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AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF INDONESIAN IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT INTO ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The translation of idiomatic expressions in digital media content plays an important role in ensuring effective communication across cultures in the global digital era. Idioms are culture-bound expressions whose meanings cannot be interpreted literally, which makes their translation particularly challenging. This study aims to analyze the translation strategies used in translating Indonesian idiomatic expressions into English in digital media content and to examine how these strategies affect meaning equivalence and readability. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected from Indonesian digital media content such as social media captions, promotional posts, and short online texts that provide English translations. The analysis was conducted by identifying translation strategies based on Baker's (2018) framework. The findings reveal that paraphrase is the most dominant translation strategy, followed by idioms with similar meaning but different form. Idioms with similar meaning and form and omission are used less frequently. Most translations achieve partial meaning equivalence, as the core message is conveyed while some cultural and expressive nuances are reduced. This study concludes that translators tend to prioritize clarity and readability over maintaining idiomatic form in digital media contexts.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions, translation strategies, digital media, meaning equivalence

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital media has become one of the most influential platforms for communication. Social media, blogs, and online promotional content enable messages to reach a global audience with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As a result, translation plays a crucial role in ensuring that messages delivered through digital media can be understood by international readers. One linguistic feature that frequently appears in digital communication is idiomatic expressions.

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Idiomatic expressions are fixed or semi-fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal meanings of their individual words. They are closely related to cultural context and are often used to convey emotions, attitudes, humor, and social values (Helmie 2020). Translating idioms from Indonesian into English is challenging because many Indonesian idioms do not have direct equivalents in English. Literal translation may lead to misunderstanding or loss of meaning.

Previous studies on idiom translation have mainly focused on literary texts, novels, and formal documents. However, studies that specifically examine idiom translation in digital media are still limited. Digital media has unique characteristics such as informality, brevity, and an emphasis on clarity and engagement, which may influence translation strategies.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the translation strategies used in translating Indonesian idiomatic expressions into English in digital media content and to examine the degree of meaning equivalence achieved. This research is expected to contribute to translation studies by providing insights into idiom translation in contemporary digital communication. There are two research questions regarding to the explanation, they are what translation strategies are used in translating Indonesian idiomatic expressions into English in digital media content? And how do these strategies help maintain idiomatic meaning and readability in digital contexts?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section explains the theories underlying the research entitled “Translation Strategies of Indonesian Idiomatic Expressions in Digital Media Content”. The theoretical framework covers: The Concept of Idioms and Their Characteristics, Idiom Translation in Translation Studies, Idiom Translation Strategies, and Idioms in Digital Media.

a. Idioms and Their Characteristics

Idioms are language units that carry figurative meanings and cannot be interpreted literally. Nugroho Wijaksono et al. (2022) explain that idioms are expressions whose meanings cannot be derived from the meanings of their individual words, but rather from their pragmatic meaning and function in discourse. In addition, idioms have relatively fixed structures, so even slight changes in form may alter their meanings.

Laila Qadera Fitria and Otong Setiawan Djauhari (2025) further state that idioms are considered fixed expressions that convey implicit meanings and require cultural context interpretation to be properly understood.

b. Idiom Translation in Translation Studies



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In translation studies, idioms are linguistic elements that are often difficult to translate because they contain connotative meanings that cannot always be understood literally (Komalasari, 2024).

The goal of idiom translation is not only to transfer meaning but also to maintain the same pragmatic effect for the target readers. Therefore, translators must consider aspects such as readability, naturalness, and the appropriateness of idiom usage within specific contexts.

c. Idiom Translation Strategies

According to Baker (2018), there are several common strategies used in translating idioms:

- Idioms with Similar Meaning and Form

The translator uses a target-language idiom that has a similar form and meaning to the source-language idiom. This strategy is ideal but rarely found due to cultural differences.

- Idioms with Similar Meaning but Different Form

The translator selects a different idiom in the target language that conveys the same meaning, even though its structure differs from the source idiom.

- Paraphrase

This strategy is used when an idiom does not have an appropriate equivalent. The meaning of the idiom is explained using ordinary expressions without an idiomatic form.

- Omission

Idioms are omitted when their figurative meaning is not relevant or cannot be effectively conveyed. This strategy is often used when literal translation may cause ambiguity or misinterpretation.

d. Idioms in Digital Media

Digital media has communication characteristics that tend to be fast-paced, concise, and informal. Crystal (2011) states that digital language is dynamic, flexible, and often influenced by trends. In this context, idioms are used to add humor, emotion, and a sense of closeness with readers, particularly in social media, blogs, online articles, and digital marketing content.

However, idiom translation in digital media requires special attention due to factors such as a broader and more global audience, a more casual language style, the need to maintain fluency and readability, and the tendency to prioritize core messages over literary form (Helmie, Halimah, and Hasanah 2020). Therefore,



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idiom translation strategies must be able to produce translations that are natural, accurate, and communicative in digital contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research focuses on analyzing linguistic phenomena and interpreting translation strategies rather than measuring numerical data.

Data and Source of Data

The data consisted of Indonesian idiomatic expressions found in digital media content, such as social media captions, promotional posts, and short online narratives, along with their English translations. The data were obtained from publicly accessible digital platforms that provide bilingual content.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted by identifying digital media content containing Indonesian idiomatic expressions and documenting their English translations. Each idiom was recorded together with its context of use to support interpretation.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by comparing the source-language idioms with their target-language translations. The translation strategies were classified based on Baker's (2018) classification, which includes idioms with similar meaning and form, idioms with similar meaning but different form, paraphrase, and omission. The degree of meaning equivalence was then analyzed descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that several translation strategies are used in translating Indonesian idiomatic expressions into English in digital media content. The most dominant strategy identified is paraphrase. This strategy is commonly used when an idiom does not have a direct equivalent in English. By paraphrasing, translators explain the meaning of the idiom using non-idiomatic expressions, which helps ensure clarity and comprehension for a global audience. However, this strategy often reduces the idiomatic and cultural richness of the original expression.

The second most frequently used strategy is idiom with similar meaning but different form. In this strategy, the translator replaces the Indonesian idiom with a different English idiom that conveys a similar meaning. Although the form of the idiom changes, the figurative meaning is largely preserved, resulting in a natural-sounding translation.

The strategy of idiom with similar meaning and form is used less frequently. This strategy occurs only when both Indonesian and English share similar idiomatic expressions. When applied, it results in a high degree of meaning equivalence, but such cases are limited due to cultural differences between the two languages.



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In addition, omission is occasionally used when the idiom is considered non-essential or difficult to translate without affecting readability. This reflects the characteristics of digital media, which prioritize efficiency, clarity, and direct communication.

Overall, the findings indicate that most translations achieve partial meaning equivalence. While the core message of the idioms is successfully conveyed, some cultural nuances and expressive elements are often lost. This supports previous studies suggesting that achieving full equivalence in idiom translation is difficult, particularly in informal and cross-cultural digital contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the translation of Indonesian idiomatic expressions into English in digital media content generally results in partial meaning equivalence. Paraphrase is the most dominant translation strategy, followed by idioms with similar meaning but different form. Idioms with similar meaning and form and omission are used less frequently.

The dominance of paraphrase indicates that translators prioritize clarity, readability, and accessibility to suit the global nature of digital media. Although this strategy effectively conveys the main message, it often reduces the idiomatic and cultural expressiveness of the source language. Therefore, translators are encouraged to balance readability and cultural representation by selecting appropriate strategies based on context and communicative purpose.

Future research may focus on audience responses to translated idioms in digital media or compare idiom translation strategies across different digital platforms.

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