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English Letters and Language Department  
Faculty of Humanities  
Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang

# THE CAPABILITY OF THE SEVENTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH TEACHING IKIP PGRI MADIUN IN TRANSLATING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Yuli Kuswardani

The Faculty of Letters and Arts Education IKIP PGRI Madiun  
Email: ikuswardaniae@gmail.com

## Abstract

The goal of this research is to expose the outcome of the idiom translation of the students. This research employs descriptive qualitative method, purposive sampling, and a deep interview. It is found out that the capability of the students in translating idioms is different. The capability of the students in translating idiom is influenced by translating experiences and the effectiveness of translation tools' usage.

Keywords: capability, idiomatic expressions, translation

## 1. Introduction

Among the difficulties arising in translating, the very complicated one is the difficulties related to culture, including translating idiomatic expressions. The idiomatic lexicon of one language is different from others because idioms are typical of one language and this peculiarity is specific to one language. Smith (in Fernando, 1996:18) says that "*idioms are forms of expression, of grammatical construction, or of phrasing, which are peculiar to a people or a nation*". This difference is closely related to the culture of the language users. Any nation has its way of perceiving and expressing something and its way is influenced with the geographical environment and the way of living. According to Baker (1992: 21), the cultural diversity is resulted by the difference in geography, belief, custom, knowledge, food and technology used in each country. For example, the idiom *feel like a million bucks* which is translated into *seperti mendapat duitan runtuh*. When both idioms are analyzed by considering the forming elements, it turns out that both have different meaning. However, both idioms are considered good equivalence, due to their relation to each culture, the translation must take into account the cultural elements of each.

The western culture regards money an important thing. Therefore, western people use money to express the getting joy. On the other hand, most Indonesians are farmers, that is why their expressions involve nature words. In Indonesian society, *duit* has big value, therefore it is involved in the idiomatic lexicon to express the joy of getting great luck. Very often a translator gets into big trouble in finding the equivalence expression of the target language. Such expression as *built-in cupboard*

is really hard to find the equivalence that a paraphrase like *dibuat sebagai bagian dari struktur suatu benda dan tidak dapat dilepaskan atau dipindahkan* has to be used in the translation (Sri Samiati Tarjana, 2001: 5).

Idioms are heavily furnished with cultural load, therefore a translator has to take into account the cultural context of both source and target language in translating idioms. McGuire (1991: 23) says that, *"The translation of idioms takes us a stage further in considering the question of meaning and translation, for idioms are culture bound"*. This idea is strengthen by Nida and Reyburn (1981:64) who say, *"as much as idioms tend to be reflections of highly specific cultural features, they are very likely to cause complications in translation"*.

English and Indonesian have big difference in both their origin and the development therefore it is normal if both languages have different idiomatic lexicon which results in the emerging difficulties in translating idioms from English into Indonesian.

The difficulties faced by translators in translating idioms from English to Indonesian among others: how to translate the idioms, how to recognize and understand the meaning, how to find the correct equivalence in Indonesian. Before coming to finding of the equivalence, they also have to face a difficulty: when there is no appropriate equivalence due to cultural difference of both languages.

As an important language in science development, English has a rich idiomatic lexicon. In its development, English absorbed idioms into its lexicon. Based on this thought, the researcher assumes that more attention must be paid to idioms in translation. According to Curry (1996:3) for English learners, studying idioms is an important aspect in mastering the language, especially American English. The American is used to employing idioms in daily talks, this makes idioms become crucial part in American English. Facts show that idioms worth getting big attention. Based on his teaching experience, Lado (1989:1) says his experience in giving private lesson for years to students and foreign companies indicates one of main difficulties for English learners is idiomatic expressions. This is because so many idiomatic expressions in modern English, and the lack of books about idioms which have been translated into Indonesian. Translation, an activity with language, will never be free from idioms, since idioms are build-in part of a language. Idioms are used for supporting and enriching language. Therefore it is very crucial to discuss idiom as a subject of a translation research. This thought pushes forward the writer to discuss idiom in translating English to Indonesian.



## 2. Research Method

The study is qualitative descriptive using primary and secondary data. Primary data is the result of idiom translation and interview with the students. Secondary data is theories or information supporting the analysis. The texts being translated are in the form of literature, economy, and medical texts. The researcher analyzes the data using interactive analysis model consists of data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification.

## 3. Finding and Discussion

### 3.1 Research Finding

How far the equivalence of data is evaluated by analysing the accuracy of meaning of the English which is translated into Indonesian based on the context. The result of the analysis is then classified into AE/Appropriate Equivalence, LE/Less Appropriate, IE/Inappropriate Equivalence, UI/Untranslatable Idiom.

#### a. Student A

The translating result of idioms of student A is shown in table 1 as follows:

Table 1: The translating result of idioms of student A

| Text                            | N    | Students A        |     |       |    |
|---------------------------------|------|-------------------|-----|-------|----|
|                                 |      | AE                | LE  | IE    | UI |
| Literature                      | 24   | 11                | 9   | 4     | -  |
| Medical                         | 8    | 5                 | 2   | 1     | -  |
| Economy I                       | 5    | 4                 | 1   | -     | -  |
| Economy II                      | 9    | 2                 | 5   | 2     | -  |
| Total                           | 46   | 22                | 17  | 7     | -  |
| Percentage                      | 100% | 47.8%             | 37% | 15.2% | 0% |
| Competence on translating idiom |      | Less good (47.8%) |     |       |    |

The following is discussed some example of idiom translation produced by student A

(1) Av Lit, 95: 4/ 08/ AE

*The odour of Christmas being on the wind, it was the season when superfluous pork and black puddings are suggestive of charity in well-to-do families; and Silas's misfortune had brought him uppermost in the memory of housekeepers like Mrs Osgood, Mr Crackenthorp, too, while he admonished Silas that his money had probably been taken from him because he thought too much of it,*

and never came to church, enforced the doctrine by a present of pigs' petittues; well calculated to dissipate unfounded prejudices against the clerical character.

(*well-to-do* = *kaya*)

The source language idiom *well-to-do* is translated by student A as '*kaya*'. Students A uses nonidiom equivalence. Although the source language idiom is translated into nonidiom equivalence, the translation is correct because the meaning of nonidiom target-language is the same as the source-language idiom.

(2) A/ Lit. 108: 1/ 24/ LE

*Hold your tongue, and don't worry me. I can see Nancy's eyes, just as they will look at me, and feel her hand in mine already.*

(*Hold your tongue* = *Jangan bicara*)

Appropriate equivalence = *Tutup mulutmu*

In the source text above, the idiom *Hold your tongue* has primary meaning '*diam dan menahan untuk tidak mengatakan kata-kata yang kurang sopan*'. Student A translates the idiom arbitrarily but contextually inaccurate, to be '*jangnan bicara*'. Idiom translation of source language is contextually inaccurate because the translation lack of emotional quality existed in the source idiom. In the source language, idiom '*Hold your tongue*' expresses anger. Therefore the idiom better translated into '*tutup mulutmu*' so that the emotive effect is the same as in idiom of the source language. Accordingly the communicative value is equivalent with the idiom of the source text.

#### b. Student B

The translation produced by student B is shown in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. The translating result of idiom of student B

| Text                            | N    | Student B         |       |       |       |
|---------------------------------|------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
|                                 |      | AE                | LE    | IE    | UI    |
| Literature                      | 48   | 21                | 9     | 8     | 10    |
| Medical                         | 4    | -                 | -     | -     | 4     |
| Economy I                       | 6    | 3                 | 1     | 2     | -     |
| Economy II                      | 9    | 3                 | 2     | 3     | 1     |
| Total                           | 67   | 27                | 12    | 13    | 15    |
| Percentage                      | 100% | 40,3%             | 17,9% | 19,4% | 22,4% |
| Competence on translating idiom |      | Less good (40,3%) |       |       |       |

The following is discussed example of idiom translation produced by student B:

(1) B/ Lit. 92: 12/ 01/ AE

But either because inquiry was too slow-footed to overtake him, or because the description applied to so many pedlars that inquiry did not know how to choose among them, weeks **passed away**, and there was no other result concerning the robbery than a gradual cessation of the excitement it had caused in Raveloe.

(**passed away** = *berlalu*)

In the source text above, idiom '**passed away**' means '*berlalu*' by the context. Translator B translates the idiom correctly. Although source language idiom is translated into nonidiom equivalence, but the translation is correct because the meaning of nonidiom target-language is the same as the source-language idiom.

(2) B/ Lit. 94: 5/ 08/ LE

To any one who had observed him before he lost his gold, it might have seemed that so withered and shrunken a life as his could hardly be susceptible of a bruise, could hardly endure any subtraction but such as would put an end to it altogether. But in reality it had been an eager life, filled with immediate purpose, which fenced him in from the wide, cheerless unknown. It had been a clinging life; and though the object round which its fibres had clung was a dead disrupted thing, it satisfied the need for clinging. But now the fence was **broken down**-the support was snatched away

(**broken down** = *hancur/roboh*)

Appropriate equivalence = *dibongkar*

Primary meaning of the idiom '**broken down**' is '*rusak*' but in the context of source language above, the meaning is '*dibongkar*'. Student B translates idiom of the source text to be '*hancur/roboh*'. The translation produced by student B inequivalent with the context of idiom '**broken down**' in the source text. With this translation, the message of idiom of source text cannot be conveyed appropriately due to the meaning shift. Viewed from the context, the idiom '**broken down**' above bears some meaning elements of '*dirusak/diceraikan-cerai-kan bagian-bagiannya dengan paksa*' and '*perbuatan yang sengaja dilakukan oleh orang lain*', whereas '*hancur/roboh*' means '*binasa, rusak, runtuh dengan sendirinya/tidak dilakukan dengan sengaja oleh seseorang atau orang lain*'. Idiom '**broken down**' will more appropriate if it is translated to be '*dibongkar*' because this meaning is equivalent with the meaning of the idiom in the source text.

(3) B/ Lit. 95- 34/ 17/ UI

"Come, Master Mamer, why, you've no call to **sit-a-moaning**.

You're a deal better off to ha' lost your money, nor to ha' kep it by foul means.

(**sit-a-moaning** = *UI*)

Appropriate equivalence = *mengeluhkan*

In the context of the source language above, idiom '*sit-a-moaning*' means '*mengeluhan*'. Student B does not translate this idiom because he is unable to interpret the meaning of this idiom, therefore he cannot translate it to the target language correctly.

#### c. Student C

The translation produced by student C is shown in Table 3 as follows:

Table 2. The translating result of idioms of student C.

| Text                            | N    | Student C    |      |      |    |
|---------------------------------|------|--------------|------|------|----|
|                                 |      | AE           | LE   | IE   | UI |
| Literature                      | 58   | 47           | 7    | 4    | -  |
| Medical                         | 8    | 7            | -    | 1    | -  |
| Economy I                       | 7    | 7            | -    | -    | -  |
| Economy II                      | 9    | 8            | -    | 1    | -  |
| Total                           | 82   | 69           | 7    | 5    | -  |
| Percentage                      | 100% | 84.1%        | 8.6% | 7.3% | 0% |
| Competence on translating idiom |      | Good (84.1%) |      |      |    |

The following is discussed some examples of idiom translation produced by student C:

#### (1) C/ Lit. 97: 1/ 26/ AE

*He had a sense that the old man meant to be goodnatured and neighbourly; but the kindness **fell on** him as sunshine falls on the wretched-he had no heart to taste it, and felt that it was very far off him.*

(*fell on* = *menyertai*)

Idiom '*fell on*' is translated by translator C to be '*menyertai*'. This translation is appropriate because the meaning of idiom is equivalent to contextual meaning of source language. '*menyertai*' is the appropriate idiom of '*fell on*' the meanings of those are the same.

#### (2) C/ Lit. 93: 13/ 06/ LE

*When the robbery was **talked of** at the Rainbow and elsewhere, in good company, the balance continued to waver between the rational explanation founded on the tinder-box, and the theory of an impenetrable mystery that mocked investigation.*

(*talked of* = *dinyatakan*)

Appropriate equivalence = *diperbincangkan*.

Idiom '*talked of*' is translated by translator C to be '*dinyatakan*'. This translation is inappropriate because the meaning is not equivalent to contextual meaning where this idiom is used in the source language. '*Dinyatakan*' means '*dikatakan*', while the meaning of idiom '*talked of*' in the above context is '*dibicarakan*', '*dipercakapkan* atau *dijadikan*'.

*bahan percakapan*'. Therefore this translation is inappropriate because the idiomatic meaning in the source text is not conveyed to the target language correctly. The meaning of idiom *'talked of'* is conveyed correctly by the context if it is translated to be *'diperbincangkan'*

### 3.2. Discussion

The factor which influences the competency of student in translating idiom is how long he experiences to be a translator. From the interview with the students, it turns out that each student has different working period in translation. Student A has become a translator for two years, while student B for one year. Student C has experienced a translator job for the longest time among the three, that is for three years. The length they get involved in translating job as a part timer influences their competence in translating idioms. The longer they become translator, the more often they practice translating, therefore they get more experience accordingly. From the experience, many things can be learnt, and this is very useful for enriching their knowledge in translation.

Soemamo (1988: 33) says, *"Keberhasilan seorang penerjemah juga ditentukan oleh pengalaman yang cukup dalam praktik penerjemahan."* Moreover, Soemamo (1988: 65-66) also says that the competency in translating appropriately cannot be gained in relatively short time. The competency is gained through a long term process and only can be gained through several steps of development. This statement of Sumarmo is closely related to some finding in his research, he studied the relation between the length of learning in translation, gender, English competence, and types of translation mistake in translating English into Indonesian.

The effectiveness in using dictionary also provides factors which influence the result of translating idiom by student. The findings in this research indicate that the use of dictionary more effectively by student C has helped him produce idiom translation which has higher equivalence as compared to the work of student A and B. In his research, Nababan (2004: 215-2016) gets the fact that most of professional translators who became the subject of his research admitted the benefit of using dictionary in translation.

This statement is in accordance with the thought of Wojowasito (2003: 127) who proposes the importance of dictionary for translating activity. He says: *"Kamus dan kegiatan penerjemahan merupakan dua hal yang tidak terpisahkan antara satu dengan yang lainnya."* Researcher agrees with the thought of Wojowasito. When translator translates some text and gets a difficulty in finding equivalence word, then the first step to do is to consult dictionary to find out the equivalence word. This way, dictionary becomes a tool to find the equivalence of the source language word he wants to know.



The following is the thought of Sri Samlati Tarjana (2001: 24), about the importance of the use of dictionary for a translator to overcome the difficulties in translating idioms, that is by using monolingual and bilingual dictionary, she says:

"...translators in Indonesia are challenged to improve themselves to become professionals in the field. This is only possible through constant practice, namely by continuously attempting to carry out translation works. By doing so, they are forced to look up the meanings of idioms in monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, to check references about English and Indonesian idioms, and to consult with the native speakers whenever available."

This skill in using dictionary must be completely mastered by a translator. This is of course must be practiced continually, that is by actively using dictionary in translating activity. This in its turn should help him produce good translation.

#### 4. Conclusion

Referring to the result of the analysis, the capability of the students in translating idioms is influenced by the students' experiences to be translators and the use of dictionary.

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