



Strategies and Challenges in Translating English Idioms Into Indonesian: a Case Study of The Film Up

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Abstract. *This study explores the strategies and challenges involved in translating English idioms into Indonesian, using the animated film Up (2009) as a case study. Idioms often carry cultural meanings that are difficult to render directly, especially in audiovisual media such as subtitles, which face spatial and temporal constraints. This research analyzes ten idioms from the film along with their Indonesian translations, identifying three main strategies applied by the translator: paraphrasing, literal translation, and substitution with equivalent idioms. The findings indicate that paraphrasing is the most frequently employed technique, effectively retaining meaning and ensuring clarity for the target audience. However, some idioms lose their original nuance or emotional impact when translated literally. This research emphasizes the crucial role of cultural sensitivity and contextual awareness in translating idioms, especially in subtitling, where clarity and naturalness of language are essential due to space and time limitations.*

Keywords: *Audiovisual translation; Idiomatic translation; Subtitling; Translation strategies*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi dan tantangan dalam proses alih bahasa idiom dari bahasa Inggris ke bahasa Indonesia, dengan menggunakan film animasi UP (2009) sebagai studi kasus. Idiom seringkali mengandung makna budaya yang sulit diterjemahkan secara langsung, terutama dalam media audiovisual seperti subtitle, yang menghadapi batasan ruang dan waktu. Penelitian ini menganalisis sepuluh idiom dari film tersebut dan terjemahan Indonesianya, mengidentifikasi tiga strategi utama yang digunakan oleh penerjemah: paraphrasing, terjemahan harfiah, dan penggantian dengan idiom setara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa paraphrasing adalah teknik yang paling sering digunakan untuk mempertahankan makna dan memastikan kejelasan bagi audiens target. Namun, beberapa idiom kehilangan nuansa asli atau dampak emosionalnya saat diterjemahkan secara harfiah. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya kesadaran budaya dan pemahaman konteks dalam penerjemahan idiom, terutama dalam subtitling, di mana bahasa harus ringkas dan alami.

Kata kunci: Strategi terjemahan; Subtitle; Terjemahan audiovisual; Terjemahan idiomatik

1. INTRODUCTION

Idioms play a vital role in language and culture, frequently conveying meanings beyond the literal definitions of their component words. In translation, especially between languages with distinct cultural backgrounds such as English and Indonesian, idioms present specific challenges. These expressions are often used in audiovisual media like films to convey humor, emotion, and character development. However, translating idioms in subtitles is difficult due to space limitations and the need for natural-sounding dialogue.

Numerous researchers have explored the complexities involved in translating idiomatic expressions. Baker (1992) emphasizes that idioms pose both linguistic and cultural challenges, particularly when no direct equivalent exists in the target language. Similarly, Díaz-Cintas and

Remael (2007) point out specific difficulties in audiovisual translation, such as limited screen space and the need for synchronization with visual and audio elements.

This study examines the strategies and difficulties in translating English idioms into Indonesian in the animated film *Up* (2009). Known for its emotional narrative and expressive language, the film contains idiomatic expressions that require careful rendering. The aim is to understand how translators handle culture-specific language under the constraints of subtitling, ensuring both accuracy and audience accessibility.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

Translating idioms is widely recognized as one of the most complex aspects of translation, particularly because idioms carry meanings that cannot be understood by interpreting their individual components literally. Idioms are fixed expressions whose overall meanings are often culturally bound and context-dependent (Fernando, 1996; Baker, 1992). In audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, the challenge intensifies due to spatial and temporal constraints, requiring the translation to be concise, clear, and faithful to the source meaning (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007).

Baker (1992) suggests four primary approaches for translating idioms: (1) employing an idiom with a comparable meaning and structure in the target language; (2) rephrasing the idiom; (3) translating the idiom word-for-word; and (4) leaving out the idiom if it proves too intricate or culturally specific. The selection of a strategy is based on the situation, the target audience and the objective of the writing. In his 1992 framework on subtitling strategies, Gottlieb highlights the importance for translators to take into account technical constraints, including limits on characters per line, the amount of time displayed on screen, and the need for synchronization with spoken dialogue.

Previous studies have examined the translation of idioms in audiovisual contexts. Ramière (2006) found that idiomatic expressions in films are often altered or adapted due to cultural differences and the need for audience accessibility. Rezene (2020), in a study on animated films, noted that paraphrasing is the most frequently used strategy because it offers flexibility and helps maintain clarity, especially for younger audiences.

Cultural awareness is also a crucial component in idiomatic translation. Hatim and Mason (1997) emphasize the importance of pragmatic equivalence and cultural sensitivity in rendering idioms, as these expressions often carry not only linguistic meaning but also emotional and social nuance.

Grounded in these theoretical perspectives and prior studies, this research aims to explore how idiomatic expressions in the film *UP* (2009) are translated into Indonesian subtitles. It focuses on identifying the strategies used—paraphrasing, literal translation, and idiomatic substitution—and analyzing the effectiveness and challenges of each approach in preserving the intended meaning within the constraints of translation in film.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the strategies used in translating idiomatic phrases from English to Indonesian in the animated movie *Up* (2009). The data source comprises ten intentionally chosen idioms taken from the English conversations in the film, along with their related Indonesian subtitles, which were officially released on Disney+ Hotstar.

The idioms were chosen due to their cultural importance, role in the story, and how often they are used. The process of data collection included recognizing and recording the idiomatic expressions along with their translations in subtitles.

The data were examined through a method of comparative textual analysis. Every idiom was analyzed by contrasting the source text (ST) with the target text (TT) to assess how well the meaning was maintained. The analytical framework employed in this research is based on Mona Baker's (1992) a set of identified strategies for idiom translation, comprising:

1. Applying an expression that has a comparable meaning and structure (idiomatic replacement),
2. Rendering the idiom word-for-word (literal translation),
3. Rephrasing or rewording (rewording).

Each idiomatic expression was examined in relation to the visual and storytelling features of the scene to comprehend the translator's decision-making process, focusing on the linguistic and cultural distinctions between English and Indonesian.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research examines ten English idioms present in the animated movie *Up* (2009) and their corresponding translations in Indonesian subtitles. The data gathering took place in June, using the Indonesian subtitle version that was officially released on Disney+ Hotstar. Each idiom is examined by employing Mona Baker's (1992) strategies for translating idioms: idiomatic substitution, literal translation, and paraphrasing.

1. Use of Idioms as Substitutes

Idiomatic substitution refers to the process of taking an idiom from the original language and swapping it with an equivalent idiom in the target language that maintains a comparable meaning and structure.

a) Idiom 1: "Piece of cake" → "Ini gampang kok!"

This is an instance of idiomatic replacement. The Indonesian expression maintains the same tone and significance, rendering it an efficient adaptation.

b) Idiom 2: "Hit the road" → "Ayo kita berangkat!"

A phrase that is culturally equivalent and idiomatic is utilized. The lighthearted and joyful tone is maintained, which aligns well with the context of the movie.

2. Direct Translation

A literal translation conveys the expression exactly as it is, which can be successful if the intended meaning is still clear in the new language.

a) Idiom 3: "Pack your bags" → "Berkemas dan pergi"

This direct translation is effective since the phrase has become widely used and recognized in Indonesian.

b) Idiom 4: "Blow someone away" → "Menerbangkan kami"

Although it is a direct translation, it may lead to confusion. In Indonesian, the term "menerbangkan" may lead to misunderstandings, particularly in the absence of contextual information.

3. Rewording

Paraphrasing consists of rewording the expression in a literal manner to maintain its meaning while avoiding figurative language.

a) Idiom 5: "Cross your heart" → "Janji, ya?"

The emotional message remains intact, although the metaphor has been removed. This approach places importance on clear communication and understanding of cultural contexts.

b) Idiom 6: "Big shoes to fill" → "Tugasmu berat, Nak"

The rephrased text accurately conveys the feeling of accountability, although the metaphor is not preserved.

c) Idiom 7: "Get cold feet" → "Mendadak takut"

The meaning is clear, but the richness of the metaphor is diminished, showing a balance between clarity and stylistic accuracy.

d) Idiom 8: “Up in the air” → “Jadi tidak pasti”

The rephrased version correctly reflects the intended meaning, but it does not include the visual imagery found in the original expression.

e) e) Idiom 9: “Hold your horses” → “Tunggu sebentar”

The translated phrase is suitable for younger audiences, but it lacks the original idiom's cultural richness.

f) Idiom 10: “Break down” → “Menangis tersedu-sedu”

A rephrased version that accurately conveys emotional subtleties, appropriate for the tone of the scene.

Examination of Results

According to the data, paraphrasing appeared to be the strategy used most often, followed by idiomatic replacement and direct translation. This conclusion agrees with Baker's (1992) note that paraphrasing is frequently essential an exact equivalent cannot be found in the target language. The translator's choices were affected by various factors, such as the limited space for subtitles, the intended audience (children and families), and the cultural differences in the use of idioms.

Additionally, certain idioms were made simpler to improve understanding, particularly for younger audiences. However, this sometimes resulted in a loss of metaphorical depth and cultural subtleties. These results align with earlier studies conducted by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), who observe that translators working with audiovisual content must always find a balance among accuracy, clarity, and conciseness.

The significance of this study is twofold: (1) it points out the difficulties that idioms create in subtitling, particularly in cross-cultural situations, and (2) It highlights the necessity for translators to possess expertise in both language and culture. The findings add to the increasing research on translating idioms in audiovisual media, offering valuable insights for both professionals and researchers in this area.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research shows that translating idioms in audiovisual media, especially in movie subtitles, involves unique difficulties that necessitate not just language skills but also an understanding of cultural contexts. Among the strategies identified, paraphrasing was recognized as the most commonly used and effective technique for preserving meaning and improving clarity for Indonesian audiences. While direct translations maintain the original

text's phrasing, they frequently do not capture the emotional or cultural subtleties. Though idiomatic substitution is not frequently employed, it has been shown to be effective when there are appropriate equivalents in the desired language and culture.

The results highlight the significance of context, audience awareness, and format limitations in the subtitling of idiomatic phrases. This study adds to the expanding area of audiovisual translation by demonstrating how idioms can be skillfully handled within the constraints of screen space and time, particularly in content aimed at families and children.

Nevertheless, this research focuses on only one animated movie and a somewhat limited selection of idioms. Future studies are recommended to broaden the focus by examining idiomatic translation in different types, such as comedy, drama, or action, and by carrying out comparative research involving several language pairs. Studies on audience reception may offer greater understanding of how idiomatic subtitles are comprehended and valued.

In conclusion, this study aims to serve as a valuable reference for both professional translators and translation scholars working with idiomatic expressions in audiovisual contexts.

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