Indonesian EFL Learners' Perceptions of ChatGPT's Translation Readability in Translating English Literary Text

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Highlights
Indonesian EFL learners generally found ChatGPT's translations readable. However, they faced challenges with syntax, semantics, and stylistics issues which required extra reading time. The untranslated sentences due to content policy restrictions further added to the difficulties. Despite high readability ratings, these issues disrupted their overall reading experience.

ABSTRACT: This study investigated how English as foreign language (EFL) learners in a literary community setting perceived the readability of ChatGPT's translations in translating an English short story into Indonesian. This research used a short story written by Gerald Murnane entitled The Boy's Name was David. By using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research explored two questions: the readability score of the translations and learners' perceptions of this readability. Purposive sampling was employed by involving 18 EFL learners from Kurvadot Creative, a literature discussion community in Cepu, Indonesia. The data were collected through document, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. The readability assessment was analyzed by using Nababan's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) framework, while the EFL learners' perceptions in the discussion was analyzed by using thematic analysis. The results revealed that learners generally rated the ChatGPT translations as Readable, with an average score of 2.68. However, the participants also identified several challenges. These included linguistic issues, such as issues with syntax, semantics, and stylistics, as well as reading engagement problems where the participants required more time to read certain parts of the translation. In addition, the untranslated sentences caused by ChatGPT's content policy restrictions added to the challenges. Despite the relatively high readability ratings, these factors disrupted participants' overall reading experiences with the translated short story by ChatGPT.

Keywords: ChatGPT's translation, translation readability, English literary Indonesian EFL learners.

Introduction

Translation's important role in EFL learning context especially for learners who rely on their first language (L1) for comprehension and interpretation is inevitable. As Putrawan (2019) noted, L1 and translation persist as essential components in EFL learning to bridge the linguistic gap and facilitate learners to understand English texts. However, Beinborn et al. (2014) noted that second language (L2) learners, who often possess substantial reading experience in their native language, encounter unique

difficulties when engaging with complex texts in L2. To bridge the learning difficulties, the integration of L2 materials and tools further enriches the EFL learning experience. Jeane Tuilan et al. (2023) underscored the value of translation tools in enhancing students' engagement with the English language. In addition, Vo & Huynh (2024) emphasized that authentic materials in L2 is able to boost learners' motivation. These findings underscored the importance of using accessible, high-quality translations to support EFL learners' learning.

Moreover, the widespread use of ChatGPT has introduced new possibilities for EFL learning and translation tasks. ChatGPT is the world's most popular multipurpose generative AI tool (Bukar et al., 2024; Haleem et al., 2022). The accessibility and versatility have quickly gained growing interest in using AI technologies for educational purposes. The popularity underscores the relevance of studying ChatGPT's usage in EFL contexts, particularly in translation and literary studies. For EFL learners, ChatGPT may provide personalized learning environments, assists with writing tasks, simplifies complex concepts, creates engaging learning experiences, and boosts learners' confidence (Diasti, 2024). These capabilities make it particularly valuable in literary studies, enabling Indonesian learners to explore and better understand English literary works. As Teng (2024) suggests, AI tools like ChatGPT offer promising solutions to challenge in deeper engagement with literary texts for EFL learners.

EFL Learners as Literary Enthusiasts

For EFL learners as literary enthusiast, literary discussion forums provide a good place to manage their interest in literary works. In recent years, Afdholy et al. (2020) stated that literary communities have grown rapidly in Indonesia. The significant emergence of literary communities may address the campaigns of Indonesia's low literacy rates. By 2019, initiatives like *Kurvadot Creative* had expanded these efforts which creates a suitable space for literary and artistic activities, including monthly discussions held in informal settings such as in the coffee shops (Khairudin et al., 2023). *Kurvadot Creative*'s literary discussion attracted a diverse group of participants with varied occupations who have the same enthusiasm for literature readings.

Thus, this study situated the investigation within the broader context of Indonesia's EFL status, where English is widely taught but not as an official language. As Rohmah (2005) notes, English learning in such contexts is motivated by both educational and professional needs, or even entertaining and interest needs such as in the literary community settings. Moreover, reading habits, language preferences, and the perceived status of the source language further shape the reception of translated fiction (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2024). Here, machine translation (MT) tools, including ChatGPT, are becoming valuable assets in this setting. As Raad (2020) observed that MT provides an effective and accessible way to facilitate English learning. By simplifying translation tasks and encouraging engagement with English

literature, these tools contribute to improve literary reading comprehension among EFL learners within literary communities.

Translation Readability and *The Boy's Name was David*

Readability is defined as the reading ease in which a text can be read and its meaning is understood (McDonald, 2020). It encompasses various linguistic and contextual factors that influence a reader's ability to comprehend a translation easily. Key aspects contributing to readability include textual tone, style, and the use of social dialects that are familiar and accessible to the target readers (Nababan & Nuraeni, 2012; Nababan & Santosa, 2018). These elements are particularly significant in educational and literary translations, where clarity and cultural relevance are important. Nababan's TQA framework provides a vigorous methodology to evaluate translation readability. This theoretical approach offers structured and objective criteria to assess translation text which align with the expectations and comprehension levels of the target readers. Thus, Nababan's TQA is particularly well-suited to analyze AI-generated translations, such as the translations produced by ChatGPT. This theoretical framework is a comprehensive assessment to evaluate how well the translations produced by ChatGPT meet the needs of EFL learners as literary enthusiasts.

Besides, Gerald Murnane's literary works are renowned for their unique and challenging nature. His works offered a distinct narrative style that sets them apart from other authors. Murnane's fiction is characterized by its intricate construction of narrative landscapes which can encourage readers to engage their imagination actively. However, these landscapes often remain vague, leaving both characters and readers with an ambiguous understanding of the narratives (Murphy, 2013, 2014). For instance, in *The Boy's Name Was David* (Murnane, 2018), Murnane's deliberate obscurity fosters intriguing and perplexing narratives. Readers often find Murnane's writing style is estranging and alienating which demands significant effort to comprehend. His repetitive phrasing and frequent use of indeterminate expressions which create a dense and intricate narration (Carman, 2018). Additionally, Murnane frequently makes indirect references to unnamed authors and literary works, adding further complexity. To engage with his texts, readers must actively trace patterns and connections. His, narratives often lack a clear linear progression (Uhlmann, 2015). Murnane's works thus challenge readers to navigate the ambiguities which offer a unique literary reading experience that is as demanding as it is enriching.

Thus, understanding EFL learners' perceptions is essential to evaluate the performance of ChatGPT as a translation tool in such contexts. Besides, translating a short story of Gerarld Murnane by using ChatGPT was challenging due to its complex linguistics features and narrations. Finally. The EFL learners' perceptions provide valuable insights into how well ChatGPT meets the readers' expectation translation task of Murnane's The Boys Name was David.

Literature Review

ChatGPT leverages natural language processing (NLP) to produce human-like text, excelling in tasks like question answering, summarization, and translation (Haleem et al., 2022). However, AI translation tools still face significant challenges, particularly in translating literary texts. Issues such as translation reliability and frequent errors are common, even in advanced systems like ChatGPT (Yuxiu, 2024). These tools struggle with socio-culturally complex texts, as MT systems lack the nuance to fully capture cultural contexts and stylistic subtleties (Urlaub & Dessein, 2022). These limitations highlight the need for continued refinement of AI tools, especially when addressing the demands of stylistically and culturally rich texts (Turganbayeva et al., 2022). Instead, the systems have to struggle with maintaining the grammatical accuracy and structural coherence in translating complex sentence structures (Naveen & Trojovský, 2024). The Less readable translations often result from AI's failure to adapt to target text (TT) stylistic norms or its tendency to replicate source language structures (Nasution, 2022). In addition, as software which governed by its creators, it can sometimes lack contextual precision and exhibit the inherent constraints of artificial systems (Kastowo et al., 2024). Bias remains another concern, as studies reveal that ChatGPT occasionally leans toward particular viewpoints or struggles to capture the cultural nuances and complexities of different languages (Duncan & Mcculloh, 2023; Postigo, 2024). In translation tasks, while ChatGPT demonstrates strengths in clarity and accessibility, the outputs often prioritize source language emphasis. It may lead to stylistic or contextual inaccuracies and need further oversight to human translator (Baihaqi & Mulyana, 2021; Hidayati & Nihayah, 2024).

Besides, the existing studies also pay attention on the end users of machine translation. A study reported that users perspectives reveal varying levels of acceptance and satisfaction with AI translation tools. Ainan Ningrum & Dewi (2024) found tools like Google Translate acceptable and readable. While other studies perceived the tool as more critical which noted its tendency toward the literal translations (Winiharti et al., 2021). In literary contexts, AI struggles with the unique demands of translating literary voice and stylistic nuance, areas that remain underexplored in MT research (Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2019). In addition, translation studies have shifted toward target readers-oriented approaches. The cultural turn emphasizes tailoring translations to the readers' cultural and contextual expectations, moving beyond linguistic equivalence (Gambier, 2023). Here, ChatGPT shows potential engage with translations task (Xiao & Zhi, 2023). Thus, understanding readers' perceptions is essential for evaluating the performance of translations in terms of the cultural and stylistic aspects.

Despite the growing adoption of AI translation tools like ChatGPT for various purposes and researches, a gap exists in understanding its performance in producing readable translations of complex literary texts, particularly from the perspective of EFL learners as literary enthusiast. Current research predominantly emphasized technical accuracy, linguistic fidelity, and functional translations, leaving readability

and interpretive quality, while the usage in literary contexts for EFL learners were relatively unexplored. Thus, addressing to these gaps will provide a deeper understanding of ChatGPT's in performing literary translation task which may offer insights into how it can be optimized for EFL learners as literary enthusiasts. By exploring EFL learners' perception in such settings, educators and researchers can identify areas for improvement in AI-driven translation tools, ensuring they align better with the linguistic and cultural expectations of EFL learners. Moreover, examining these perceptions helps to assess the role of ChatGPT in facilitating comprehension of complex texts, particularly in literary studies where the translation readability is crucial.

Therefore, the research gap of this study lies in the lack of empirical investigations that focus on EFL learners' perceptions of the readability of AI-generated translations in literary contexts. Previous studies have examined translation quality mostly from technical or linguistic perspectives, but little attention has been given to how readers, especially EFL learners who engage with literary works, perceive the readability and interpretability of such translations. This unaddressed area is essential, since reader-oriented evaluation is a key dimension in translation studies, particularly in literature where stylistic and cultural nuances play a significant role.

Thus, to be involved in the research field's gap, this research explored on how EFL learners in a literary community setting perceive the readability of ChatGPT's translations, particularly in translating an English short story into Indonesian. To address this question, the study is guided by two specific research objectives. The first is to evaluate and measure the readability of the AI-generated translations; and, the second is to gain insights on how EFL learners perceive the readability of the translated text. By answering these two research questions, this study will provide a comprehensive examination of both the technical aspects of translation readability and the subjective perceptions of EFL learners.

Method
Research Design
This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to address the research questions. As noted by Sutopo as cited in Nababan & Santosa (2018), this method is ideal for analysing data in the form of words and sentences to enable an objective examination of textual and perceptual elements. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen to provide an in-depth and detailed exploration of the collected data. Then, the research utilized a purposive sampling method to identify the participants' criteria. According to Creswell (2013), purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who align with the specific objectives of the study. This approach ensured that participants met the criteria to gain relevant and informative data. The combination of a descriptive qualitative framework and purposive sampling facilitated a thorough and focused investigation which was aligned with the study's aim to

explore EFL learners' perceptions of ChatGPT's translation readability in literary contexts.

Research Setting

This study was conducted within the context of a literature discussion community in Central Java, Indonesia, named *Kurvadot Creative*. The participants who also served as raters consisted of 18 EFL learners with diverse educational and occupational backgrounds who had interest in literary works as represented in Table 1. Their ages spanned from high school students to individuals in their 50s, providing a broad spectrum of perspectives. According to Kim (2004), participation in literary community discussions enriches reading experiences by allowing individuals to exchange ideas and insights. These discussions foster interactive and collaborative patterns, enabling participants to engage deeply with literary texts and gain authentic, responsive perspectives on the works under discussion.

Table 1

Participants' Background

Occupation	Details
Self-employed/Entrepreneur	2 participants
Employee	3 participants
Lecturer	2 participants (1 is an English lecturer)
Teacher	3 participants (1 is an Indonesian language teacher)
Writer	1 participant
Translator	3 participants (2 English translators and 1 France translator)
Student	4 participants
Total	18 participants

The choice of a community-based setting added significant value to the assessment of readability. Unlike formal classroom contexts where participants may be influenced by assessment pressures, literary communities allow learners to read, interpret, and evaluate texts in a more natural and interest-driven environment. This authentic setting ensures that the readability evaluation reflects genuine reader responses. As such, the perspectives captured in this study represent how translations are experienced in real-world literary communities and readers, thereby offering richer and more valid insights into readability.

Thus, the setting in the discussion was suitable to address the research objectives. The participants' varied backgrounds and active engagement in literary discussions provided valuable insights into the readability assessment of translated literary texts. To present the analysis and discussion, the 18 raters were anonymized and coded as P1 through P18. Each rater contributed to evaluate the readability of ChatGPT-translated literary texts, ensuring a comprehensive assessment and evaluation from multiple viewpoints.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study involved three main sources: document, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Each method was carefully designed to

address the research objectives and provide comprehensive insights into the readability of ChatGPT's translations.

Document

The primary data for this study comprised ChatGPT's translation of Gerald Murnane's short story, *The Boy's Name Was David*. Specifically, the data included all utterances in the original text and translated text by ChatGPT. In the translation process, this research inputted this prompts to ChatGPT: "*Generate a translation of the following short story from English to Indonesian.*" The applied prompt followed the iterative prompting methodology described by (Manifeste, 2023). Then, the translated data was systematically coded as S.1, S.2, S.3, ..., S.177, where each code corresponded to a translated unit of sentence. The coding was essential to facilitate detailed analysis at the levels of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, aligning with (Nababan & Nuraeni, 2012) emphasis on precise translation quality assessment.

Questionnaire

In addition to the document, data was collected through a paper-based questionnaire distributed to the participants who served as raters. The questionnaire was aimed to evaluate the readability of the Indonesian translation based on the framework proposed by (Nababan & Santosa, 2018) which used a three-tiered scoring system to capture the assessment from participants as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Readability Questionnaire

No	Target Text	Readable (3)	Less readable (2)	Unreadable (1)
S.001	Nama anak laki-laki itu adalah David			
S.002	Nama pria itu entah apa adanya.			
S.003	Dia berusia lebih dari enam puluh tahun dan menghabiskan sebagian besar waktunya sendirian.			

The questionnaire was designed to gather readability assessment from typical readers of the target language. Unlike studies employing only on expert judgment, this study also prioritized the perspectives of EFL learners in a literary discussion, who are native Indonesian speakers, ensuring a focus on the readability as perceived by typical users of the translation.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion was conducted to gain qualitative insights into participants' perceptions of the translation's readability. These sessions were recorded through direct observation notes, following the guidelines provided by (Neuman, 2014). Focus groups, as (Neuman, 2014) describes, are informal group interviews conducted in a discussion setting. This method allowed participants to freely share their opinions and ideas in an interactive environment. Direct observation notes

captured specific details of the discussions, providing rich data for later interpretation and analysis. To present the data obtained from focus group discussion, all statements from the participants were translated into English by using ChatGPT as well. In summary, by combining document, questionnaires, and focus group discussions, this study ensured a comprehensive approach to the data collection step to address the translation readability.
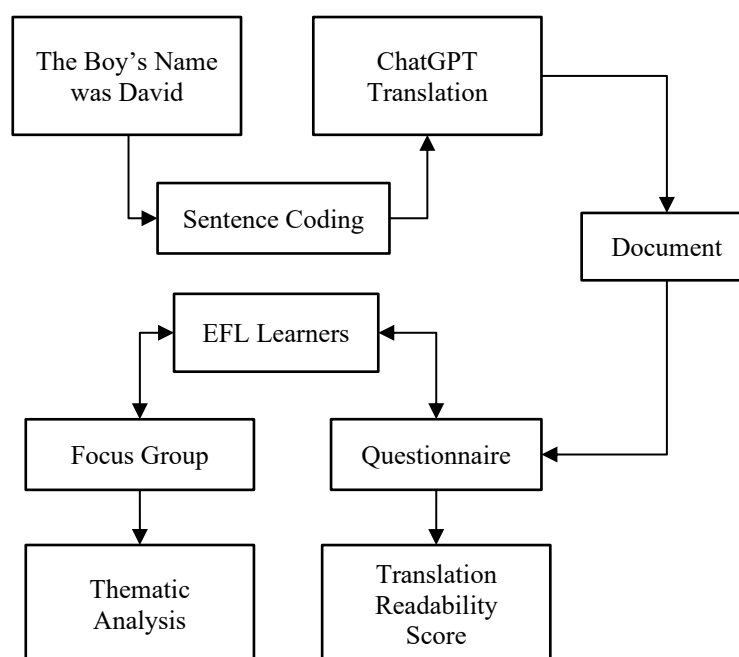

Figure 1. Research Procedure

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analysed using two key methods: Nababan's TQA for readability and thematic analysis for participants' perceptions. These approaches were chosen to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of both the objective and subjective aspects of the translated text's readability.

For the readability assessment, ChatGPT's translation of The Boy's Name Was David was segmented and systematically coded as S.1, S.2, S.3, ..., S.177. The coding process was conducted manually by the researcher, who assigned codes sentence by sentence to ensure accuracy and consistency in identifying each unit of analysis. This manual approach allowed careful alignment between the original and translated text and minimized possible errors from automated segmentation. Participants' questionnaire responses, which rated the translation's readability, were then analyzed quantitatively using Nababan's TQA framework to obtain readability scores.

For the qualitative dimension, thematic analysis was applied to the focus group discussion (FGD) data to uncover participants' perceptions of readability. Following Creswell (2013), the analysis proceeded through three stages. First, during the open coding phase, the researcher reviewed observation notes and transcripts, highlighting

key phrases or statements related to readability issues. Next, in the categorization stage, similar codes were grouped into broader categories, such as lexical clarity, sentence complexity, cultural nuance, and stylistic accessibility. Finally, in the theme generation stage, these categories were synthesized into overarching themes that captured participants' shared perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT translations.

In summary, by combining Nababan's TQA with a step-by-step thematic analysis, the study ensured both objectivity and depth in investigating the readability of ChatGPT's translation. The manual coding of translated segments, paired with systematic theme development from FGD data, provided a multidimensional understanding of how Indonesian EFL learners in a literary community perceive AI-generated translations.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion which focused on two main objectives: measuring the readability scores of ChatGPT's translation using Nababan's TQA framework and understanding how typical Indonesian readers perceive the translation's readability. To ensure in-depth analysis and discussion, the findings are integrated with the discussion. This section will be divided into two subsections. The first one will discuss about the translation readability; and, the second one will discuss about the perception of the participants towards the translation. The Findings and Discussion integration was designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of its readability among the target readers.

ChatGPT's Translation Readability Score

This subsection addresses the first research question which examined the readability of ChatGPT's translation of Gerald Murnane's short story, The Boy's Name Was David. The findings presented here are derived from two primary sources: document analysis and a questionnaire which was distributed to the participants. The document analysis is to examine the data both in ST and TT, while the questionnaire captures the raters' assessment toward the translation readability.

Table 3

Document Result

	Total	Detail	Code Detail
Data of ST	177	176 sentences and 1 paragraph	S.001, S.002, S.003, …, S.177
Data of TT	176	176 sentences	From S.001 to S.177, except S.112
Untranslated Data	1	1 paragraph	S.112 (Paragraph 26)

As shown in Table 3, the document results revealed a total of 177 data in the source text (ST) which consist of 176 sentences and 1 paragraph. In contrast, the target text (TT) contained 176 sentences, with one paragraph, S.112, left untranslated. The untranslated paragraph corresponds to Paragraph 26 of ST which consists of 7

sentences. S.112 was not translated due to a content policy issue flagged by the ChatGPT system.

This issue reflects to the observation of Kastowo et al. (2024) who argue that ChatGPT's functionality is constrained when the input qualifies as a regulatory or ethical violation. These rules are aimed to ensure responsible use of AI technology but can limit its performance in handling certain types of sensitive literary materials. Thus, considering about the issue, S.112 was excluded from the readability assessment. A detailed discussion of S.112 will be explained further in the next subsection.

Table 4
Questionnaire Result of Readability Assessment

	Readable	Less readable	Unreadable	Total
Total Data	258	75	19	352
Total Score	774	150	19	943

The questionnaire result showed that 258 samples were classified as Readable with the highest total score of 774 out of 943. It indicated that most translations were clear, easy to understand, and adhered well to established readability standards. This result affirmed that ChatGPT performed strongly in generating translations that are accessible to readers. In contrast, the Less readable category comprised of 75 samples with the total score of 150. It was suggested that while the translations in this category were generally comprehensible, readers required additional effort to grasp the text. Issues such as awkward phrasing, inconsistent syntax, or partial adherence to cultural context might have contributed to this classification. Then, the unreadable category was accounted as the smallest portion with 19 samples with a total score of 19. Translations in this category were difficult to understand. Overall, the findings emphasized ChatGPT's performance in producing readable translations.

$$Average\ Readability\ Score = \frac{(258 \cdot 3) + (75 \cdot 2) + (19 \cdot 1)}{258 + 75 + 19}$$

$$Average\ Readability\ Score = \frac{943}{352} = 2.68$$

The calculation of the average readability score resulted of 2.68. With an average score approaching to 3, the translations demonstrated a strong degree of comprehensibility which largely aligning with the High readable category. This suggested that the majority of translations effectively met the readability level of the EFL learners engaging with the literary text. However, while the score of 2.68 reflected a highly readable text, it also highlighted the opportunities for translation improvement. The influence of the less readable and unreadable categories on the overall score underscores the need for further tools' refinements. This finding aligns with (Ainan Ningrum & Dewi, 2024), who stated that translation tools such as Google Translate often produce readable translations. However, in contrast, Winiharti et al. (2021) found that literal translation tendencies tend to reduce the overall readability.

Several examples from the translation, S.168 and S.169, exhibited high readable translations which indicated their ease of understanding for the target readers.

S.168
ST: A scab had formed over the wound, but a narrow zone of red remained around the scab.
TT: *Kerak telah terbentuk di atas luka tersebut, tetapi zona merah sempit masih tersisa di sekitar kerak.*

S.169
ST: During the years when he was a teacher of fiction writing, the man of this fiction had read aloud to his students and had urged them to consider many hundreds of statements by writers of fiction or anecdotes about those writers.
TT: *Selama tahun-tahun ketika ia menjadi guru menulis fiksi, pria dalam kisah ini telah membacakan keras kepada murid-muridnya dan mendorong mereka untuk mempertimbangkan ratusan pernyataan oleh pengarang fiksi atau anekdot tentang para penulis tersebut.*

The sentence structure is straightforward clear which maintain the flow of the ST. The translation uses familiar terms, ensuring that the target audience, especially EFL learners, can grasp the meaning without difficulty. The translation successfully engages the reader without overwhelming them. S.168 and S.169 demonstrated easily readable translations for EFL learners.

Despite the high-readable translations, there are also instances where the translated sentences were rated as less readable or more difficult to understand. S.105 and S.106 are examples of less readable translation:

S.105
ST: A young woman sits in a small boat in the shallows of a lake on a summer morning.
TT: *Seorang wanita muda duduk di sebuah perahu kecil di dangau danau pada pagi hari musim panas.*

S.105 was found to be less readable due to the use of the word "*dangau*," which is an uncommon or regional term for "shallows." This term may not be easily understood by the general Indonesian readers. In this context, a more widely recognized term, such as "*perairan dangkal*" (shallow water), would have provided greater clarity. The unfamiliarity of "*dangau*" creates a barrier for the reader which reduced the overall readability of the translation.

S.106
ST: The rest of her group are on a sandbar nearby.
TT: *Sisanya dari kelompoknya berada di sebuah banci pasir di dekatnya.*

S.106 also encountered readability issues due to the mistranslation of the term "sandbar." The word "*banci*" used in the translation refers to a term that is typically associated with an effeminate person which is entirely inappropriate in this context. The correct term should be "*batu pasir*" or "*tanjung pasir*," both of which refer to a sandbar in Indonesian. Moreover, the phrase "*Sisanya dari kelompoknya*" (the rest of

her group) feels slightly awkward and could be rephrased for smoother readability. While S.105 and S.106 is grammatically correct, the phrasing feels less natural compared to the fluidity of the original English..

In summary, this study reflected both the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT in translating literary text which was aligned with other machine translator tools investigations (Baihaqi & Mulyana, 2021; Bania & Faridy, 2023; Ismailia, 2023; Nasution, 2022; Winiharti et al., 2021). The studies stated that while these MTs can be effective tools for rapid and functional translations, they often struggle with maintaining readability, especially for more complex or stylistic literary texts. This study highlights the importance of refining these systems to improve their capacity for translating texts that require nuanced understanding and cultural adaptation.

The Emerging Perceptions

The translations generated by ChatGPT were generally perceived as readable in conveying the ST into Indonesian. However, the participants in the Focus Group Discussion highlighted specific issues that occasionally detracted them from their reading experience. These included awkward phrasing, cultural mismatches, and inconsistencies in preserving the tone and style of the original text. These categorized themes provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT's translations. While the tool demonstrates significant potential for generating readable translations, the identified issues indicate areas where AI translation systems could improve particularly in handling linguistic and cultural nuances.

Syntactical and Structural Issues
1. Syntactical Errors

Participants in the Focus Group Discussion identified certain sentences exhibited unnatural or incorrect syntactic structures which disrupt the flow and clarity of the translation. For example, participants pointed out sentences such as S.089 and S.076 as particularly problematic. P1 noted that "the structure feels awkward and forces readers to re-read for understanding," while P3 observed that "the sentence does not follow standard Indonesian syntax, making it hard to grasp the meaning."

> **S.076**
> ST: He would have rejoiced if he could have witnessed a contest of sentences alone: if he could have repeated aloud to himself even a short sentence from each of the leading pieces of fiction so as to have had in his mind as the race came to an end only such visual images as arose from the remembered sentences.
> TT: *Dia akan bersukacita jika dia bisa menyaksikan kontes hanya dari kalimat-kalimat: jika dia bisa mengulangi keras kepada dirinya sendiri bahkan sebuah kalimat pendek dari setiap karya fiksi terkemuka sehingga di pikirannya saat perlombaan berakhir, hanya gambaran visual yang muncul dari kalimat-kalimat yang diingat.*

The errors in translations occur when the AI struggles to adapt the sentence structures of the ST to the grammatical conventions of the TT. This issue is particularly

significant in literary translations, where nuanced and complex sentence structures demand a higher degree of linguistic precision. As P7 highlighted, "the awkward syntax makes the translation feel less natural, and readers are left guessing the intended meaning." These challenges suggest limitations in ChatGPT's ability to handle intricate syntactic transformations required for effective cross-linguistic translation. This aligns with prior research indicating that "some versions are inaccurate and inappropriate according to grammatical rules" (Baihaqi & Mulyana, 2021). The identified syntactical errors in S.079 classified under the "Less Readable" category. Incorrect syntax influenced the flow and coherence of the text which forced readers to read carefully.

2. Complex Sentence Structures

Participants highlighted that some sentences in the translation were excessively complex, requiring multiple readings to understand their meaning. Sentences such as S.049 and S.080 were specifically mentioned as problematic. P4 remarked, "The sentences are too convoluted, and it's hard to follow the logic in one go," while P6 added, "The complexity of the structure detracts from the reading experience, making it feel like the translation is not tailored for smooth comprehension."

S.080

ST: In one of those years, the man began to understand that his failing more and more to remember details connected with more than three thousand pieces of fiction might itself be imagined as the finish of a horse-race.

TT: *Di salah satu tahun itu, pria itu mulai memahami bahwa ketidakingatannya untuk semakin mengingat detail terkait dengan lebih dari tiga ribu karya fiksi mungkin diibaratkan sebagai akhir dari perlombaan kuda.*

Complex sentence structures often pose significant challenges for machine translation. While it can effectively handle straightforward sentences, any tools including ChatGPT frequently struggle with intricate grammatical arrangements, resulting in translations that lack clarity. P8 noted, "The translation preserves the complexity of the original text but at the cost of readability, which is frustrating for readers." Thus, this study aligns with Urlaub & Dessein (2022), who noted that translation tools often struggle to handle complex sentence structures, particularly when dealing with literary texts.

Semantic Issues
1. Inaccuracy in Translation

Certain words in TT, such as "scrapbook" and "staplecheese" in S.41 and S.084, were left untranslated. While these instances did not render the sentences unreadable, they did create moments of confusion for readers. P3 noted, "The untranslated terms stood out and made me pause, but I could guess their meaning from the surrounding context."

S.084

ST: The last part of this last race would more resemble the last part of a long-distance steeplechase, when all but two or three entrants had dropped far behind.

TT: *Bagian terakhir dari perlombaan terakhir ini akan lebih menyerupai bagian terakhir dari steeplechase jarak jauh, ketika semua kecuali dua atau tiga peserta telah jauh tertinggal.*

The untranslated words suggest limitations in the AI model's lexicon or its ability to identify "less-common terms". While the context sometimes compensates for these gaps, reliance on inference can disrupt the reading experience, especially for non-native speakers. This issue highlights the broader challenge faced by machine translation systems in managing linguistic nuances and cultural specificities.The presence of untranslated words can also result from word-by-word translation errors or mismatched vocabulary choices, further complicating the text. These issues reflect not only gaps in vocabulary databases but also the absence of effective mechanisms to handle non-standard terms or unique cultural references as noted by Urlaub & Dessein (2022).

2. Awkward or Unnatural Phrasing

Some participants noted that specific phrases in the translated text were awkward or unnatural, leading to comprehension difficulties or distractions (e.g., S.134, S.12, S.87). For example, P7 stated, "The sentence made sense after rereading, but it felt clunky and interrupted the natural flow of the text."

S.134

ST: During a lifetime of watching horse-races or televised images of horse-races and of listening to radio broadcasts of horse-races, the man mentioned often in this fiction but never named had seen a comparatively small number of a sort of finish in which the eventual winner had not been considered even a likely placegetter a short distance from the winning post.

TT: *Selama seumur hidupnya menonton perlombaan kuda atau gambaran perlombaan kuda di televisi dan mendengarkan siaran radio tentang perlombaan kuda, pria yang sering disebut dalam karya fiksi ini tetapi tidak pernah disebutkan namanya pernah melihat sejumlah kecil dari jenis finish di mana pemenang akhirnya tidak dianggap sebagai yang mungkin menempati tempat teratas hanya sejauh pendek dari garis finis.*

Awkward phrasing often arises from overly literal translations, where the AI fails to adapt idiomatic or culturally specific expressions from the source language into natural equivalents in the target language. While the core meaning may remain accurate, the phrasing feels uncomfortable or out of place for the target readers. This issue, which is aligned with Taivalkoski-Shilov (2019), reflects a limitation in the AI's ability to balance semantic accuracy with stylistic fluency.

3. Overuse of Deixis and Pronouns

Participants reported difficulty tracking referents due to the overuse of deixis and pronouns in some translations which influenced the coherence as S.158 and S.107. P5 noted, "I had to reread the sentence multiple times to figure out who or what 'it' referred to."

S.158

ST: The man, whatever his name was, remembered perhaps fifteen years afterwards only a summary of the advice that he had given to the young woman, whatever her name was, after she had reported to him what was summarised in the previous paragraph.

TT: *Pria itu, siapapun namanya, ingat mungkin lima belas tahun kemudian hanya ringkasan dari nasihat yang telah ia berikan kepada wanita muda itu, siapapun namanya, setelah dia melaporkan kepada dia apa yang diringkas dalam paragraf sebelumnya.*

The overuse of pronouns and deixis can create ambiguity, especially when the references are not immediately clear and not sufficient. This is a recurring problem in AI-generated texts where context resolution mechanisms are limited. Rather than repeating nouns or providing sufficient contextual cues, the translation system may default to pronouns or demonstrative references which led to the target readers' confusion. Additionally, literal or overly simplified translations can compound errors in coherence, such as mismatched pronouns or prepositions. These inconsistencies disrupt the logical flow of sentences, making it challenging for readers to maintain their reading experience.

Style Issues

Participants noted that the language style in some translations was excessively formal, which did not align well with the intended tone and fluidity of the fiction text like in S.145 and S.157 as P6 commented, "The text felt rigid and lacked the natural rhythm expected in a narrative."

S.145

ST: Then, while he was reading or writing, the man was visited, as he was liable to be visited at any time during the year, by a person who had heard about his course and wanted to learn more about it before applying to enrol.

TT: *Kemudian, ketika dia sedang membaca atau menulis, pria itu dikunjungi, seperti yang biasa terjadi pada saat-saat tertentu sepanjang tahun, oleh seseorang yang telah mendengar tentang kursusnya dan ingin mempelajari lebih lanjut sebelum mendaftar.*

The use of formal language style in fiction can make the text feel detached or unnatural. Another contributing factor is the inability of MT systems to differentiate between contexts that require formal language and non-formal language tone. Besides, MT systems struggle to capture narrative's emotional or stylistic nuances as highlighted by (Baihaqi & Mulyana, 2021).

Requiring Multiple Readings

Some sentences in the translation were reported to require multiple readings for comprehension like in S.80. Participants highlighted the difficulty of understanding such sentences on the first attempt. For instance, P2 remarked, "I had to reread this sentence twice before I could grasp its meaning, which disrupted the overall narrative flow."

S.080

ST: In one of those years, the man began to understand that his failing more and more to remember details connected with more than three thousand pieces of fiction might itself be imagined as the finish of a horse-race.

TT: *Di salah satu tahun itu, pria itu mulai memahami bahwa ketidakingatannya untuk semakin mengingat detail terkait dengan lebih dari tiga ribu karya fiksi mungkin diibaratkan sebagai akhir dari perlombaan kuda.*

Sentences that demand repeated readings significantly hinder the readability and engagement of the text. In fiction, where a seamless narrative flow is crucial for immersion, such disruptions can frustrate readers and reduce the overall enjoyment of the story. The findings align with research indicating that translation quality directly affects reading time. Reading time is crucial in measuring translation performance both on human translation and even machine translation. When readers spend more time decoding unclear translations, their reading experience becomes less fluid and more taxing. These issues matter in literary translations, where nuanced language and stylistic fidelity are essential (Turganbayeva et al., 2022). Machine translation systems, including ChatGPT, often struggle with balancing fidelity to the source text with readability for the target readers especially in literary translation task.

The Untranslated Paragraph and the Limitations of ChatGPT

Participants observed the issue where ChatGPT left an entire paragraph untranslated, Paragraph 26 (S.112). For example, P2 noted, "It skipped translating a whole section, leaving readers to guess its content." This omission disrupted the narrative flow, forcing readers to interpret gaps or switch between the source and translated texts.

S.112 (ST)
Late on a summer evening in the 1940s, a girl of twelve or thirteen years tries to explain herself to her mother. A few minutes before, the girl had been playing cricket in the backyard with some boys from the neighborhood. The girl had often played cricket with the boys. She was known as a tomboy and was innocent of sexual knowledge. During the latest game, she had chased the ball into a shed. The eldest boy had followed her. He had taken out his erect penis and had tried to undo her clothes. The girl's mother, who might well have been spying on the cricketers for some time previously, had come into the shed. Later, when the girl tried to explain herself, she had seen that her mother thought her partly to blame, even complicit.

To present the translation of S.112, the researcher asked a translator to manually translate Paragraph 26 with the following translation result:

S.112 (TT)
Pada suatu petang di musim panas 1940-an, seorang gadis berusia sekitar dua belas atau tiga belas tahun berusaha menjelaskan dirinya kepada sang ibu. Beberapa menit sebelumnya, gadis itu tengah bermain kriket bersama bocah-bocah lelaki tetangganya di halaman belakang. Gadis itu sering main kriket bersama bocah-bocah lelaki. Dia dikenal sebagai perempuan tomboi, tapi polos soal urusan seksual. Di permainan terakhir, gadis itu mengejar bola ke dalam sebuah gudang. Bocah lelaki paling tua membuntutinya. Bocah itu mengeluarkan penisnya yang menegang dan berusaha melepas pakaian gadis itu. Ibu gadis itu, yang tampaknya sudah sering

memata-matai bocah-bocah bermain kriket, ikut masuk ke gudang. Kelak, ketika gadis itu berusaha menjelaskan perihal dirinya, gadis itu melihat sang ibu beranggapan dia turut bersalah, bahkan terlibat.

The untranslated S.112 highlighted the limitation of ChatGPT's ability to handle certain types of content within literary translations, particularly when the ST material is sensitive or inappropriate according to its content policy. ChatGPT operates within a framework of ethical and legal guidelines established by its software developers. These guidelines restrict its ability to generate content that may be deemed unethical or in violation of regulations. In the case of S.112, ChatGPT detected the S.112 input as potentially breaching its content policies which led to the untranslated paragraph.

The prominent influential factor is due to the chosen prompts. The absence of detailed prompts may have contributed to translation gaps, as the AI defaulted to a general approach unsuited for literary texts. Next, ChatGPT translates text on a sentence-by-sentence basis, without adjusting the number of sentences. In addition, AI systems, including ChatGPT, are inherently limited by their inability to fully grasp nuanced cultural or contextual meanings as previously studied by (Kastowo et al., 2024). This can result in omissions or inaccuracies, particularly in texts that rely heavily on cultural references or idiomatic expressions. Participants echoed this sentiment, with P4 stating, "The system's interpretation felt robotic, and some sections didn't reflect the emotional depth of the original."

In addition, the complexity of the ST, *The Boy's Name Was David* by Gerald Murnane, may contribute to the readability challenges observed in some of the translations. Murnane's distinctive writing style often involves intricate sentence structures, indirect references, and a reliance on vague language that can pose difficulties for readers. This observation highlights the challenges of Murnane's writing, which is already difficult to interpret in English and becomes even more so when translated into another language.

Murnane's sentences frequently feature long and, complex structures with repetitive key words and phrases. Besides, Murnane's work often use of conditional and speculative language extensively. These stylistic choices make his writing particularly difficult to translate, moreover to maintain the same level of nuance and flow in another language. It can be especially difficult to convey in Indonesian, where in which the sentence structures and vocabulary may not directly align with English. Long, formal sentence structures may become overly convoluted or awkward in Indonesian, especially if they are not adapted to local syntactical norms. Moreover, vague language and indirect allusions make the reading comprehension become harder for EFL learners who may not be familiar with such nuances. As a result, the syntactical and stylistic features of Murnane's work present inherent challenges to the translation which explain why some of the translated sentences received lower readability scores. These challenges contributed to the issues of the Less Readable and Unreadable categories of the translation readability assessment. Thus, while tools like ChatGPT can produce accessible translations, they it may struggle to fully preserve

the subtleties and stylistic elements of literary works like Murnane's. The AI's inability to capture these complexities leads to less readable or even unreadable translations.

In summary, the challenges inherent in MT remained a persistent concern, particularly in contexts requiring socio-cultural and linguistic precision. This finding aligns with prior research of (Turganbayeva et al., 2022) that identified the constant emergence of problems in machine translation. In addition, English relies heavily on tenses to indicate time, Indonesian conveys temporal context through other linguistic signals (Ismailia, 2023). Moreover, the reliability and accuracy of machine translations depend significantly on the quality and diversity of the training data used to develop the models (Ghosh & Caliskan, 2023). The limited contextual and cultural understanding of ChatGPT often results in literary translation errors.

Conclusion

This study revealed that while ChatGPT produced readable translations of Gerald Murnane's The Boy's Name Was David—with an average readability score of 2.68—it also faced notable challenges in handling linguistic and stylistic complexity. EFL learners in the study found the translations mostly accessible but occasionally disturbed by awkward syntax, semantic inaccuracy, and inconsistent tone which affected their reading experience. The omission of one paragraph due to content restrictions further illustrated the system's current ethical and contextual limitations. These findings highlight important implications for both EFL education and AI development. For educators, ChatGPT can function as a valuable learning aid that helps learners engage with authentic English texts, provided it is used under guided instruction to foster critical awareness of meaning, nuance, and translation quality. For developers, the results point to the need for refining translation models to better manage literary language, complex structures, and cultural references. In conclusion, ChatGPT shows considerable promise as a supportive tool for EFL learners, yet it remains dependent on human oversight. Combining AI-assisted translation with pedagogical strategies and improved model training can enhance both readability and educational value in future applications.

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