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Translation accuracy of an Indonesian divorce certificate

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Translation accuracy of an Indonesian divorce certificate by ChatGPT: A study of formal and dynamic equivalence

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Abstract. The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in translation offers opportunities for efficient legal document translation. However, AI-generated translations remain challenging because legal documents require terminological precision and contextual accuracy. This study investigates the accuracy of an Indonesian divorce certificate translated into English using ChatGPT based on Nida and Taber's concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. Translation units from an Indonesian divorce certificate were categorized into legal, administrative, and socio-cultural terms. Each unit was analyzed in terms of lexical form, legal meaning, and contextual appropriateness. Legal terminology was generally translated accurately through formal equivalence when equivalent legal concepts existed in English. Administrative terminology showed mixed results: established governmental terms were generally appropriate, whereas culture-specific concepts presented accuracy problems. Socio-cultural expressions required dynamic equivalence and posed the greatest challenges because they reflected legal and cultural concepts without direct English equivalents. Overall, ChatGPT performed well in translating standardized legal terminology but showed limitations with culturally embedded and institution-specific expressions. ChatGPT has potential for assisting legal document translation, but culturally specific legal and administrative concepts require human evaluation to ensure semantic precision, contextual appropriateness, and legal reliability. This study demonstrates the application of formal and dynamic equivalence to evaluate ChatGPT-generated legal translations and provides practical insights into its strengths and limitations.

Keywords: accuracy; ChatGPT; equivalence; legal; translation

Abstrak. Penggunaan kecerdasan buatan (AI) yang semakin meningkat dalam penerjemahan memberikan peluang untuk menerjemahkan dokumen hukum secara lebih efisien. Namun, penerjemahan yang dihasilkan oleh AI masih menghadapi tantangan karena dokumen hukum memerlukan ketepatan terminologi dan akurasi kontekstual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji akurasi penerjemahan akta cerai berbahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris menggunakan ChatGPT berdasarkan konsep kesepadanan formal dan dinamis dari Nida dan Taber. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif. Unit-unit penerjemahan dari akta cerai berbahasa Indonesia dikategorikan ke dalam terminologi hukum, terminologi administratif, dan ekspresi sosial budaya. Setiap unit dianalisis berdasarkan bentuk leksikal, makna hukum, dan kesesuaian konteks. Terminologi hukum secara umum diterjemahkan secara akurat melalui kesepadanan formal ketika konsep hukum yang setara tersedia dalam bahasa Inggris. Terminologi administratif menunjukkan hasil yang beragam; istilah pemerintahan yang telah umum digunakan umumnya diterjemahkan dengan tepat, sedangkan konsep administratif yang bersifat spesifik secara budaya menunjukkan permasalahan akurasi. Ekspresi sosial budaya memerlukan kesepadanan dinamis dan menimbulkan tantangan terbesar karena mencerminkan konsep hukum dan budaya yang tidak memiliki padanan langsung dalam bahasa Inggris. Secara keseluruhan, ChatGPT menunjukkan kinerja yang baik dalam menerjemahkan terminologi hukum yang telah terstandar, tetapi masih memiliki keterbatasan dalam menerjemahkan ekspresi yang berkaitan erat dengan budaya dan institusi tertentu. ChatGPT berpotensi membantu

penerjemahan dokumen hukum, tetapi konsep hukum dan administratif yang bersifat spesifik secara budaya memerlukan evaluasi manusia untuk memastikan ketepatan semantik, kesesuaian kontekstual, dan keandalan hukum. Penelitian ini menunjukkan penerapan kesepadanan formal dan dinamis dalam mengevaluasi penerjemahan hukum yang dihasilkan oleh ChatGPT serta memberikan wawasan praktis mengenai kelebihan dan keterbatasannya.

Kata kunci: akurasi; ChatGPT; hukum; kesepadanan; penerjemahan

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of globalization and international mobility has significantly increased the need for the translation of official documents across languages and legal systems. Civil documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce certificates, academic diplomas, and court decisions are frequently required for immigration, overseas employment, higher education, and international legal proceedings. Because these documents serve as official evidence of an individual's legal status, their translation must accurately preserve both the legal meaning and the institutional function of the source text. Even minor translation errors may result in administrative misunderstandings, legal disputes, or the rejection of documents by foreign authorities. Consequently, legal document translation requires a higher degree of precision than many other forms of translation because it directly affects legal certainty and institutional recognition (Newmark, 1988; Munday, 2016).

This condition highlights the importance of translation in many aspects of human life (Jayantini, 2016; Margono, 2002; Jayantini et al., 2021). The demand for translation services is also increasing due to global business. Consequently, the translation of official documents has become an essential activity to support cross-border communication and institutional recognition (Budiharjo et al., 2022; Rahmawati, 2021). The message transferred in the communication must be through the translation techniques that are applied at the word, phrase, clause, or sentence level (Muliawati et al., 2020). Therefore, translators must carefully consider both linguistic accuracy and contextual meaning when translating. Nunan (1993) argues that context is a situation that gives rise to discourse in which the discourse is embedded.

The translation of legal documents presents unique linguistic and cultural challenges. Unlike general texts, legal documents contain specialized terminology, standardized expressions, and institutional concepts that are embedded within a particular legal system. Many legal terms do not have direct lexical equivalents in other languages because legal systems are shaped by distinct historical, cultural, and administrative traditions. Therefore, legal translators must preserve not only the semantic meaning of individual words but also the legal function and communicative purpose of the document. As noted by Danet (1980), legal language reflects social values, institutional practices, and legal norms, making contextual understanding essential for producing accurate translations.

In the translation process, equivalence is an important aspect of achieving accuracy, acceptability, and readability (Fadillah & Sinaga, n.d. 2015; Panou, 2013; Septarani, 2022). Translation accuracy can be evaluated using various theoretical frameworks in translation studies. One of the most influential frameworks is the equivalence theory proposed (Nida & Taber, 1969). According to this theory, translation equivalence can be categorized into two main types: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on preserving the linguistic form and structure of the source text, while dynamic equivalence emphasizes the naturalness and contextual understanding

of the translation in the target language. These concepts provide a useful analytical framework for evaluating whether a translation accurately conveys the meaning and function of the original text.

Recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) have transformed translation practices. AI-powered translation systems are increasingly used because they can generate translations rapidly, maintain grammatical fluency, and process large amounts of multilingual text efficiently. Among these technologies, ChatGPT has attracted considerable attention due to its ability to produce context-sensitive translations and natural-sounding language. Unlike conventional machine translation systems that primarily rely on statistical or neural translation models, ChatGPT generates translations by considering broader linguistic context through a large language model architecture. Consequently, many translators, researchers, and institutions have begun exploring its potential as an AI-assisted translation tool. Nevertheless, concerns remain regarding its reliability when translating specialized texts, particularly legal documents that require terminological precision, contextual sensitivity, and institutional accuracy.

Several studies have investigated the application of artificial intelligence in translation. Existing research generally reports that AI-assisted translation performs well when translating general texts but encounters greater difficulty with culturally specific expressions, legal terminology, administrative concepts, and idiomatic language. Studies on legal translation consistently emphasize that linguistic accuracy alone is insufficient because translators must also preserve legal meaning and institutional equivalence across different legal systems. Other studies examining ChatGPT and similar AI tools suggest that although these technologies produce fluent and grammatically acceptable translations, human post-editing remains necessary to verify contextual accuracy, specialized terminology, and cultural appropriateness. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that AI has considerable potential to support translation activities while simultaneously highlighting the continuing importance of human expertise in evaluating translation quality.

Amangeldievna (2025) emphasizes the importance of context and cultural understanding in legal translation. Amangeldievna (2025) explains that legal meaning is shaped by systemic, cultural, and procedural contexts, and that translators must consider the legal system and social context of the source language when transferring meaning into the target language. Similarly, this research also demonstrates that administrative and culturally specific terms such as *kelurahan* and *cerai talak* cannot always be translated directly into English without explanation. Both studies, therefore, recognize that literal translation alone is insufficient for legal texts, and that conceptual equivalence must be taken into account. However, the research conducted by Amangeldievna (2025) mainly focuses on contextual and comparative legal analysis in translating Uzbek–English legal texts, emphasizing the role of context and legal systems in determining translation accuracy. In contrast, this study specifically evaluates the translation accuracy of an Indonesian divorce certificate translated using ChatGPT, using the framework of formal and dynamic equivalence proposed by Nida and Taber (1969). Therefore, it introduces a technological dimension (AI-assisted translation), which is not the main focus of Amangeldievna's work. Danet (2024) argues that legal language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a mechanism for expressing social values and legal norms. Similarly, this study demonstrates that legal terms such as *cerai talak* contains specific cultural and legal meanings rooted in Islamic family law, which cannot always be translated directly into English without additional explanation. This confirms Danet's view that legal language reflects social, cultural, and institutional frameworks. Despite this similarity, there is a methodological difference. The work of Brenda Danet is primarily theoretical and sociolinguistic, focusing on how legal language functions within society and legal institutions. This study is empirical and translation-oriented, analyzing specific translation units in a legal document with ChatGPT using equivalence

theory. Similar to this study, (Rahma et al., 2025) examine the effectiveness of machine translation and highlight that human involvement remains essential to ensure translation accuracy. Their research found that machine translation tools can translate simple texts quickly but often fail to capture cultural nuances, idiomatic meanings, and contextual complexity, especially in religious texts. The main difference lies in the object of analysis and research focus. The study conducted by Rahma et al (2025) focuses on the use of Deep Translator for translating Arabic religious and academic texts, focusing on the comparison between machine translation and human translation. Meanwhile, this study focuses on ChatGPT translation of legal documents, particularly the translation of an Indonesian divorce certificate, and evaluates translation quality using equivalence theory rather than a direct comparison between human translators and machine translation tools.

Despite the growing body of research on AI-assisted translation, several gaps remain. First, most previous studies have focused on general texts, literary works, educational materials, or religious discourse, whereas relatively little attention has been given to Indonesian legal documents. Second, existing research has rarely examined divorce certificates, even though these documents combine legal terminology, administrative terminology, and culturally embedded concepts within a single text. Third, although many studies evaluate translation quality using general criteria such as accuracy, acceptability, and readability, relatively few employ Nida and Taber's concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence to analyze AI-generated legal translations. These gaps indicate the need for further investigation into how AI systems translate legally and culturally sensitive documents within the Indonesian context.

An Indonesian divorce certificate provides an appropriate case for examining AI-assisted legal translation because it contains multiple categories of translation challenges. In addition to legal terminology, the document includes administrative expressions related to Indonesia's governmental structure, such as *kabupaten*, *kecamatan*, and *kelurahan*, together with culturally specific legal concepts derived from Islamic family law, including *ceraai talak*. These expressions require translators to balance lexical accuracy, legal equivalence, and cultural comprehensibility. Consequently, the document offers a suitable corpus for evaluating both the strengths and the limitations of ChatGPT in translating official legal documents.

This study adopts the concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence proposed by Nida and Taber (1969) as its analytical framework. Formal equivalence evaluates the extent to which a translation preserves the lexical structure, grammatical form, and semantic content of the source text. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, focuses on whether the translated text produces an equivalent meaning and communicative effect for target-language readers. Because legal document translation requires both structural fidelity and contextual appropriateness, these complementary concepts provide an appropriate theoretical framework for evaluating AI-generated translations. Applying both perspectives enables a more comprehensive assessment of whether ChatGPT successfully transfers legal meaning while maintaining readability and contextual accuracy.

Building on previous research while addressing the identified gaps, this study investigates the English translation of an Indonesian divorce certificate generated by ChatGPT. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: How accurately does ChatGPT translate an Indonesian divorce certificate into English when evaluated using the concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence? Which categories of translation units demonstrate formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence?

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to evaluate the translation accuracy of ChatGPT-generated translations of an Indonesian divorce certificate using the theoretical framework of formal and dynamic equivalence. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing field of AI-assisted translation studies by providing empirical evidence regarding the strengths and limitations of ChatGPT in legal document translation. Furthermore, the study offers practical insights for translators, researchers, and institutions seeking to integrate artificial intelligence into professional legal translation while maintaining linguistic precision and legal reliability.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method to analyze the accuracy of an Indonesian divorce certificate translated into English by ChatGPT (Miles et al., n.d.). A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research examines linguistic phenomena and interprets translation accuracy based on established translation theories, rather than measuring statistical relationships.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence proposed by (Nida & Taber, 1969). These concepts are used to evaluate whether the translation preserves the lexical structure of the source text or successfully conveys the intended meaning in a natural and contextually appropriate manner in the target language.

The study was conducted through document analysis using an authentic Indonesian divorce certificate (Akta Cerai) issued by an Indonesian Religious Court as the primary source of data. The document was selected because it represents an official legal text containing various translation challenges, including legal terminology, administrative terminology, and culturally specific expressions. To protect privacy and comply with ethical standards, all personal information in the document, such as names, identification numbers, addresses, and case numbers, was anonymized prior to analysis.

The English version of the document was generated using ChatGPT. The translation was produced using free access ChatGPT on January 15th, 2026. The translation was produced using a single prompt requesting ChatGPT to translate the entire divorce certificate from Indonesian into English without additional explanatory notes or post-editing. The AI-generated translation served as the target text for analysis.

The unit of analysis consisted of translation units extracted from the divorce certificate. Following qualitative document analysis, purposive sampling was employed to identify translation units that were linguistically or legally significant. These units comprised words, phrases, and short clauses representing three analytical categories:

1. legal terminology (e.g., Akta Cerai, Pengadilan Agama, Termohon);
2. administrative terminology (e.g., kabupaten, kecamatan, kelurahan, panitera);
3. socio-cultural expressions (e.g., cerai talak, mengurus rumah tangga).

These categories were selected because they represent the principal linguistic features of Indonesian legal documents and pose different levels of translation complexity.

Data were collected through a document analysis procedure consisting of four stages. First, the Indonesian divorce certificate was selected as the source document. Second, the document was translated into English using ChatGPT. Third, the source text and the AI-generated translation were

aligned sentence by sentence to facilitate comparison. Finally, translation units relevant to the research objectives were identified and organized according to the three analytical categories.

The evaluation of translation quality was guided by Nida and Taber's (1969) concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence refers to translations that preserve the lexical meaning, grammatical structure, and legal function of the source text as closely as possible. Dynamic equivalence refers to translations that prioritize naturalness, communicative effectiveness, and contextual appropriateness while preserving the intended meaning of the original text. A translation unit was evaluated using the following operational criteria: formal equivalence - the translation maintains both the lexical form and the legal or semantic meaning of the source expression; dynamic equivalence: the translation adopts a different linguistic form but successfully conveys an equivalent meaning that is natural and understandable in English; and translation inaccuracy: the translation fails to preserve the intended legal, administrative, or cultural meaning, resulting in ambiguity, semantic distortion, or loss of contextual information. These operational definitions were applied consistently throughout the analysis to ensure transparency and analytical consistency.

The data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The first stage involved data reduction, in which relevant translation units were selected from the complete document. The second stage consisted of data display through a classification table that organized the translation units according to translation category and equivalence type. The third stage involved interpretation of each translation unit by comparing the Indonesian source expression with the English translation generated by ChatGPT. Each translation was evaluated using the operational criteria of formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, or translation inaccuracy. Finally, cross-category comparisons were conducted to identify broader patterns regarding ChatGPT's strengths and limitations in translating legal documents.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, each translation unit was examined systematically using the same analytical framework. Interpretations were supported by established theories of translation equivalence and legal translation, enabling a transparent and theoretically grounded evaluation of the AI-generated translations.

Because this study analyzed an official legal document, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. All personally identifiable information contained in the divorce certificate was removed or anonymized before analysis. The study evaluated only linguistic features of the document and did not examine or disclose any information related to the individuals involved in the legal case.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the classification of some translations of legal terminologies where high precision is required because it relates to legal rights and procedures, administrative terminologies that is about documentation and bureaucratic information, and socio-cultural expressions where dynamic equivalence is applied to convey cultural meaning to the target audience.

The analysis of the translated divorce certificate focuses on the level of translation accuracy by applying the concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. These two concepts are fundamental in translation studies and were introduced by Nida & Taber (1969). Formal equivalence emphasizes the preservation of the linguistic structure and lexical elements of the source text, while

dynamic equivalence focuses on the naturalness and contextual acceptability of the translation in the target language.

Table 1 Classification of Translation Units in the Divorce Certificate

No	Source Text (Indonesian)	Target Text (English)	Category	Explanation of Translation
1	<i>Akta Cerai</i>	Divorce Certificate	Legal Terminology	The term refers to an official legal document issued by a court confirming the dissolution of a marriage. The translation accurately conveys the legal function of the document in the target language.
2	<i>Pengadilan Agama</i>	Religious Court	Legal Terminology	This institution handles family law cases for Muslims in Indonesia. The translation preserves the institutional meaning while making it understandable for English readers.
3	<i>Termohon</i>	Respondent	Legal Terminology	The term refers to the party responding to the legal claim filed by the petitioner. The English equivalent accurately reflects its procedural role in legal proceedings.
4	<i>Penetapan</i>	Decision	Legal Terminology	The term ‘penetapan’ refers to a formal determination issued by a court or judicial authority. The translation “decision” conveys the meaning of an official ruling or determination made within legal proceedings.
5	<i>Kekuatan hukum tetap</i>	Permanent legal force	Legal Terminology	This phrase indicates that a court ruling has obtained final and binding legal status, meaning it can no longer be challenged through ordinary legal remedies. The translation accurately reflects the concept of a legally enforceable final decision.
6	<i>Kelurahan</i>	Urban Village	Administrative Terminology	The translation of the word ‘kelurahan’ into “urban village” reflects a dynamic equivalence approach, aiming to convey the administrative function of the term. It helps international readers understand it as a local governmental unit in an urban region. However, it is not accurate.
7	<i>Kabupaten</i>	Regency	Administrative Terminology	The term ‘Kabupaten’ refers to a second-level administrative division in Indonesia governed by a regent. The translation of the word ‘Regency’ is commonly used in English to represent this regional administrative unit within the Indonesian governmental system.
8	<i>Panitera</i>	Registrar	Administrative Terminology	The word <i>Panitera</i> is a court official responsible for documenting and managing legal records. The translation reflects a comparable administrative role in English-speaking legal systems.
9	<i>Provinsi</i>	Province	Administrative Terminology	The term ‘Provinsi’ refers to the highest-level regional administrative division in Indonesia, governed by a governor. The translation

				'Province' accurately represents an equivalent administrative unit commonly used in English to describe major territorial divisions within a country.
10	Talak	By way of divorce by talak	Socio-Cultural Expression	The term originates from Islamic law referring to the husband's declaration of divorce. The translation retains the cultural concept while explaining it in English.
11	Pekerjaan: mengurus rumah tangga	Occupation Housewife	Socio-cultural expression	In native English speaker society, housewife is a married woman who takes care of her own household, doing cooking, cleaning, child rearing, etc. These responsibilities are equivalent to ' <i>mengurus rumah tangga</i> '

A translation is considered highly accurate when the concepts and definitions of lexical items in the source text correspond closely to the meanings expressed in the target text. Additionally, structural consistency also contributes to translation accuracy. In legal documents such as divorce certificates, the structure of the original sentence is often maintained so that one sentence in the source language corresponds to one sentence in the target language. This structural parallelism helps preserve the legal clarity and informational integrity of the document.

Legal terminology achieved the highest translation accuracy because standardized legal concepts often have established English equivalents that facilitate formal equivalence. The administrative terminologies demonstrate moderate translation accuracy. The terms representing broadly recognized governmental structures are translated successfully, whereas institution-specific administrative concepts remain susceptible to semantic imprecision. The socio-cultural expressions constitute the most challenging category. Their successful translations depend on dynamic equivalence because they embody legal, religious, and cultural meanings that cannot always be transferred directly into English. Overall, the findings indicate that ChatGPT performs effectively when translating standardized legal terminology but encounters difficulty as translation units become more culturally and institutionally specific.

DISCUSSION

Formal equivalence can be identified in the translation of the term "Akta Cerai" as "Divorce Certificate." In Indonesian legal terminology, the word *akta* means a written proof containing statements (information, acknowledgments, decisions, and others) regarding a legal event, prepared in accordance with the applicable regulations, witnessed and authorized by an official office (*surat tanda bukti berisi pernyataan (keterangan, pengakuan, keputusan, dan sebagainya) tentang peristiwa hukum yang dibuat menurut peraturan yang berlaku, disaksikan dan disahkan oleh pejabat resmi*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/akta>). Within the context of family law, *Akta Cerai* is an authentic legal document that explains a person's divorce status, issued after a divorce decision has been granted by the Religious Court for Muslim couples or by the District Court for non-Muslim couples (*akta autentik yang menerangkan status perceraian seseorang, dibuat setelah adanya ketetapan perceraian dari pengadilan agama bagi pasangan muslim atau pengadilan negeri bagi pasangan nonmuslim*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/akta%20cerai>). The translation of Divorce Certificate closely reflects both the lexical structure and the legal meaning of the original term, making it a strong example of accurate legal translation.

This translation demonstrates the principle of formal equivalence, as described by Nida & Taber (1969), in which the translator attempts to reproduce the form and content of the source text as closely as possible in the target language. Formal equivalence prioritizes structural correspondence between the source text and the translated text, with particular attention to grammatical form, lexical choice, and semantic meaning. In the case of *Akta Cerai*, the translation maintains the two-part nominal structure of the Indonesian phrase, with the word *divorce*, which means an official or legal process to end a marriage (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/divorce>) corresponding to *cerai*, which means the end of husband and wife relationship (*putus hubungan sebagai suami istri*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/cerai>), and *certificate*, which means an official document stating the information on it is true (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/certificate>) corresponding to *akta*, which means a letter of proof containing a statement, recognition, decision, etc.) regarding a legal event made according to applicable regulations, witnessed and approved by an official (*surat tanda bukti berisi pernyataan (keterangan, pengakuan, keputusan, dan sebagainya) tentang peristiwa hukum yang dibuat menurut peraturan yang berlaku, disaksikan dan disahkan oleh pejabat resmi*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/akta>). Since both components have clear lexical equivalents in English, the translation achieves a high degree of semantic transparency.

Legal translation typically requires a higher degree of formal equivalence because legal documents function as official records with potential legal consequences. According to Newmark (1988), legal and administrative texts belong to the category of informative texts, in which accuracy, clarity, and precision are the primary priorities of translation. Unlike literary translation, where stylistic creativity may play a greater role, legal translation must preserve the exact meaning and legal function of the source text. Any deviation from the intended meaning may result in misinterpretation or administrative complications. Therefore, translators must ensure that the legal terminology used in the target language accurately reflects the legal concepts expressed in the source language.

Furthermore, the translation of Divorce Certificate also aligns with the observation conducted by Munday, n.d. (2016) that translation often involves identifying established terminology that already exists within the target language. When equivalent legal terms are available in both languages, translators can rely on established terminology to preserve both conceptual and linguistic correspondence. Because the concept of a divorce certificate exists in many legal systems around the world, the translation can maintain a direct correspondence with the source term without requiring extensive explanatory adaptation.

Another factor supporting the accuracy of this translation is the consistency of legal terminology across international contexts. In many legal systems, a divorce certificate refers to an official document issued by a court or civil registry confirming the legal termination of a marriage. Since this concept exists in both Indonesian and English legal frameworks, the translation maintains both functional and semantic equivalence. This situation represents ideal conditions for the application of formal equivalence, in which the translator can preserve both the structure and meaning of the source text without compromising clarity.

In addition, the preservation of formal structure contributes to the reliability and credibility of the translated document. Legal documents often follow standardized linguistic conventions that help ensure consistency across administrative systems. By maintaining a close structural correspondence with the source text, the translation preserves the formal tone and institutional character of the document. As a result, the translation remains appropriate for official use in international administrative or legal contexts.

The translation of the Indonesian administrative term *kabupaten* into *regency* represents an example of how administrative terminology can be rendered through functional or dynamic equivalence in translation. In the Indonesian governmental system, the term *kabupaten* refers to a second-level administrative division below the provincial level and is led by a regional head known as *bupati* (*daerah swatantra tingkat II yang dikepalai oleh bupati, setingkat dengan kota (madya), merupakan bagian langsung dari provinsi yang terdiri atas beberapa kecamatan*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/kabupaten>). This administrative unit is responsible for managing local governance, public services, and regional development within its territorial jurisdiction. Since administrative systems differ significantly across countries, translating such institutional terminology requires careful consideration of functional equivalence rather than literal correspondence.

From the perspective of translation theory proposed by Nida & Taber (1969), this translation can be understood as an application of dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence focuses on conveying the closest natural meaning of the source text within the cultural and linguistic framework of the target language. Instead of preserving the exact lexical form of the original expression, the translator aims to reproduce the same communicative effect for the target audience.

The term ‘regency’ historically refers to a territory governed by a regent, particularly in European historical contexts. It means the office, jurisdiction, or government of a regent or body of regents (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/regency>). Although this term does not represent an exact institutional equivalent of *kabupaten*, it has become widely accepted in English-language translations of Indonesian administrative terminology. The use of *regency*, therefore, reflects an attempt to approximate the administrative level represented by the term *kabupaten* using a terminology that is understandable to international readers.

This strategy also corresponds with the approach described by Baker, n.d. (2018), who explains that translators frequently employ approximate institutional equivalents when translating culturally specific concepts. Administrative terminology often reflects governance structures that are unique to a particular national system, meaning that direct lexical equivalents may not exist in other languages. In such cases, translators must select terms that convey the closest functional relationship between administrative units of the source language and target language speakers’ government systems.

From a functionalist perspective, the translation also aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Nord et al., n.d. (1997), who argued that translation should be understood as a purposeful activity guided by the intended communicative function of the target text. In the case of translating official documents such as divorce certificates, the primary purpose of the translation is to provide clear and understandable information to international readers or foreign institutions. Therefore, the use of the term ‘regency’ serves a practical communicative purpose by helping readers understand the hierarchical level of the administrative unit referenced in the document.

Furthermore, the translation maintains consistency with other related administrative terms commonly used in English translations of Indonesian governmental documents. For example, *provinsi* - region or area headed by a governor (*wilayah atau daerah yang dikepalai oleh gubernur*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/provinsi>) – is typically translated into ‘province’, which means one of the areas that a country or empire is divided into as part of the organization of its government, which sometimes has some control over its own laws (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/province>), while *kecamatan*, district (city) area that includes several villages or sub-districts, headed by a sub-district head (*daerah bagian kabupaten*

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(kota) yang membawahkan beberapa desa atau kelurahan, dikepalai oleh seorang camat (<https://kbki.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/kecamatan>), is translated into 'district', which means an area of a country or town that has fixed borders that are used for official purposes, or that has a particular feature that makes it different from surrounding areas (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/district>). Within this hierarchical administrative structure, the use of 'regency' for *kabupaten* helps preserve the relative relationships between administrative units. Terminological consistency is particularly important in official documents, as it ensures clarity and coherence across the entire translation.

An example of dynamic equivalence can be observed in the translation of the occupational phrase "*Pekerjaan: mengurus rumah tangga*" into "Occupation: housewife." The Indonesian phrase literally refers to an individual whose primary activity involves managing household affairs, including domestic responsibilities such as maintaining the home, preparing meals, and caring for family members. If translated literally, the phrase might appear as 'Occupation: managing the household'. However, such a literal translation may sound unnatural in English administrative documentation.

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Instead, the translation uses the lexical item 'housewife', which means a woman whose work is inside the home, doing the cleaning, cooking, etc., and who usually does not have any other job (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/housewife>), is widely recognized in English to refer to a woman whose primary role involves managing domestic activities within the household. This translation demonstrates the application of dynamic equivalence because it prioritizes communicative naturalness and cultural familiarity over strict lexical correspondence.

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According to Nida & Taber (1969), dynamic equivalence aims to produce a similar response in the target-language reader as that experienced by the original audience. In practical terms, this means that the translation should convey the same meaning and social function even if the linguistic structure differs from the original expression. The term 'housewife' effectively communicates the intended occupational category in a concise and culturally recognizable form.

The use of this translation also reflects the broader principle that translation must consider sociocultural context. As emphasized by Munday, n.d. (2016), translation involves not only linguistic transfer but also cultural mediation between different social systems. Occupational labels often carry social and cultural implications that must be considered when selecting appropriate equivalents in the target language.

The translation demonstrates how translators must adapt expressions to the conventions of the target language. According to Baker (2018), translators frequently replace descriptive expressions in the source language with more concise lexical items in the target language when such items exist. In administrative contexts, occupational information is typically recorded using standardized categories rather than descriptive phrases. The use of the term 'housewife', therefore aligns with the conventions of English administrative documentation.

By selecting a culturally recognizable occupational label, the translation successfully conveys the social role described in the source text while maintaining clarity and naturalness. This example illustrates how dynamic equivalence can enhance the readability and communicative effectiveness of translated official documents.

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Despite the presence of several accurate translations, the analysis also reveals certain limitations in the application of dynamic equivalence. One example is the translation of the Indonesian

administrative term ‘*kelurahan*’ into ‘urban village’. Although this translation frequently appears in automated translations, it does not accurately represent the administrative function of ‘*kelurahan*’ within the Indonesian governmental structure.

In the Indonesian administrative hierarchy, ‘*kelurahan*’ represents the lowest level of government administration in urban areas (*daerah pemerintahan yang paling bawah yang dipimpin oleh seorang lurah*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/kelurahan>). It functions as a subdivision of a district and is headed by an official known as ‘*lurah*’. Since the term represents an official administrative unit, translating it into ‘urban village’ may lead to misunderstanding among English-speaking readers. The phrase may be interpreted as a descriptive expression referring to a village located within a city rather than an official governmental subdivision.

This example illustrates the difficulty of translating culturally embedded institutional terminology. As explained by Baker (2018), translators often encounter problems when no direct conceptual equivalent exists between the source and target languages. In such situations, translators must analyze the function of the institution within its administrative system and identify an expression that conveys the closest functional meaning.

A more accurate translation for *kelurahan* would therefore be ‘urban subdistrict’, which better reflects its position within the Indonesian administrative hierarchy. The term ‘subdistrict’ indicates that the unit functions as a subdivision of a district, while the modifier ‘urban’ clarifies its geographical context within a city environment. This translation represents more accurately the administrative role of *kelurahan* and reduces the risk of misinterpretation among international readers.

Another issue identified in the translation concerns the phrase ‘*Dengan Cerai Talak*’, which is translated into ‘By way of divorce by talak’. This expression refers to a specific form of divorce in Islamic law in which a husband pronounces *talak* in order to dissolve the marriage. The concept originates from Islamic jurisprudence and therefore, represents a culturally and legally specific practice. Because the concept does not exist in the same form in many Western legal systems, translating the phrase presents significant challenges.

This translation attempts to convey the meaning of the original expression while adapting it to English legal terminology. The word *talak* means divorce between husband and wife or the severance of the bonds of marriage (*perceraian antara suami dan istri atau lepasnya ikatan perkawinan*) (<https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/talak>), and the target language term ‘divorce’ means an official or legal process to end a marriage official or legal process to end a marriage (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/divorce>). Based on these definitions, *talak* is already equivalent to ‘divorce’, and consequently, the term ‘By way of divorce by talak’ could lead to uncertainty that should not be found in a legal document.

This situation highlights the tension between maintaining formal equivalence and ensuring communicative clarity. While preserving the original term may maintain terminological accuracy, additional explanation may be necessary to ensure that the meaning is fully understood. Translators must therefore balance structural fidelity with explanatory adequacy when dealing with culturally specific legal concepts. These challenges illustrate the broader complexity of translating official documents that are deeply embedded within particular legal and institutional systems.

Fu & Liu (2024) examined lexical and syntactic features. Interestingly, ChatGPT showed higher accuracy in terminology, while human translators were better at restructuring long and complex

sentences into shorter, more comprehensible clauses. The authors therefore argue that AI and human translators have complementary strengths rather than one completely replacing the other.

This research goes further because its problem is not simply terminology. The Indonesian divorce certificate contains legal concepts and culturally embedded expressions. They require knowledge of the Indonesian legal and socio-cultural context. Thus, the findings of this research extend Fu and Liu's argument: ChatGPT may demonstrate considerable terminological competence, but terminology that is legally or culturally embedded cannot always be evaluated merely in terms of lexical accuracy.

Gao et al. (2024) compared ChatGPT, Google Translate, and DeepL based on fidelity, fluency, language style, and machine-translation style. ChatGPT performed better than Google Translate and DeepL on the evaluated criteria, particularly when appropriate prompting was used. However, the overall quality still did not reach a fully satisfactory level, indicating that ChatGPT continued to have difficulties with the deeper linguistic and cultural features of classical poetry.

At first glance, literary translation and legal-document translation appear very different. However, they share an important characteristic: both contain meanings that cannot always be understood through literal lexical translation alone. Although the present study deals with legal documents rather than literary texts, the findings reveal a comparable issue: successful translation requires more than recognizing individual words. In classical poetry, the translator must interpret imagery, symbolism, allusion, and cultural meaning. In a divorce certificate, the translator must understand the legal and administrative meanings embedded in expressions such as *cerai talak* and *kelurahan*. Thus, this study extends the discussion of AI translation beyond literary-cultural texts to legal-cultural texts.

The findings further correspond with Bulqois et al. (2026), whose analysis of ChatGPT-generated translations of educational material shows that communicative translation does not always preserve pragmatic meaning. In the present study, the translation of *mengurus rumah tangga* as “housewife” demonstrates the opposite possibility: ChatGPT successfully moved beyond formal correspondence and selected an expression that is more natural and meaningful in the target language. From the perspective of Nida and Taber (1969), this example can be interpreted as dynamic equivalence. Nevertheless, the contrasting treatment of *cerai talak* and *kelurahan* indicates that ChatGPT does not consistently achieve dynamic equivalence when the source expression contains legal or socio-cultural meanings that depend heavily on the Indonesian context.

Theoretically, the study demonstrates that classical translation theories remain relevant for evaluating translations produced by contemporary artificial intelligence systems. Rather than replacing established translation theories, AI technologies create new contexts in which those theories can be applied and further developed.

Practically, the findings suggest that ChatGPT can serve as an effective tool for producing initial drafts of legal document translations, particularly when translating standardized legal terminology. However, human translators remain indispensable for verifying administrative terminology, culturally specific expressions, and legal concepts that require contextual interpretation. Consequently, the most effective approach to legal document translation is likely to involve collaboration between artificial intelligence and professional human translators, with AI providing translation efficiency and human experts ensuring legal accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and institutional reliability.

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Ultimately, the translation of legal documents such as divorce certificates requires a careful balance between structural fidelity and functional adaptation. Maintaining this balance ensures that the translated document remains both legally reliable and accessible to international readers, thereby fulfilling the practical purpose of the translation. As noted by Hatim & Mason, n.d. (1997), translators act as communicators who mediate meaning between different linguistic and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the translation accuracy of an Indonesian divorce certificate generated by ChatGPT using Nida and Taber's (1969) concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence. The findings demonstrate that the translation quality varies according to the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the translation units. Standardized legal terminology generally achieved the highest level of accuracy because equivalent legal concepts are available in both Indonesian and English, allowing ChatGPT to preserve both lexical meaning and institutional function through formal equivalence. Administrative terminology produced mixed results, with greater accuracy for internationally recognized governmental concepts than for administrative terms unique to the Indonesian legal system. Socio-cultural expressions presented the greatest translation challenges because they contain legal, religious, and cultural meanings that require contextual interpretation beyond direct lexical correspondence.

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These findings indicate that ChatGPT has considerable potential as an AI-assisted tool for translating legal documents, particularly when the source text contains standardized legal terminology with established equivalents in the target language. However, the analysis also demonstrates that culturally embedded expressions and institution-specific administrative terminology remain difficult to translate accurately without human intervention. Consequently, AI-generated translations of legal documents should be regarded as preliminary outputs that require careful review by qualified translators or legal experts before being used in official or legal contexts.

The study also demonstrates that the combined application of formal and dynamic equivalence provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating AI-generated translations. Formal equivalence enables the assessment of structural and semantic correspondence, whereas dynamic equivalence facilitates the evaluation of contextual appropriateness and communicative effectiveness. Together, these complementary perspectives contribute to a more systematic understanding of the strengths and limitations of AI-assisted legal translation.

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From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that AI can improve the efficiency of legal document translation by producing linguistically fluent initial drafts. Nevertheless, professional human expertise remains essential for verifying legal accuracy, administrative terminology, and culturally specific concepts. Accordingly, the integration of AI-assisted translation with human post-editing represents the most appropriate approach for ensuring both efficiency and reliability in legal document translation.

This study has several limitations. It examined a single Indonesian legal document and evaluated one AI-generated translation using a qualitative approach. Consequently, the findings should not be generalized to all legal document types or AI translation systems. Furthermore, because the translation was generated using the freely accessible version of ChatGPT available at the time of the study, future software updates may produce different translation outputs.

Future research should investigate a wider range of Indonesian legal documents, compare multiple AI translation systems, and incorporate quantitative translation quality assessment together with expert inter-rater evaluation. Such studies would provide broader empirical evidence regarding the capabilities and limitations of artificial intelligence in legal translation and contribute to the development of more reliable AI-assisted translation practices.

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