

Translation Strategy for Idioms in “The Schools for Good and Evil”

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and explain the translation strategy of the idioms used in the film "The Schools for Good and Evil" by Soman Chainani. The basic problem in this study is the difficulty of translating the idioms in the film, therefore the right strategy is needed in its translation. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative method. A total of 14 idioms were found in the film and then became data in this study. The results of the study indicate that, based on four translation strategies of Baker's theory, there are 14 idioms using 3 main theories; namely 1). 6 idioms use translation strategy of idioms with similar meaning and form; 2). 5 idioms use translation strategy of idioms with similar meaning but dissimilar form, and the last one, 3). 3 idioms use paraphrasing translation strategy. The frequent use of the similar meaning and form strategy shows that a lot of idioms in the film have direct equivalents in Indonesian, making translation straightforward.

Keywords: *idiom, movie, translation strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Translation of idioms can be quite tricky, especially when working on films. Idioms are expressions whose meaning cannot be known merely by looking at the individual words alone; that makes them especially difficult to translate. In movies, idioms are more than words; they shape characters, moods, as well as emotion. Yet, idiomatic phrases get lost in translation from one language to another, especially when the languages belong to totally different cultures and structures, as culture affects everything regardless of the field (Putri, 2023). Darmojuwono et al. (2014) points out that understanding sentences and discourse is not possible if we do not pay attention to the elements outside the language, which relates to our knowledge about the world and human life. This problem is especially evident in fantasy films like The Schools for Good and Evil, which are full of idiomatic phrases that need to be handled with care to retain their meaning and emotion.

As Anasta (2022) explains in her article, Review Buku The School for Good and Evil, Sedang Tayang di Netflix!, the movie The School for Good and Evil is an adaptation of a best-selling book series that Netflix brought to the screen on October 19, 2022. Written by Soman Chainani, an

American author with Indian roots and a Harvard graduate, the series has captivated millions of people. Since its debut in 2013, it has sold over 3 million copies and been translated into 30 languages. Often described as a fairy-tale version of Harry Potter, *The School for Good and Evil* quickly gained popularity after its release. This research, thus, covers the translation of idioms from English to Indonesian in *The Schools for Good and Evil*, due to its popularity among the public. In general, Newmark (1988) stated that, in translating idiomatic language, it is difficult to match equivalence of meaning with equivalence of frequency. Thus, this study will answer the following question: How are idioms translated in the Indonesian version of *The Schools for Good and Evil* movie? This research, therefore, seeks to find the strategies that the translator uses to overcome the challenges of idiom translation, and how such strategies preserve the intended meaning and cultural context.

This study is significant because it covers the gap that exists in the literature regarding the translation of idioms, especially in fantasy films. Most of the existing studies have not given enough attention to how idioms are translated into this genre, especially from English to Indonesian. The present study aims to contribute to a better understanding of translation in audiovisual media and tries to understand specific difficulties translators face while adapting idioms for a different cultural and linguistic audience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies on Idiom Translation

Idiom translation has always been one of the most problematic research areas, especially in the case of literary works, as both semantic and pragmatic are the problems by itself in idioms (Premasari & Widodo, 2021). As Kovacs (2016) points out, the translation of idioms requires profound knowledge of both the source and target languages and strong awareness of the cultures standing behind them. The meaning of idioms is often based on the culture; therefore, it is hard to translate them word for word without losing their meaning. Listia and Arapah (2021) added the emotive weight in translating idioms, stating that failure in maintaining this emotion in the translation process may lead to the misjudgment of idioms and affect the overall message. Besides, Ngongo et al. (2024) explained that one of the major problems in translating idioms is that most of them have multiple meanings that cannot be defined from the words involved.

These are challenges that over the years have made researchers find ways of translating idioms, including, for instance, Baker's (1992) translation strategies like similar meaning and form, paraphrasing, and adapting idioms to fit into the cultural context.

Various studies have also been conducted to make sense of such translation strategies. Ahdilla (2024) discussed idioms in *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*, explaining how the genre of a text can influence the choice of translation strategy. This research showed that free translation strategies are often adopted because it can preserve the meaning and flow of texts better while considering the cultural context. Hanim (2022) discussed idiomatic expressions in the translation of *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*. The research observed how translators frequently switched from a more formal structure to a more communicative and natural structure that would meet the intended understanding of the target audience. Meanwhile, Chotimah (2022) analyzed how idiom translation can achieve full, partial, or no equivalence, and concluded that the most successful translations have full equivalence, which means the translation is accurate and can be easily understood. In addition, Bulkes & Tanner (2017) highlight that translating idioms can be challenging, but becomes much easier when the expression is commonly used and readers are already familiar with its meaning. On the other hand, idioms that are rarely used or have unclear meanings can be significantly harder to interpret and translate.

Theoretical Perspectives on Idiom Translation

A number of theoretical frameworks have been made to guide the translation of idioms. For example, Nababan (2003) points out that the understanding of the literal meaning, context, and cultural connotation of the source idiom is very important in choosing the appropriate equivalent in the target language. This view is supported by Machali (2000), who states that semantic and communicative techniques of translation usually work well for idioms. With those theories, the translator can then provide an accurate functional equivalent for the source in the target language that logically makes linguistic and cultural sense. The second point is Baker's (1992) theories on strategies of translation, which present the argument to adapt idioms into an appropriate cultural text that ensures efficiency in delivering the meaning.

With these theoretical perspectives in mind, the present study now applies them to *The Schools for Good and Evil* that presents its own set of challenges. This fantasy film, not only does it have great emotional depth, but also points that its idioms carry both linguistic and cultural significance. This research aims at analyzing the idiomatic translation strategies adopted in the film and explores how such strategies handle the challenges of translating idioms within the cross-cultural and audio-visual context. By so doing, this study hopes to add to the knowledge base on how idioms could best be translated into films, especially those film genres that are culturally and emotionally charged.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. It is chosen because this approach will be helpful in exploring how idioms are translated in the movie *The Schools for Good and Evil*. The objectives of this research are to know the translation strategies applied to the idioms, and to analyze how the strategies work in translating the idioms within the movie. The qualitative method fits because this research is directed to see specifically how the idioms are translated and how those translations match or fit with the theories of translation.

Research Site and Participants

Researching was done by analyzing the movie *The Schools for Good and Evil*. The movie was chosen since it contains many idioms that are important to know to make out character, mood, and emotion of the plot. Therefore, in this case, a movie becomes "participant" in research, with the object study focused on film idioms used, and its translation in Indonesian.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was made by watching the movie and taking note of the idioms used. Those idioms were then analyzed in regards of Mona Baker's (1992) proposed translation strategies, which are: using an idiom with the similar meaning and form in the target language, using an idiom with a different meaning and form, paraphrasing, and leaving the idiom out. Each idiom was examined to determine which strategy it used and whether it successfully conveyed the meaning of the source language.

FINDINGS

Translation of Idioms with Similar Meaning and Form

This strategy involves translating idioms from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) with a meaning and form that are similar. In other words, this strategy conveys a meaning that closely matches the idiom in the SL. Below are examples of idioms in the film *The Schools for Good and Evil* that use this strategy:

Datum 1

SL: Look, look! Dig around. (2:18:07)

TL: Coba cari.

In the sentence above, the idiom "dig around" refers to the action of "searching for something." According to the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, the meaning of this idiom

is "to search in something in order to find an object in something". The equivalent meaning in Indonesian for "dig around" is "mencari sesuatu." This translation maintains both the meaning and form of the idiom in the source and target languages.

Datum 2

SL: Okay, this might sound crazy, but you ever think about branching out of your comfort zone? (2:18:02)

TL: Ini ide gila, tapi pernah berniat membaca genre lain?

According to Collins Dictionary (1983), the idiom "branch out" means "do something that is different from their normal activities or work". The equivalent expression in Indonesian is "mencoba hal baru." This matches the definition in the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, which defines the idiom as "to start to do an activity that you have not done before, especially in your work or business". In the context of the dialogue in the film, this translation becomes "membaca genre lain," describing the character's suggestion to try something new. The choice of this translation makes the result more natural and is easily understood by the target audience.

Datum 3

SL: Sophie, you've never even set foot outside Gavaldon. (2:15:39)

TL: Sophie, kau belum pernah keluar Gavaldon.

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD) (1985), the idiom "set foot in somewhere" means "to go to a place" or "(to) get out." When translated more deeply into Indonesian, the idiom "set foot out" can be equivalent to "keluar" or "leaving a place." The translation strategy used for this expression is similar meaning and form, as the structure and meaning of the idiom in both the source and target languages are nearly similar.

Datum 4

SL: My dear, one doesn't measure one's goodness just by how one looks. (2:04:29)

TL: Sayangku, menilai kebaikan seseorang bukan dari penampilannya.

The phrase "measure one's goodness" can be translated into Indonesian as "mengukur kebaikan seseorang," while "how one looks" can be rendered as "berdasarkan penampilan." Both phrases maintain the original meaning and form when translated into Indonesian. Thus, the idiom in this example also uses the similar meaning and form strategy.

Datum 5

SL: So, off we jolly well go. (1:32:18)

TL: Nah, mari kita berangkat.

The idiom in this sentence falls under the similar meaning and form strategy. The word "go" is equivalent to "pergi" or "berangkat" in Indonesian. As for the phrase "jolly well," according to

the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (1884), it is used for emphasis when the speaker is annoyed. However, in this context, it conveys enthusiasm or determination. Kumairoh (2023) notes that "jolly well" indicates doing something with full spirit and resolve.

Datum 6

SL: Ah, must have slipped my mind. (47:03)

TL: Mungkin aku lupa.

According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (1844), the phrase "slip your mind" means "to forget something or fail to do something." The word "slip" translates to "luput" in Indonesian, which forms the phrase "luput dari ingatan." This can be equivalently translated into Indonesian as "melupakan sesuatu" or "lupa melakukan sesuatu." Therefore, the idiom translation strategy used here is also similar meaning and form since the idiom's meaning and structure are effectively preserved in the target language.

Translation of Idioms with Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form

This strategy involves translating idioms that share the same meaning in both the source and target languages but has difference in the form. Below are some examples of idioms from the film that use the similar meaning but dissimilar form translation strategy:

Datum 1

SL: I think I'm gonna be sick. (1:00:46)

TL: Aku ingin muntah.

According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (1844), the idiom "be sick" means "to bring food from your stomach back out through your mouth." This is equivalent to the meaning of "muntah" in Indonesian. In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), "muntah" is defined as "to expel food, drink, or other substances that have entered the stomach back out." Based on this explanation, both expressions share the same meaning but are conveyed differently in the source and target languages.

Datum 2

SL: We will get to the bottom of this. (49:47)

TL: Kita akan cari tahu.

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD) (1985), the idiom "get to the bottom" means "to discover the truth about a situation." Similarly, the Collins Dictionary interpret it as "finding the real cause of the problem." In Indonesian, the equivalent phrase "mencari tahu," defined by the KBBI as "to seek information or clarification," has the same

meaning. Thus, this idiom translation employs the similar meaning but dissimilar form strategy, as the source and target languages express the same idea in different forms.

Datum 3

SL: It's true evil, and we have to stick together. (49:06)

TL: Ada kejahatan sejati, dan kita harus tetap kompak.

The idiom "stick together," as defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (1844), means "to stay together and support each other." In Indonesian, the equivalent "tetap kompak" conveys the same sense of unity. The KBBI defines "kompak" as "united in addressing or dealing with a matter." Therefore, this idiom uses the similar meaning but dissimilar form strategy, with both expressions preserving the same meaning but different in form.

Datum 4

SL: You're both such dolls to ask. (43:42)

TL: Manis sekali pertanyaannya.

In the context of this dialogue, the idiom "such dolls" refers to the phrase "manis sekali" (very sweet) in Indonesian. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (1844), "doll" can describe a "pretty or attractive woman" but is often considered outdated or offensive. In contrast, the KBBI defines "manis" as "pleasantly charming (regarding face, smile, words, etc.) or very polite and gentle." The translation adapts the meaning appropriately for the target audience, following the similar meaning but dissimilar form strategy.

Datum 5

SL: You know, I think I'm really getting the hang of this. (40:17)

TL: Aku mulai menguasai ini.

The idiom "get the hang of something," according to the CALD (1985), means "to learn how to do something, especially when it is not simple or obvious." The equivalent in Indonesian, "mulai menguasai," has the same meaning. In KBBI, "menguasai" has several definitions, including "to take control," "to manage," or "to master." In this context, "menguasai" refers to mastering a skill or ability, making it a suitable translation. Thus, this idiom also follows the similar meaning but dissimilar form strategy, preserving the meaning while adapting the form to fit the target language.

Translation of Idioms with Paraphrase

One translation strategy that translators can choose when there is no equivalent expression in the target language to transfer the meaning of the source language (SL) is the paraphrase strategy.

Below are some examples of idioms from the film *The Schools for Good and Evil* that use the paraphrase strategy:

Datum 1

SL: You two think you're better than us, but really you're just a prig and a pig. (2:20:37)

TL: Kalian sok hebat, padahal kalian busuk dan buluk.

In the context of the sentence above, the idiom "a prig and a pig" is translated as "busuk dan buluk" in the target language (TL). This expression was chosen because there is no direct equivalent for the idiom in the TL. The translator chose "busuk dan buluk" as a creative interpretation to transfer the intended meaning. The strategy applied here is paraphrasing.

Datum 2

SL: This is what you've always wanted? To simply have it all at your feet? (31:43)

TL: Ini yang kau impikan? Semua tunduk padamu?

In this context, the idiom "all at your feet" is translated as "semua tunduk padamu." This choice was made because no suitable equivalent exists in the TL to express the same idea. Thus, the translator used "semua tunduk padamu" to rephrase the idiom's meaning. The translation strategy employed here is paraphrase.

Datum 3

SL: Both girls were met with open arms and open minded. (13:06)

TL: Kedua gadis itu disambut hangat dan terbuka.

In the dialogue above, the idiomatic expression "with open arms and open minds" is translated as "hangat dan terbuka." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "with open arms" means "in a very friendly way," while "open-minded" means "willing to consider ideas and opinions that are new or different from your own." In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), "hangat" has multiple meanings, but in this context, it implies "gembira" (cheerful). Similarly, "terbuka" here refers to "bersikap terbuka" (being open-minded). The translator chose "hangat dan terbuka" because it better fits the TL while maintaining the essence of the SL. This translation also uses the paraphrase strategy due to the lack of a direct idiomatic equivalent in the TL.

The result indicates that paraphrasing as a translation strategy is employed when no equivalent idiom can be found in the target language. According to Ariyani et al. (2021), the paraphrase strategy is used when the meaning of the source language differs too much from the target language, resulting a need to express it in different form. Some challenges in translating English idioms into Indonesian including identifying and understanding idiomatic or fixed expressions in the source text and effectively transgerring the meaning of idioms and fixed expressions into the target language.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to answer the question: "How are idioms in the film *The Schools for Good and Evil* translated into Indonesian?" It focused on identifying the strategies used and understanding their effectiveness in preserving meaning and cultural relevance. The analysis revealed three main strategies: similar meaning and form (6 idioms), similar meaning but dissimilar form (5 idioms), and paraphrasing (3 idioms). The distribution of these strategies is shown below:

Table 1. Translation strategy of the movie idiom "The Schools for Good and Evil"

No.	Translation strategy	Sum
1.	Similar meaning and form	6
2.	Similar meaning but dissimilar form	5
3.	Paraphrase	3
Total		14

The data demonstrate that idioms in the film were mostly translated using the strategy of similar meaning and form that was applied to 6 idioms. For instance, the idiom "dig around" (SL) was translated as "coba cari" (TL), preserving both the meaning and structure of the original expression. This indicates that, when direct equivalents exist in the target language, translators preferred this strategy to ensure clarity and accuracy.

The second most frequently used strategy, similar meaning but dissimilar form, was applied to 5 idioms. An example is "get to the bottom of this" (SL), which was translated as "kita akan cari tahu" (TL). While the meaning remains consistent, the form experiences an adjustment to better suit the cultural and linguistic context of the target language. This strategy is important for maintaining the intended impact of idioms that have no direct structural match in Indonesian.

Lastly, the paraphrasing strategy was used for 3 idioms. For example, "a prig and a pig" (SL) was translated as "busuk dan buluk" (TL). This approach was used when no equivalent idiom or similar expression exists in the target language. By focusing on transferring the core meaning paraphrasing ensures that the idiom's meaning is still similar, even if its original form is lost.

The frequent use of the similar meaning and form strategy shows that many idioms in the film have direct equivalents in Indonesian, making translation straightforward. This supports Baker's (1992) theory that idioms with similar meaning and form are easier to translate accurately. The use of the similar meaning but different form strategy reflects the translator's ability to adapt

idioms to fit cultural and linguistic differences. Paraphrasing, while used less often, was important when no equivalent idiom existed in Indonesian, ensuring that the meaning was preserved.

These findings match with earlier studies (e.g., Kovacs, 2016; Ariyani et al., 2021) that highlight the importance of cultural and contextual understanding in idiom translation. They also show how Baker's strategies work effectively in film translation, where preserving emotional and cultural nuances is essential.

This research has practical implications for translators, especially those working on subtitling films. Understanding which strategies to use can help translators produce subtitles that are accurate, natural, and relatable for the target audience. However, this study has some limitations. It focused on a single fantasy film, which might not represent idiom translation strategies in other genres. Future research could examine idiom translation across different genres or use larger datasets to identify broader data. Expanding the scope of analysis would provide a deeper understanding of how idioms are translated in various contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the idioms analysis found in the film *The Schools for Good and Evil*, it was concluded that there were three translation strategies regarding idioms in the film. In the analysis, 14 idioms were found in the film; among them, the strategy "similar meaning and form" was the most frequent strategy, with 6 idioms out of the total number. This strategy is more comprehensible because the form and meaning are similar in both languages; therefore, it will be easier for audience to understand the idioms in the film. It will also be easier for translators to choose the right strategies.

Because, according to the study, it only involved idioms from a single film, it is also hoped that future idiomatic researchers would broaden their research into studying idioms in different film genres for better comprehension of idioms. It is, therefore, very important to have the film industry and professional translators collaborate in ensuring that the translation is well received in the target language and culture. The present research looks not only at the translation strategies, but also at how well the target audience understands and relates with the translation. A good translation maintains both the meaning and the cultural aspects of the original content, making the film more relatable and loyal to its original form.

This research indicated the need for translators to know not only the language but also the culture. Further studies could be done on how technology, for example machine translation and AI, influences idiom translation into film subtitles or dubbing. The ultimate goal is to come up with a translation relevant to the audience and faithful to the original message.

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