

TRANSLATION OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN “LOOKING FOR ALASKA” INTO INDONESIAN

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Abstract

It is still a great debate whether a translator needs to substitute idiomatic expressions in the source with the idiomatic expressions in the target language. A translator plays a significant role in connecting the author and the reader. The present research examined the Indonesian translation of English idioms encountered in the novel of Looking for Alaska by John Green. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data were sorted out from this novel as the corpus. There were 94 idioms encountered in the examined novel. The institutionalization-characterized idioms appeared the most frequent, and the least frequently employed idioms were characterized frozenness. The idioms were mostly translated through paraphrasing.

Keywords: *Idioms, translation, novel*

INTRODUCTION

An idiom is a group of words that form different meanings from each member word as a whole sentence. The group of words must be treated as one without omitting a word, or it will not convey the purpose of the idiom itself. Language has various idioms that native speakers use spontaneously without thinking about their figurative nature (Manzoor & Kiran, 2015, p. 225). Non-native speakers may get confused when meeting an idiom that they have never heard before.

Considering that idiom is an integral part of the English language, EFL students need to get accustomed to such expressions. However, schools do not need to stress the importance of learning idioms. Language teachers generally ignore words like idioms, collocations, proverbs and fixed expressions (Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013, p. 111). The use of idioms greatly influences the teaching and learning process of a foreign language (DeCaro, 2009, p. 124).

Using idioms may help the students improve their daily communicative skills. The students may learn idioms through formal speeches like lectures, conversation, or other sources like novels, movies, radio, and television (Manzoor & Kiran, 2015, p. 225). Novels speak about important things even though their primary purpose is entertainment. By reading novels, a reader unconsciously adds vocabulary, figurative language, and idioms to their command.

Well-known novels are mostly translated into various languages to reach international readers. Translating is not an easy job. It is an instrument of education and truth (Newmark, 1987, p. 6). Translating idiomatic expression is not easy work (Baker, 1992, p. 65), but it can be a challenging task.

Translators play a significant role in connecting the author and the reader. They must be aware that novel writers mainly employ idioms to express their thoughts in their works. Idiomatic expressions can be the most challenging part of translating a novel. To translate idioms, a translator must be skilled in both the source language and the target language (Sudarsono, *Voice Changing: Translating Strategy to Generate the Naturalness in Indonesian Texts*, 2011).

One of the difficulties in translating novels lies in replacing the idiomatic expressions in the source language into the expressions in the target language properly. Idioms may not always be apparent. Idioms may employ ill-formed grammar or include expressions that violate conditions such as (1).

(1) raining cats and dogs

A translator must be able to recognize whether a group of words is categorized an idiomatic expression. Idioms can create confusion when they refer to a reasonable literal meaning (Sudarsono, *Voice Changing: Translating Strategy to Generate the Naturalness in Indonesian Texts*, 2011). For instance, (2). It can be translated literally into ‘deceive’ or idiomatically ‘cheat someone’.

(2) to take someone for a ride

The present research was designed to discover how a translator translates idiomatic expressions. The corpus was the novel of *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. This novel was considered popular and important to have the EFL students to read. Many educators and librarians recommend *Looking for Alaska* to their students (Gallo, 2006). This novel was translated by Barokah Ruziati and Sekar Wulandari.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research employed a descriptive qualitative method. This method provides depth and detail to create an understanding of phenomena and lived experiences (Bowen, 2005, p. 209). Qualitative data deal with meanings, whereas quantitative data with numbers. The data were sorted out from the novel of the source language, namely, English and its Indonesian version, translated by Barokah Ruziati and Sekar Wulandari that was published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. Both the version of English and Indonesian were treated as corpora.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most idioms appear abstract; they are not at random, but there is no shared set of terms to describe idioms, of which the characteristics can be given for phrases, called idioms. The construction of idioms may display semantic characteristics and structural peculiarities on their grammatical behavior, which the general grammatical rules of the relevant language cannot usually explain (Langlotz, 2006, p. 2).

Idiomatic expressions are classified into compositeness, institutionalization, non-compositionality, and frozenness (Langlotz, 2006). Composite idioms refer to the idioms of multi-word units, comprising two or more lexical constituents (Langlotz, 2006, p. 3). For example, the idiom of (3) consists of two lexical constituents, that is **good** and **grief**; (4) refers to a compound, comprising **black**

and **bird**; (5) is an example of a phrasal verbs, consisting of **stand** and **by**; and (6) represents a proverb.

- (3) good grief
- (4) blackbird
- (5) stand by
- (6) Birds of a feather flock together.

Institutionalization refers to the degree of familiarity with an idiom (Langlotz, 2006, p. 3). This type of idiom is culture-bound. It is a set of words, well-known in a particular language community as an idiom. It is an effect of cognitive entrenchment. Idioms are institutionalized when they become automatized through a gradual process of cognitive routinization (Langlotz, 2006, p.99). The collection of idioms or dictionaries can be the tools to check whether or not an idiom is institutionalized in the language community.

Non-compositionality refers to the idioms, whose meaning cannot be derived from their constituent members (Langlotz, 2006, p. 3). For example, the meaning of (7) cannot be understood from each constituent part of the phrase. The semantic non-compositionality and the existence of a literal homonymous counterpart are the essential features of pure idioms, being complementary and of equal importance. Non-literal interpretation of an idiom can be seen as the most common attribute of idioms.

- (7) the apple of someone's eye

Frozensness or lexico-grammatical-fixedness refers to the restricted lexico-grammatical behaviour of idioms (Langlotz, 2006, p. 3). Typically, their behavior is not open to modification since it will change the meaning and lose its idiomaticity. For example, (8) will lose its idiomatic sense if the constituent words changed into semantically-related words like (9) or (10). It is also impossible to passivize such a type of idiom as (11) that will sound unnatural. That is why most idioms are restricted to changes.

- (8) kill two birds with one stone
- (9) annihilated two birds with one stone
- (10) kill two birds with one rock
- (11) *With one rock, two birds **were killed**.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research found out that the novel 'Looking for Alaska' of the source language applied 363 idioms. They were classified into institutionalized, composite, non-composite, and frozen idioms. The institutionalized idioms were the dominant idioms in their frequency although it was not significant as shown in the following table.

No.	Type	Freq	%
1	Institutionalized Idioms	94	26
2	Composite Idioms	91	25
3	Non-composite Idioms	91	25
4	Frozen Idioms	87	24

Total	363	100
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To check whether or not the data belonged to institutionalized idioms, the researcher employed an online idiom dictionary called The Free Dictionary by Farlex.

The second type of idiom encountered in the corpus was non-composite idioms. This type of idiom is illustrated with (12), which can be derived from their constituents' words. The phrase (12) can be clearly understood literally, but idiomatically it means (13). The idiomatic expression (12) was taken from Context 1.

(12) I could live with it

(13) someone can accept a condition even though it is not entirely pleasant for them

Context 1:

She looked so pretty, her big eyes blinking fast, her cheeks soft and round, and still the roundness could only remind me of Alaska's thin face and her high cheekbones. But, I could live with it – and, anyway, I had to

Another example of the institutionalized idioms is (14). This idiom can also be understood well without working hard to have its idiomatic meaning. The idiom (14) refers to (15). Lexically, (14) also means (16). The reader can grasp the situation that Pudge and the gang reach the end of their investigation and currently cannot move anywhere, even if they do not know its idiomatic meaning.

(14) dead-end

(15) the situation in which someone cannot make any more progress

(16) an end of a road or passage from which no exit is possible

There were 91 composite idioms. Three idioms consist of only one word. They are **kick**, **rat**, and **pissed**. They show that idioms does not necessarily have more than one word.

Frozen idioms were found minor. There were 87 idioms strict to modification. In contrast, more idioms are open to modification. The idiomatic expressions with phrasal verbs can be mostly modified by adding a noun in the middle of the phrase. For example, a pronoun or a noun can be inserted into (17) to emphasize the action performed or completed. Another example of idiomatic expressions is shown in (18) that can be substituted (19). Both idioms are synonymous or bear a similar meaning.

(17) pull off

(18) can't bear

(19) can't stand

The translators, Barokah Ruziati and Sekar Wulandari, applied 4 strategies to translate English idiomatic expressions in the English version into the Indonesian version. They applied idioms of similar meaning and similar

meaning, similar meaning and different forms, paraphrasing, and omission. The most dominant strategy applied by the translators was paraphrasing, and the least one was omission as can be seen in the following table.

No.	Translation Strategy	Freq	%
1	Paraphrasing	265	78
2	Using an idiom of similar meaning but different form	51	15
3	Using an idiom of similar meaning and similar form	18	5
4	Omission	7	2
	Total	363	100

Paraphrasing is the easy way to avoid substituting English idioms with the Indonesian idioms. This translation strategy was the strategy that Barokah Ruziati and Sekar Wulandari typically employed in translating 'Looking for Alaska' from English into Indonesian. This translation strategy is also the solution to translate texts of two cultures. The novel of 'Looking for Alaska' was written in the cultural setting of the United States and the translated version was produced by the translators of and for the readers of Indonesian culture. Thus, it reasonable to claim that the culture of the source language different from the target language translators made the translators fail to replace the English idioms encountered in the source novel with the Indonesian idioms in the producing the translation version. For example, the translators paraphrased (20) with (21) taken respectively from the source language (SL) and the translation language (TL).

(20) the hair of the dog

(21) obat mabuk

SL:

Alaska looked like a train-wreck but insisted on pouring the last few sips of Strawberry Hill into her cold instant coffee before chucking the bottle behind her. "The hair of the dog," she said.

TL:

Alaska terlihat sangat berantakan, tapi berkeras menuangkan beberapa tetes terakhir Strawberry Hill ke dalam kopi instannya yang dingin sebelum melemparkan botol ke belakang. "Obat mabuk," katanya.

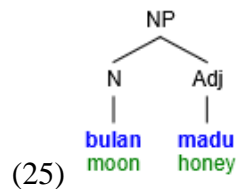
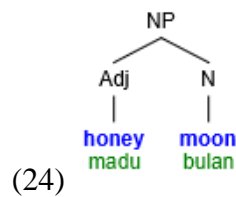
American people are very much attached with alcoholic beverages consumption when they already reach legal ages. Alcoholic drinks have been widely consumed throughout the history of America. Therefore, there can be various idiomatic expressions associated with alcoholic beverages, such as (20) above. In contrast, Indonesian is the language spoken by primarily Moslem, who are, according to the Islamic law, forbidden to consume alcoholic beverages.

Alcohol consumption is seen as something atrocious for the national norms in Indonesia. The distribution of alcohol beverages is strictly controlled by the government, too. Thus, the idiomatic expressions about the alcoholic drink are very limited if any.

Another strategy applied by the translators was having an idiom of similar meaning and similar form. For instance, (22) was translated into an idiom of (23). They convey similar in meaning derived from **honey** means *madu* and **moon** means *bulan*. Both idiomatic expressions are grammatically classified into a noun phrase (NP), where the English noun head (N) is preceded by its modifier (adjectival), and Indonesian one works in reverse as respectively shown in (24) and (25).

(22)honeymoon

(23)bulan madu



The translators were found not to translate the idioms of the source language in the target language. The translators minimally applied this strategy, as illustrated in (26). The translators did not translate it into the target version to avoid its impolite expression for Indonesian readers. In reference to the Indonesian norms and religious teaching, the translation of (26) may be deemed so rude for Indonesian readers.

(26)screw you

Another reason not to translate the idiom encountered in the source novel may be due to redundancy in the target language as shown in (27).

(27)took off

THE CONTRIBUTION TEFL IN INDONESIA

The idiomatic expression has a significant role in language proficiency. To master a language must also to master all aspects of the concerned language (Sudarsono, 2016) including idiomatic expressions. The mastery and the skill of employing idiomatic expressions in a particular language is one of the indicators that one's speech is considered native or native-like at least. They also indicate that the speakers are considered as bilinguals when they are proficient and competent in idiomatic expressions of the concerned languages.

Learning idioms from 'Looking for Alaska' may help the students achieve native-like English. The teachers can also teach the students how translate the

idioms of English into Indonesian appropriately. The students may not only understand any linguistic forms lexically, but also contextually as well as culturally.

Being aware of idiomatic expression come hand in hand with the ability to translate them. Knowing how to interpret the meaning of idiom based on its context can help students in order to comprehend the whole message of a sentence (Sudarsono, 2011). Analyzing how translators mostly translate idioms can help students and teachers find the best and most accurate way to translate idiomatic expressions.

CONCLUSION

Looking for Alaska was written in the setting of the United States. There were thoughts, ideas, feelings and so forth that were expressed in idiomatic forms. The idiomatic expressions encountered in this novel can be classified into institutionalized, composite, non-composite, and frozen idioms. The dominant forms of idioms that the writer expressed was the institutionalized, although the frequency of the types as a whole does not differ significantly.

The strategies applied by the translators to translate the source novel into the translation version vary from one to another. The translators productively employed paraphrasing to translate the novel in Indonesian version. The translator avoided translating some English idioms due to the inappropriateness culturally and religiously.

To enable the students to master native-like English, the teachers need to exposure idiomatic expressions to their students in English and their equivalent in Indonesian through reading novels, both the English version as well as the Indonesian one.

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