality assessment included an accuracy instrument, which the authors adapted to evaluate equivalence. To assess the acceptability of the translated text, the authors used the assessment criteria proposed by Machali (2000: 119-120). A readability rating instrument was also used to measure how easy the translation is to read. The following is an explanation.

a. Accuracy Rating Instrument

The instrument used to measure the level of equivalence proposed by Nagao, Tsuji, and Nakamura (1998) in Nababan et al. (2004: 42) is the Accuracy Rating Instrument based on a scale of 1 to 4, with the following explanation.

Table 1: Scale of Translation Quality

No.	Definition
1	The original message is clearly expressed in translated sentence. It is easy to understand and requires no changes.
2	The original message is clearly expressed in the source sentence. The translate version is easy to understand for the evaluator, buy it may need some rephrasing and adjustments in sentence structure.
3	The message in the original sentence isn't clearly shown in the translated sentence. Some words were chosen poorly, and the way phrase, clause and sentence are connected isn't correct, which causes confusion.
4	The source sentence is not translated at all the target sentence, meaning it is either left out or removed completely.

The table above illustrates the evaluation of translation quality at the sentence level. However, assessing the quality of a single sentence cannot be done without considering its context. In other words, the quality of one sentence is closely connected to how the rest of the sentences in the text are translated.

b. Acceptability Rating Instrument

A separate tool is used to measure acceptability, even though both equivalence and acceptability can be evaluated together. This distinction helps provide a more precise evaluation of the overall translation quality. Machali (2000: 199-120) provides translation assessment guidelines that use a grading scale from A to E.

Translation assessment signs according to the Machali Category

a. Category of Almost perfect translation with Score = 86-90 (A), indicator = Natural flow; it almost doesn't sound like a translation; no spelling mistakes or grammar issues; no incorrect word usage.
b. Category of very good translation with score = 76-85 (B), indicator = the meaning stays clear and accurate; there are no stiff, literal translations; no wrong terms used; there may be one or two minor grammar or spelling errors (for Arabic, no spelling errors at all).
c. Category of good translation with score = 61-75 (C), indicator = There is no significant change in meaning; the translation is quite literal, but it's less than 15 % of the text, so it doesn't feel like a direct translation. There are a few grammatical mistakes and some idiomatic issues, but they are also under 15% of the text. There may be one or two spelling errors, especially for Arabic. This should ideally have one.
d. Category of enough translation with score = 46-60 (D), indicator = It feels like a translation; there are some awkward literal translations; but they are below 25%. There are some grammars or idiomatic errors, but again, they are under 25%. There might be one or two places where the terms used are not standard or are unclear.
e. Category of bad translation with score = 20-45 (E), indicator = It clearly feels like a translation; there are too many literal translations, more than 25% of the text. There's also more than 25% of the text has meaning issues or incorrect term usage.

The tool used to evaluate the acceptability of the translation in this paper is called the acceptability rating instrument. It includes specific criteria, indicators, and a rating scale from 1 to 3 Machali, as mentioned in Kurnianingtyas (2008).

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c. Readability Rating Instrument

This tool is used to check how easy or hard it is to understand the translated text. It has two types of questions: closed-ended and open-ended. The open-ended questions ask about the readability level of the translated text, using a scale from 1 to 4: very easy, easy, difficult, and very difficult.

These questions also ask readers of the target language text explain why they chose that level of readability. Additionally, assessors are asked to provide examples from the translated text they are evaluating. Here is an example of the readability rating instrument, adapted from Nababan (2004: 62); as cited by Kurnianingtyas (2008). If you select very easy, easy, difficult, or very difficult, you need to explain your reasoning or mention the factors that influenced your choice. You should also reference each sentence in each paragraph according to how well you following criteria and indicators for evaluating readability.

Instrument readability modification consists of three parts below starting from scale 3 to 1:

a. Scale = 3, criteria = easy, indicator: the translation is easy to understand and comprehend. Many of the specialized terms used in the translation are familiar to the reader.
b. Scale = 2, criteria = moderate, indicator: the translation is easy to understand and comprehend, but there are one or two terms that are less clear or understandable to the reader.
c. Scale = 1, criteria = difficult, indicator: the translation is somewhat easy to understand and comprehend because some terms are not clear or understandable to the reader.

Criteria for Translation Evaluation

According to Larson (as cited Emzir, 2015: 267), there are three main factors to consider when assessing a translation: (1) accuracy, (2) clarity, and (3) naturalness.

1. Accuracy: A translation is accurate if it stays true to the content and information in the original text.
2. Clarity: A translation is clear if it is easy for the reader to understand and grasp.
3. Naturalness: A translation is natural if it follows the rules of the target language and feels familiar to the reader.

In addition, Ottel, as cited in Hartono (2015: 59), has provided more criteria for evaluating translations, including:

1. Paying attention to the rules and norms of the target language
2. Considering cultural differences
3. Ensuring the intended meaning is clear
4. Checking if the text flows smoothly and is well-organized
5. Being accurate with terminology
6. Making sure there are no editorial errors
7. Ensuring the layout is correct

Translation Evaluation Strategies

Translation experts have suggested different strategies for checking the quality of translation. This study will describe several methods that can be used either together or separately, depending on the type of text or purpose. Although most of these methods are used for non-literary texts, some can also be used for literary works, especially prose. However, the evaluation standards for literary translation are treated differently. The following are some translation quality assessment strategies that compare the source and target texts (Hartono, 2017: 50).

1) Accuracy Test

An accuracy test checks if the meaning from the source text (ST) matches the meaning in the target text (TT). The goal is to transfer the message accurately. The translator must not remove, add, or change the meaning of the ST just because of the form of the target language. To be accurate, the translator may adjust grammar or sentence structure. Nida and Taber (1982) believe that the content of the message is most important, that means it's sometimes acceptable or even necessary to make major changes to the structure. Larson (1984) says

the main purpose of an accuracy test is to check whether the information is equivalent. This check ensures that all information is present, nothing is missing, nothing is added and nothing is changed. Once this is confirmed, the translation should compare the ST and TT to find other issues. They should note any points that need to be reconsidered and be as objective as possible while evaluating their work. They must also avoid making unnecessary changes.

2) Readability Test

Larson (1984) says that a readability test checks the translation is easy to understand. Text with a high readability score is easier to read than text with a low score. The opposite is also true. This test includes factors like word choice, sentence structure, paragraph organization, grammar, font size, punctuation, spelling, spacing and margin size.

3) Naturalness Test

Larson (1984) explains that the purpose of translation is to produce a natural-sounding translation. This means the meaning from the source language should be clearly expressed naturally and appropriately in the target language. So, the naturalness test checks whether the translation feels natural and fits the style of the target language.

4) Comprehension Testing

Newmark (1988) suggests that comprehension testing is used if the translation is understood correctly by native speakers. This is closely related to referential errors. Which are mistakes involving facts, real-world information, or ideas rather than just words.

5) Consistency Check

Consistency checks are very important in a technical context. Duff (1981) says there are no strict rules for translating, but it's important to avoid certain mistakes, like inconsistency. Larson (1984) notes that the source text usually has key terms that are repeated. In long texts or over time, it's possible to use different terms for these key words. So, at the end of the translation, the translator should check for consistency. This is especially important in documents like political, technical, economic, legal, educational, or religious texts. Consistency

is also a goal of editing and requires careful attention. For example, it's important to keep the spelling of names of people and place consistent. Repeated use of foreign words should be checked for marks like question marks, commas, parentheses, colons, semicolons, exclamation points, or others consistent? During the final check, the format of the manuscript and other materials like footnotes, glossaries, indexes, or table of contents should also be reviewed. If the translator isn't sure about formatting, they should refer to a manual that covers spelling, punctuation, and other details.

6) Knowledge Test

This knowledge test is used to check how good a translation of technical text is. The method involves checking how well the reader understands the content of the translated text. Readers of the translated text are asked to read it and answer questions that the evaluator has prepared. If the reader of the translated text can answer as many questions correctly as the reader of the original text, it shows that the translated text conveys the same message as the original text (Brislin in Nababan, 2004: 48). However, this method can sometimes lead to a wrong conclusion about the quality of the translation.

7) Performance Test

Performance tests are usually used to check the quality of translation of technical documents. Brislin (in Nababan, 2004: 48) says that with performance tests, assessors can find out how good a translation is by testing the performance of technicians who need to use the translated text to fix or adjust parts of equipment.

C. Result and Discussion
Data Description

According to Nababan et al. (2004), there are several methods that can be used to measure the quality of translation results: cloze techniques, reading aloud techniques, knowledge tests, performance tests, translation, equivalent-based approaches, accuracy rating instruments, and readability rating instruments. In this study, the assessments of the translation quality included, among other things, the accuracy

rating instrument, which was arranged to assess the level of equivalence, and then to assess the level of acceptability of the translated text.

The author arranged the assessments criteria offered by Machali (200: 119-120) and the readability rating instrument to measure the level of readability of the translation. After giving the instruments to the students and collecting the data, using the theory by Nababan et al. (2004) for measuring translation quality, this study analyzed the results step by step.

It was found that the students' ability to translate short stories from Indonesian into English had been applied in their translations. The analysis of their translation quality grouped them into the intermediate, equivalent, and acceptable categories. Their average scores ranged from 61-75 (C), with two students scoring 76-85 (B). The descriptive data showed them to be in the intermediate and middle categories. The results of their data analysis can be seen in the tables below, which have been analyzed individually step by step.

Data Analysis

This study analyzed the data using a translation quality scale and included two analyses: a. Accuracy Rating Instrument and b. Acceptability Rating Instrument. In this study, after collecting data on students' ability to translate short story texts by using five translation procedures, the following results were obtained.

Table 2. Results of Using Procedures of Translation in the Text of the Short Stories

No	Name	Text 1					Text 2					Text 3				
		B	L	T	M	A	B	L	T	M	A	B	L	T	M	A
1	M	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√		√
2	T	√	√	√			√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√
3	A	√	√	√			√	√			√	√	√	√		√
4	M	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√
5	R	√	√		√	√	√	√		√		√	√	√		
1	W	√	√		√		√				√	√	√	√		√

2	D	√	√			√					√	√				√
3	F	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	H	√	√			√	√	√				√	√			
5	M	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	
6	D	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√		√	√

Note:
B = Borrowing,
L = Literal,
T = Transcription,
M = Modulation,
A = Adaptation.

From the result in the table above, it shows that the translation procedures they use for translating short story texts involve the five procedures mentioned, which proves that their translations follow the same procedures used when translating into English.

a. Accuracy Rating Instrument

Table 3. Scale of Translation Quality

No		Text 1				Text 2				Text 3			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1	M		√	√			√	√				√	
2	T		√	√			√	√					√
3	A			√			√	√				√	
4	M			√				√				√	
5	R		√				√	√				√	
1	W			√	√			√					√
2	D			√	√				√				√
3	F		√				√	√				√	
4	H			√			√	√					√
5	M		√				√	√				√	
6	D		√				√	√				√	

Note:
1 = the meaning of the original sentence is correctly expressed in the translated sentence. The translation is clear to the evaluator, and no corrections are needed.
2 = the meaning of the original sentence is correctly expressed in the translated sentence. The translation is clear to the evaluator, but some rephrasing and changes in word order are required.
3 = the meaning of the original sentence is not accurately conveyed in the translated sentence. There are issues with word choice and how phrases, clauses, and sentence related to each other.

4 = the original sentence is not translated at all into the target sentence, either by omission or deletion.

The result above shown a score of 3 – 4, which indicates that the translation quality of their short stories is medium. This means that some translations are not very accurate but still acceptable, while many translations are inaccurate or have several elements that are missing or are missing or not quite corrected.

Table 4. Modification of the Accuracy Rating Instrument scale

No		Text 1			Text 2			Text 3		
		3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1
4th										
1	M	√			√				√	
2	T	√			√			√		
3	A	√			√			√		
4	M	√			√				√	
5	R	√			√				√	
6th										
1	W	√				√			√	
2	D		√			√			√	
3	F	√			√			√		
4	H	√				√				√
5	M	√			√				√	
6	D	√			√			√		

Note:
3 = Worth it
2 = Not Appropriate
1 = Not Worth It

The result from the table above indicate that the modified accuracy rating instrument shows the scales are equivalent, with some being less so. However, in this particular assessment, they are considered good and equivalent.

b. Acceptability Rating Instrument

Table 5. Translation Assessment Guidelines According to Machali

No	Name	Categories	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
1	M	Good translation	63 (C)	65 (C)	64 (C)
2	T	Good translation	60 (C)	61 (C)	62 (C)
3	A	Good translation	60 (C)	60 (C)	65 (C)
4	M	Good translation	61 (C)	62 (C)	62 (C)

5	R	Good translation	60 (C)	60 (C)	65 (C)
1	W	Good translation	65 (C)	60 (C)	61 (C)
2	D	Enough translation	60 (D)	58 (D)	59 (D)
3	F	Good translation	67 (C)	66 (C)	69 (C)
4	H	Good translation	65 (C)	68 (C)	66 (C)
5	M	Very Good translation	80 (B)	78 (B)	78 (B)
6	D	Very Good translation	81 (B)	78 (B)	65 (C)

Note: Score: 86-90 (A)
              76-85 (B)
              61-75 (C)
              46-60 (D)
              20-45 (E)

Table 5 above shows that in the translation category, they are in a good position. This means they are quite skilled at translating text 1, 2 and 3. However, there are two students who are not very good translating.

Table 6. Modification of the Acceptability Rating Instrument Scale

No		Indicators								
		Text 1			Text 2			Text 3		
4th		A	LA	NA	A	LA	NA	A	LA	NA
1	M	√			√			√		
2	T	√			√			√		
3	A	√			√			√		
4	M	√			√			√		
5	R	√			√			√		
6th										
1	W		√			√		√		
2	D		√			√		√		
3	F	√			√			√		
4	H	√			√			√		
5	M	√			√			√		
6	D	√								

Note: B = Accept
             KB = Less accept
             TB = Not accept

From the result in table 6, it is clear that the three short story texts they translated were considered acceptable, with an average level of acceptability. This shows that their translation work is acceptable and easy for readers to understand in English.

Result and discussion describes the research findings and the discussion scientifically as obtained from the research result and supported with the sufficient data. The scientific finding here refers to not the data of research result obtained. The scientific findings here should be explained scientifically including: What are the scientific findings obtained? Why can it happen? Why the variable trend should be like that? All those questions should be explained scientifically, not only descriptively but also supported by sufficient basic science phenomena. Besides, it should be compared with other research result with the same relevant topic. Research result and finding should be able to answer the hypothesis research mentioned in introduction.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

In this study, the translation process involved five procedures: borrowing, literal translation, transcription, modulation and adaptation. There short story texts were used and translated into English, based on the translation results, the texts were found to be acceptable and equivalent, with scores ranging from 61 to 75 (C). These score are moderate, including the translations are of good to medium quality. This suggests that the translations are of good quality, as the students had previously received explanations in their Indonesian-English interpretation course and were given to the prior learning and assessment related to this subject study. Future researchers will be even better at exploring because the translation procedure used refers to the word-by-word analysis method when they translate it. So, next, research more deeply by understanding each procedure.

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