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ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ERROR IN TRANSLATING IDIOMS FROM ENGLISH TO INDONESIA MADE BY SIXTH SEMESTER OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BORNEO TARAKAN

Hasan Al Fitrah[1], Fitriawati[2]
[1,2]English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Universitas Borneo Tarakan
E-mail:
[1]dhevanmuhammad@gmail.com
[2] fitriawatiubt@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' errors in translating idiomatic expressions from English into Indonesian among sixth-semester students of the English Education Department at the University of Borneo Tarakan. It also examines the factors contributing to these errors. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved students with basic English proficiency levels. Data were collected through translation tests, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that students encounter considerable difficulties in interpreting idiomatic expressions, primarily due to limited linguistic knowledge, cultural differences between English and Indonesian, and stylistic constraints. These challenges are largely attributed to students' unfamiliarity with idiomatic usage, difficulties in identifying appropriate equivalents, and limited exposure to idioms in both spoken and written contexts. The complexity of meaning embedded in idiomatic expressions further exacerbates these translation errors. The study underscores the importance of enhancing learners' idiomatic competence and cultural awareness in translation instruction. It recommends that educators integrate idiomatic expressions more systematically into language learning activities to improve students' translation accuracy and communicative competence.

Keywords: Student errors, translation, idiomatic expressions

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that many countries use to communicate with one another, facilitating cross-cultural relationships. It provides a common foundation for people from various linguistic origins to converse and exchange information effectively. The English dialect is broadly utilized around the world over different areas, such as science, innovation, exchange, logical investigate, instruction etc. (Rao 2019). In Indonesia English generally is considered as a foreign language in Indonesia. Consequently, the acquisition of English has emerged as one of the subjects offered in numerous educational institutions across Indonesia. Practically English is taught in every school in Indonesia. Starting from elementary school and continuing through university level, students learn English. English, also referred to as the lingua franca, has evolved into a language used for international communication. It functions as a crucial tool for communication in the contemporary globalized environment, enabling individuals from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds to exchange information, thoughts, and experiences (Al-Sulaimaan & Khoshaba 2018).

English is acquired as a means of communication, encompassing both written and oral forms. The four primary elements involved in teaching English as a foreign language are reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Ali et al. (2018) emphasizes the importance of

learning the four essential language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking in enhancing student learning and information acquisition. Furthermore, alongside these elements, an essential aspect that must be acquired is translation. As noted by Newmark in Luhulima (2024), the translation process involves converting the meaning of a text into a different language while maintaining the author's original intent.

All students registered in the English Language Education Study Program at the University of Borneo Tarakan are required to complete a Translation course. It is essential for students to engage in translation studies as it provides them with significant advantages. First, translation is a necessary talent in today's globalized society, where cross-border communication is becoming more widespread. Students who learn translation can gain the ability to comprehend and appreciate different cultures, which is essential for effective communication in an interconnected world. Pursuant to Sun (2020), absorbing cross-cultural information during translation training allows students to develop analytical skills, increase resourcefulness and adaptability, and improve translation competence. Second, translation is an extremely effective method for language learning. This is backed by Jubran (2023) remark that translation assists learners of English as a foreign language by improving understanding, raising sensitivity to language variations, and permitting faster and more accurate re-expression of concepts. Consequently, it is essential for students to comprehend and acquire the skills necessary to translate SL ("English") into TL ("Indonesian").

Translation encompasses more than merely converting words and sentences from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). Nevertheless, translators often face challenges during the translation process, especially when dealing with figurative language. This type of language is prevalent across all writing genres. Idioms serve as some of the most prevalent instances of figurative language. According to Larson (1984), idiomatic translation entails the accurate transmission of the figurative and cultural subtleties of idiomatic expressions from the source language to the target language. Idioms are extensively utilized in both English and Bahasa Indonesia, appearing in informal contexts as well as literary compositions. They play a crucial role in the linguistic development of students. Idioms represent unique phrases that cannot be translated literally and frequently have meanings distinct from that of the particular words. As stated by Ishiwatari et al., (2019), idioms refer to expressions that are difficult to understand based on the literal meanings of their individual terms. Idioms help students extend their vocabulary while also gaining a greater knowledge of the cultural nuances and intricacies of language. As stated by Salih & Ali (2023), studying idiom translations can help people better appreciate the complexities of language, cultural context, and figurative phrases. They improve students' language abilities by introducing depth, richness, and originality, which enables them to communicate more effectively and establish stronger relationships with native speakers.

Therefore, translating idiomatic expressions poses several challenges for translators due to the inherent complexity and cultural specificity of such expressions. One challenge arises from the fact that idiomatic expressions frequently possess figurative or metaphorical meanings that cannot be translated directly on a word-for-word basis. According to Manipuspika (2022), the challenges in translating idioms and fixed expressions encompass accurately recognizing and understanding them, as well as effectively conveying their nuanced meanings in the target language. This necessitates that translators either find equivalent expressions or rephrase the idioms in the target language while maintaining their intended meaning. Given the deep linguistic and cultural ties in the source language, achieving precise translations for idiomatic terms in the target language proves to be a complex task.

The purpose of this study was to identifying the particular difficulties and errors sixth semester students have when translating English to Indonesian idioms. The researcher seeks to help students understand the significance of studying translation, especially in the context of

translating idioms from English to Indonesian. Students need to grasp fundamental translation concepts and other vital skills necessary for translation work. As they encounter new words and expressions, students should not only comprehend the meaning of the original language but also be mindful of all the possible errors that could occur during the translation process. Consequently, students have the opportunity to improve their skills, capabilities, and understanding in translating from the source language to the target language.

METHOD

The researcher used qualitative methods to investigate data and complete this investigation. A methodology for investigating and comprehending the meanings that people or groups ascribe to a social human context is qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). Formulating questions and methodologies, collecting data in a participant environment, conducting inductive data analysis, moving from detailed observations to more general themes, and interpreting the implications of the findings are all steps in the research process.

Considering the aforementioned statement, qualitative methodologies were employed to aid the researcher in articulating the facts. The results of the analysis served as a description of the study that was conducted through observations of the individual or group. Qualitative methods, particularly describing, are the most effective way for the researcher to analyze data. Using qualitative descriptive research, educators and researchers can obtain useful insights into numerous areas of the educational landscape, thereby contributing to the growth of knowledge and practice in the field.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher provides the findings from the analysis of the English to Indonesian Translation course, along with the perceptions of English Department students concerning idiomatic translation, which were gathered through questionnaires, documents, and interviews. The findings of the research were shared to address the research questions concerning the challenges encountered by students when translating idioms from English to Indonesian. In accordance with Baker's (2018) theory regarding idiom translation strategies, which are classified into different categories, Table 1 illustrates the strategies that students most commonly employ when translating idioms: 1) Utilizing an idiom similar meaning and form; 2) Using an idiom with a similar meaning but a different form; 3) Translating through paraphrase; 4) Translating by omission.

Table 1. Students' translation strategies

No.	Idiomatic Expressions	Translation Strategies			
		UISMF	UISMBDF	TP	TO
1	Hit the sack	-	39	7	1
2	Break a leg	-	29	12	9
3	Safe and Sound	-	49	1	1
4	Count on me	2	39	7	2
5	Butterfly in the stomach	3	43	2	
6	On cloud nine	2	48	-	-
7	When in Rome do what romans do	-	-	-	-
8	Call off	-	45	3	5
9	Hang in there	-	32	15	3
10	Cost arm and leg		47	2	1

Table 2. The translation errors associated with the various types of idioms made by students

No	Type of Idiom	Total	Idiom	Wrong in Translating
1	Colloquialism	2	Safe and sound	2
			Count on …	4
2	Proverb	6	Hit the sack	1
			Break a leg	-
			Butterfly in the stomach	7
			On cloud nine	3
			When in rome do what romans do	18
			Cost arm and leg	3
3	Phrasal verbs	2	Call off	-
			Hang in there	2

First, the difficulty experienced by students while translating idioms is that they find it difficult to locate a similar meaning related to the idiom. Their lack of understanding of idioms is additionally another factor creating problems when translating idioms. The distinction in sentence construction between English and Indonesian is also an element that makes it challenging for students.

The study revealed issues that the majority of students faced in translating idiomatic expressions. The initial challenge pertained to lexical knowledge. The majority of students were unable to identify the nearest equivalent source language that corresponds to the meaning of the idiomatic expressions, so they translated the idiom word for word (literal translation). For Example, “You can count on me like one, two, three, I'll be there And I know when I need it, I can count on you like four, three, two and you'll be there 'Cause that's what friends are supposed to do, oh, yeah” was translated into *“Kamu dapat menghitung pada saya seperti 1, 2, 3, saya akan ada dan saya tahu ketika saya membutuhkannya. Kamu dapat menghitung pada saya seperti 4, 3, 2 dan kamu akan ada” and “Kamu bisa hitung aku seperti 1, 2, 3, aku akan ada disana Tahu kok, kapan pun kamu butuh Aku bisa hitung kamu seperti 4, 3, 2, dan kamu akan ada disana Karena itu yang sahabat lakukan, oh ya”*. The translation of the idiom "count on" above is not appropriate. He translated it literally which in Indonesian means *“menghitung”*, while the meaning of the idiom means to “rely on”.

The next mistake in the idiom "He had butterflies in his stomach as he walked out onto the stage for his drama performance" they translated it as *"Dia sangat bahagia saat dia berjalan ke atas panggung untuk penampilan dramanya"*. An additional error is present, as there is a student who translates this expression literally, resulting in the phrase *“Dia memiliki kupu-kupu di perutnya saat dia berjalan ke atas panggung untuk penampilan dramanya”, “Perutnya terasa seperti dipenuhi kupu-kupu saat dia berjalan menuju panggung untuk pementasan drama” and “Dia merasa gembira saat dia berjalan diatas panggung untuk penampilan dramanya.”*. The idiom butterfly in the stomach according to Cambridge Dictionary has the meaning of “very nervous or frightened about something” but they translated it as very happy (*sangat bahagia*) in Indonesian.

Another mistake also occurs in the idiom "She’s been on cloud nine since she heard the news of her engagement" they translate it into "*Dia sangat beruntung sejak dia mendengar berita pertunangannya*” and “*Dia berada di atas awan semenjak mendengar kabar pertunangannya*”. An additional error arose when a student translated this expression word-for-

word, resulting in the phrase "*Dia berada di awan sembilan sejak dia mendengar berita pertunangannya*". According to Cambridge Dictionary the idiom on cloud nine has the meaning "very happy". In the Indonesian, there exists a phrase that conveys a nearly identical meaning, which is "*Seperti melayang di udara*" but they wrongly translate it into "*Sangat Beruntung*" in Indonesian.

Furthermore, there is an error in the phrase "The repairs on his vintage car ended up costing an arm and leg, but he believed it was worth it." The term "costing an arm and a leg" was misconstrued; he translated it as "*Perbaikan pada mobil antiknya akhirnya menghabiskan seimbang, tapi dia percaya itu berharga*." The true meaning of the idiom is that something is very expensive.

Second, students' responses collected from interview results support the reasons why they struggle to translate idioms from English to Indonesian.

S1. RR: "*The challenge I face when translating idioms is the lack of understanding of the context in the original language due to cultural differences in the language being translated*."

S3. CLR: "*One of the main challenges is finding equivalents that have similar meanings without losing the cultural essence. Idioms are often contextual and tied to their culture of origin, so there is not always a direct translation that has the same effect or meaning in Indonesian*."

Moreover, the stylistic factor posed a challenge in translating of idiomatic expressions. Challenges in identifying suitable equivalents in the target language are commonly encountered by several non-native learners while translating idiomatic expressions. The challenges in linguistic style were additionally affected by cultural obstacles. A frequent issue encountered was identifying a similar meaning that corresponds to the original language, despite some students' translations being adequate yet idiomatically incorrect.

S2. SJA: "*Because basically the structure of English and Indonesian is very different. Idioms in English are highly dependent on the structure of English words and sentences and sometimes the equivalent is not found in Indonesian. For example, English uses Tenses that conceptualize time while Indonesian does not have such a sentence structure.*"

S3. CLR: "*This difference is very influential. English has different sentence structures, such as the use of phrasal verbs (give up, break down), which are sometimes difficult to find equivalents in Indonesian. In addition, some idioms in English are metaphor-based which may not be easily understood in Indonesian culture*."

Addressing the factors that lead to students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions is linked to their insufficient awareness of such expressions. The students admitted that they encountered idioms during a specific sub-topic in a translation class. It appears that they rarely utilized these expressions in speaking or writing tasks, both within and beyond language schools. Consequently, their motivation to incorporate idiomatic expressions appeared to be lacking. Additionally, another issue arises from the challenges in finding suitable translations due to their limited vocabulary.

DISCUSSION

It is clear from examining the data results above that some students had trouble translating colloquial expressions. Since they were unfamiliar with the expressions and had not thoroughly studied idioms and their relationship to the target language's culture, they thought most of them were odd. understanding the notion of culture is crucial when evaluating its implications for translation. Although opinions vary regarding the relationship between language and culture, it is crucial to acknowledge that culture and language are fundamentally intertwined. Al-kadi (2015) elucidates those idiomatic expressions cannot be translated literally, as they are integral

to the socio-cultural dimension, necessitating that users of the language possess an understanding of the English cultural context. Nida (1964) asserted that cultural terms are indicative of material culture, social culture, and religious beliefs. Consequently, it can be inferred that the significance of a cultural term is confined to a particular cultural context, rendering literal translation unfeasible for these terms. This aligns with the earlier research conducted by Iklyma (2021), which found that students faced challenges in grasping the meanings of idioms. The majority of them struggled with the concept of idiom translation, lacked an adequate vocabulary, and possessed limited knowledge of the history or culture of the source language.

Tackling the factors that cause students to struggle with translating idiomatic expressions relates to their lack of familiarity with these phrases. The students admitted that they only encountered idioms during a specific sub-topic in a translation class. It appears they rarely used these expressions in speaking or writing tasks, both in and out of language schools. Consequently, their desire to use idiomatic expressions seemed to be very low. Another issue is the challenges faced in finding suitable translations because of their limited vocabulary. Vocabulary inadequacy is recognized as one of the primary barriers in translation, as indicated by Arono and Nadrah (2019). Numerous learners have mentioned struggles with locating words that accurately match the meanings in the target language. Some have even stated that they find idioms hard to understand due to their unfamiliarity. The difficulty of achieving equivalence has become a major concern in translation studies, as highlighted by Munday (2001), resulting in considerable discussions and disputes among academics. This issue stems from the fact that every language has unique linguistic and cultural traits that often vary and differ. Consequently, some students who do not understand idioms tend to translate them literally. This reflects the research conducted by Ayuningtyas et al. (2018), where students typically translated idiomatic expressions in a literal fashion. They focused exclusively on conveying the meaning of the idiomatic expression rather than translating the English idiom into its correct Indonesian equivalent.

The results shown above indicate that translating idiomatic expressions remains a major challenge. This can be due to students rarely using idioms, the lack of familiarity with idioms as a topic for classroom discussion, the hidden meanings tied to idioms, and the difficulties that come from cultural differences between English and Indonesian in everyday situations. Furthermore, idioms typically lack direct equivalents in the target language, and even if there are similar elements in the target language, their usage can differ greatly.

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions showed that lexical knowledge, cultural differences, and stylistic nuances were among the many challenges students faced when trying to understand idiomatic expressions. The learners struggled to identify the most appropriate equivalent term in the target language and found it challenging to infer the meanings of colloquial phrases. Consequently, they tended to translate these phrases literally, which often resulted in misinterpretation. Additionally, the students' grasp of idiomatic expressions was notably inadequate. The differences between English and Indonesian cultures further contributed to this challenge. Native speakers typically utilize idioms in informal conversations. Moreover, other factors that contribute to these challenges include a lack of understanding of idioms, insufficient vocabulary, which leads to difficulties in interpreting idiomatic expressions, and the learners' infrequent use of idioms in both speaking and writing.

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