The Translation of Idiomatic Expressions in ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ Novel from English into Indonesian

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Abstract

This research examines idiomatic expressions found in the translation of Twain’s ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ from English into Indonesian; identifies the characteristics of idiomatic expressions; and investigates translator’s decision to apply the procedures of translating idiomatic expressions and equivalence. This research was data-driven study which focuses on idiomatic expressions found in an American novel, ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ written by Mark Twain (1884/2018) as the Source Text (ST) and its Indonesian translation by Ambhita Dhyaningrum (2011) as the Target Text (TT). The data was analyzed by using descriptive (qualitative)-comparative methods focusing on (Kvetko, 2009) characteristics of idioms, (Catford, 1978) formal correspondence and textual equivalence, and (Newmark, 2001) semantic and communicative translation. The findings show that demotivated/opaque idioms, partially motivated idioms/semi opaque, and semi-idioms are identified in the idioms. In addition, verb, verbless, and minimal pair idioms are found. Moreover, the translator tends to apply translation shifts which depart from formal correspondence to achieve the textual equivalence. Nevertheless, sometimes the translation shifts occur without changing translation’s textual equivalence. The translator also applies communicative translation which is more natural in the target language.

Keywords:
translation; idiom; equivalence

Kata Kunci:
terjemahan; idiom; kesepadanan

Abstrak

Penerjemahan Ungkapan Idiomatik pada Novel Berbahasa Inggris ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ ke Bahasa Indonesia

1 Introduction

Translating idiomatic expressions has been a challenging task for translators. Their meaning cannot be translated based on its lexical words. They have hidden meaning consisting of some aspects, like grammar, culture, setting, and diction. (Kvetko, 2009) defines idiom as a phrase which has special meaning on its own in which the meaning can be different with its individual components and the whole idioms. It is “groups of words whose meaning is different from the individual words (Gairns & Redman, 2011). Idiomatic expressions are also culture specific in which sometimes the meaning is not equivalent in the target language. The meaning cannot be translated literally, moreover it is only used within a society which makes it hard to translate. (Ren & Yu, 2013) believe that idioms reflect culture, and culture determines idioms. Therefore, translation of idioms may involve distinctive aspects of different cultures. Transferring messages of idioms requires knowledge of both source language and target language.

“Professional Ethics of the Translators’ Guild of Great Britain” in (Baker, 2018) states that the difficulty faced by the translators requires them to have native background of knowledge. This knowledge includes the capability to speak and write fluently in order to achieve correct interpretation structurally, grammatically, and idiomatically. (Tytler, 1978) adds “translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work - knowledge of the language of the original, and acquaintance with the subject”. In order to achieve equivalence in meaning, translators should know the knowledge of the native language that he/she is working with. (Newmark, 1988) also argues that a good translation is satisfying for translators but a good translator will never be satisfied and always try to improve their work. This view shows that translators will do their best to achieve the best translation.

(Kvetko, 2009) proposes the classification of idioms based on its semantic and construction. The semantic classifications are: (1) demotivated idioms which have no connection between the meaning of the lexical words and the whole idiom; (2) partially motivated idioms which are semi-opaque in which there is a certain connection between the meaning of the whole and the individual words; and (3) semi idioms which are actualized when one word is figurative and the other has a literal meaning. He also states that idiomatic expressions are classified into verb idioms, verbless idioms, sentence idioms, and minimal idioms. Verb idioms belong to idioms which have a combination of verb and other lexical items. Verbless idioms refer to idioms without a verb which can be adverb, adjectives, and noun. Sentence idioms are the combination of subject and verb agreement. Minimal idioms are idioms which have at least one full lexical word. The classifications help translators to recognize idioms.

The differences of culture and background lead to some problems in translating idiomatic expressions. (Baker, 2018) states that there are two main problems in translating idiomatic expressions. First, the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly in the source language. For translators, recognizing whether a phrase is idiomatic expression needs better understanding about the characteristics of idiomatic expressions. Second, the difficulties faced by translators include rendering the meaning that is conveyed in the target language. In this case, translators have to translate naturally based on the meaning in the source language to be equivalent in the target language. (Nababan & Nuraeni, 2012) defines equivalence as the similarity of content or message between the source language and the target language. It is classified into two categories: formal correspondence and textual equivalent (Catford, 1978). She refers formal correspondence as any target language category such as unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc which can occupy similar source language category in the target language, while textual equivalence refers to any target language text where the meaning is equivalent with the source language text. It is seen that formal correspondence deals with the translation of target language category and textual equivalence deals with meaning.
Translation is more than just replacing lexical and grammatical items. It is also omitting the linguistic element of the source language text to achieve the equivalence. Therefore, formal correspondence can possibly not be achieved without resulting in a translation shift. It occurs when a translator tries to deliver the meaning in the target language other than translating word by word. A translation can have formal correspondence which has impact in meaning. Meanwhile, if the formal correspondence does not meet, there will be a shift of translation. It departs from formal correspondence in the process of translating from source language to the target language (Catford, 1978). He classifies shifts into two: level shifts and category shifts. Level shifts refer to a source language item which has a translation equivalent at a different level in the target language. While, category shifts depart from formal correspondence in translation.

Translation shift is classified into four categories, such as: (1) structure shift which is considered as the most frequent category shifts. The source text and target text have a shift in structure in which the words are put in different order or omitted; (2) class-shift which happens when the translation equivalent of a source language has different class in the target language; (3) unit shift is the change of rank that has equivalent word in the target language; (4) intra-system shift is the type of shift which affects the categories of grammar such as unit, structure, and class. Translation shifts affect the formation of sentence and words between two languages. Translating idiomatic expressions from the source language into the target language should result in the equivalence of meaning which has a correlation with formal correspondence. However, achieving both formal correspondence and textual equivalence is very challenging since both languages sometimes differ in word formation and meaning.

English and Indonesian languages have similarity in terms of word formations. Both languages use Subject (S)-Verb (V)-Object (O) agreement. Therefore, these languages are compatible to be investigated due to the similarity of word formations. Furthermore, in translating idiomatic expressions, a translator has to decide whether he/she will translate it using semantic or communicative meaning. (Newmark, 2001) proposes two approaches in translation, namely semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation tries to render the semantic and syntactic structure of the target language by considering the source language’s original meaning. It leaves the original culture in a translation resulting in awkward and complex translation. He also defines communicative translation as “trying to produce on the original of the readers”. In addition, semantic translation resembles Catford’s formal correspondence, while communicative translation matches with textual equivalence.

‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ was written by Mark Twain in 1884. It is considered to be the first true American novel about Jim and Finn who went along Mississippi River. As it was an American novel, the language shows cultural diversity. The use of idiomatic expression shows the culture during the time that the novel was written. This research tries to: (1) identify the characteristics of idiom; (2) investigate the formal correspondence and textual equivalence in the novel; and (3) identify the semantic and communicative meaning. This research is expected to give an insight on the translation field mainly translation equivalence.

Some studies have been carried out relating to the equivalence in translation. (Dayan, 2012) investigated dynamic equivalence and formal correspondence. He tried to give a critical review on Nida’s translation theory of equivalence and conducted a comparative study of dynamic equivalence and formal correspondence. The object of the study was the translation between English and Chinese. The writer conducted this study to confirm the applicability of Nida’s theory of dynamic equivalence in English-Chinese translation. The findings showed that the application of dynamic equivalence in the translation between English and Chinese has defects in which it usually precedences over formal correspondence.

Similar with Dayan, (Farrokh, 2011) investigated equivalence and shifts in the Persian translation of English complex sentences with wh-subordinate clauses. He applied Nida’s theory
formal and dynamic equivalence. The findings showed that the occurrence of shift is more frequent than equivalence and the equivalence does not have any similar form in the target language to achieve the dynamic equivalence. Both previous studies discussed about equivalence. They tried to investigate the application of equivalence of form and meaning in translated texts and also translation shift that occurred in the translated texts. The objects also used sentences which have literal meaning. Relying on (Baker, 2018), idiomatic expressions may have no equivalent in the target language. To fill in the gap, this research investigates formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence of idiomatic expressions as well as translation shifts that might occur in translating idiomatic expressions.

2 Methods

2.1 Data Sources

This research used ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ written by Twain (consisting of 42 chapters with 440 pages) published in Indonesia in 2018 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama and its Indonesian translation by Dhyaningrum (consist of 42 chapters with 391 pages) published by Bentang. There were two considerations in selecting this novel. First, this novel is a fiction and children’s literature which has language variations. Second, the language used consists of idiomatic expressions which is related to its culture. Accordingly, idiomatic expressions are a challenging task for translators since it has to be translated equivalently into the target language. This research used idiomatic expressions in chapter 1-10 as the data. This research was data-driven research which was interpreted according to the data. It applied qualitative data.

The idiom classification was based on Kvetko’s classification of idioms, namely semantic and constructions. The idioms are identified in ‘The Dictionary of American Idiom and Phrasal Verbs’ (Spears & NetLibrary, 2005). The excerpt below is the example of idiomatic expression found in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn novel.

(1) ST: ‘... but I don’t take no stock in it’
TT: ‘aku tidak akan mengumpulkan tawanan wanita’.

Semantically, the idiom belongs to a demotivated idiom and verb idiom in terms of construction. The meaning of the idiom is ‘not to believe of accept something’. From the translation, the meaning is far from the meaning of the idiom. The translator tried to translate based on the literal meaning and its context. The formal correspondence is very likely applied by the translator. Semantic translation is used since the meaning is not rendered smoothly.

2.2 Data Collection Technique

This research applied content analysis using observation and documentation techniques. It focused on idiomatic expressions and its Indonesian translation. The data was taken and collected by: (1) reading carefully the chapters of the novel; (2) comparing and contrasting the Source Text (ST) and the Target Text (TT); (3) underlining and taking notes the idiomatic expressions; (4) classifying the data based on idiomatic expression classification; (5) reducing the data, specifically on idiomatic expressions; (6) looking for the definition of the idiomatic expressions through ‘Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs’ by McGraw Hills; (7) classifying the data based on Kvetko’s classification of idioms, investigating Catford’s formal correspondence and textual equivalence and Newmark’s semantic and communicative meaning; (8) encoding the data sheets; (9) analyzing the data.

3 Results and Discussion

Based on the features of Catford’s formal correspondence and textual equivalence and Newmark’s semantic and communicative meaning in translation, this part of the research investigates some idiomatic expressions in ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ novel. The classifications of
Idioms are also explained. The findings show that the translation of idiomatic expressions in ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ novel do not follow the formal correspondence in the target text. However, there are some shifts in categories which are applied to make the meaning equivalent in the target text. The examples of translation shift and its equivalence in meaning are presented in the following page.

Sample 1.

(2) ST: Why, my boy, you are all out of breath.
TT: Ada apa, Anakku, mengapa kau sampai kehabisan napas begitu?

In the excerpt (2), the idiom ‘out of breath’ belongs to partially motivated idiom/semi-opaque since the meaning has a connection between the meaning of the whole idiom and individual words. Based on its construction, it is a minimal idiom which has a word formation of adverb+preposition+noun. In the TT, the word formation changes into verb+noun. Translation shift of class occurs in translating this idiom. Although the preposition is omitted by the translator, the meaning can still be understood in the TT. In addition, the meaning is equivalent with the meaning in the TT which is ‘kehabisan napas’. It has naturalness and is close to the source language message. Therefore, the translation belongs to communicative translation. The translated idiom undergoes translation shift which is applied by the translator to achieve the equivalence of meaning. Although the formal correspondence does not occur, the idiom is equivalent with the TT.

Sample 2.

(3) ST: ...and that nigger was corked up and had to take a back seat.
TT: ... dan negro itu akan terdiam dan mundur.

In excerpt (3), the idiomatic expression ‘take a back seat’ is a demotivated idiom which has no connection between the meaning of individual words and the whole idiom. It is also a verb idiom consisting of verb+noun phrase (determiner+adjective+noun). In the TT, it is translated into ‘mundur’ which is a verb. The translation does not represent the idiomatic meaning. There is a shift in structure in which the translator omits the noun phrase. Furthermore, the shift in structure means the formal correspondence is not achieved and the idiomatic expression is not equivalent with the TT. The connotative equivalence does not meet although the translator applied translation shift. The appropriate meaning is to ‘become less important’ than someone or something else which is contrast with the translated idiomatic ‘mundur’. In English, the word ‘mundur’ means ‘get back’. It is seen that the translator applied semantic translation.

Sample 3.

(4) ST: Sometimes the widow would take me one side and talk about Providence in a way to make a body’s mouth water; but maybe next day Mis Watson would take a hold and knock it all down again.

In excerpt (4), the idiomatic expression ‘knock it all down’ belongs to partially motivated idiom/semi opaque and verb idiom. It is formed by verb+object+noun phrase while the translated idiom ‘sia-sia’ is in the form of adjective. There is a translation shift of structure in this idiom. The idiom in the ST is placed in the beginning of the sentence, while in the TT, the location is at the end of the sentence. The form is also changed. However, the application of translation shift does not meet the equivalence in the TT. The translator decides to associate it with the previous sentence. In the TT, the word ‘sia-sia’ means ‘useless’. It is contrast with the meaning in the TT which is ‘to thrust someone or something to the ground by hitting’. In this case, the idiom does not have formal correspondence and equal meaning in the TT. From the sentence, the translator tries to apply...
communicative translation which is more idiomatic translation, but unfortunately the meaning is not equivalent.

Sample 4.

(5) ST: Dog my cats ef I didn’ hear sumf’n.
TT: Anjing atau kucing?

An idiomatic expression ‘dog my cats’ in excerpt (5) is a verb which consists of verb+noun phrase (possessive adjective+noun). In the TT, it consists of noun+conjunction+noun. The translation of structure shift is applied by the translator since the forms are contrast. Furthermore, the translator uses semantic translation to translate it. ‘Dog’ and ‘cat’ mean ‘anjing’ and ‘kucing’ in the TT. The meaning is literal. Meanwhile, the idiomatic meaning is ‘an exclamation of surprise’. It is a demotivated/opaque idiom since there is no connection between the meaning of idiom and individual words. The meaning used by the translator is far from the idiomatic meaning. From the translation, this idiomatic expression does not meet the textual equivalent in the TT as well as the formal correspondence.

Sample 5.

(6) ST: In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.
TT: Hidangan itu disajikan di dalam sebuah kuali, dari aneka macam bahan, dengan kuah yang menggenang di sekelilingnya dan membuatnya tampak lebih lezat.

In excerpt (6), this idiomatic expression belongs to a demotivated idiom/opaque. The meaning is used in figurative meaning and also has a literal meaning. It is also a verbless idiom which is formed without a verb. The construction is noun+conjunction+noun. In the process of translating the idiomatic expression, there is a class shift from noun into noun phrase. In the TT, the noun phrase consists of determiner+noun. In this case, the shift happens not to achieve an equivalence since the application of translation shift of unit does not result in communicative meaning. The meaning of idiomatic expression ‘odds and ends’ is miscellaneous things. However, the idiomatic expression “odds and ends” is translated as ‘sebuah kuali’ in the target language. The translator tries to guess from the exact contextual meaning of the sentence which is considered as semantic translation. Since there is a shift and the meaning is not achieved, the translated idiomatic expression does not have formal correspondence and does not result in the textual equivalence.

Sample 6.

(7) ST: Well, I couldn’t see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn’t try for it.
TT: Ya, aku tidak melihat adanya keuntungan dengan pergi ke tempat yang ingin dikunjunginya itu sehingga aku memutuskan untuk tidak mencobanya.

The idiomatic expression in excerpt (7) belongs to a verb idiom in the form of verb+noun phrase (possessive adjective+noun). In the TT, it is a verb. Hence, there is a shift of downward rank. The noun phrase is omitted by the translator to get the equivalence. The meaning of the idiomatic expression is ‘to make a final decision’. The translated idiom is ‘memutuskan’ which has similar meaning with the idiomatic expression. The idiom is a partially motivated/semi-opaque. In this idiom, the translator uses communicative translation. She tries to render it as close as the meaning in the TT. In this case, the form changes to achieve the textual equivalence although it does not have formal correspondence.

Sample 7.

(8) ST: You do that when you’ve lost a horseshoe that you’ve found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn’t ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you’d killed a spider.
In Excerpt (8), the idiomatic expression ‘nailing it up’ is a semi idiom and a verb idiom. The word formation is verb+object+preposition. In the TT, the form changed into a verb. Translation shift of downward rank occurs in the translation of this idiomatic expression. The translator translates it into ‘memakunya’ which meets the meaning of the idiomatic expression in the TT. It belongs to communicative translation. Furthermore, the translation shift is applied by the translator to achieve the meaning equivalence. There is a translation shift in translating the idiomatic expression to be equivalent in the TT. Therefore, the idiomatic expression is considered as having a textual equivalence.

**Sample 8.**

(9) ST: ..or else it wouldn’t be fair and square for the others.
TT: Kalau tidak, peraturannya jadi tidak adil untuk yang lain.

The idiomatic expression ‘fair and square’ in excerpt (9) belongs to a partially motivated idiom since the word ‘fair’ has a connection between the meaning of the idiom and individual word. It is a verbless idiom which is formed by adjectives and separated by conjunction ‘and’. The translated idiom is also in the form of adjective. However, there is an omission of adjective and conjunction which belongs to the translation shift of inter-system. It is applied by the translator to be equivalent in the TT. The translator uses communicative translation since the idiomatic expression is translated ‘adil’ which is natural and close to the meaning in the TT. The textual equivalence is achieved although it does not meet the formal correspondence.

**Sample 9.**

(10) ST: I looked over my shoulder every now and then, but I didn’t see nobody.
TT: Aku terus menerus mengamati sekitarku, tetapi aku tidak melihat siapa pun.

In excerpt (10), this idiom belongs to a partially motivated idiom and a verb idiom. The word formation is verb+preposition+noun while in the TT is verb+noun. The preposition of the word formation is omitted in the TT. The structure translation shift occurs in this translation. Interestingly, the translation shift is applied to meet the equivalence of meaning in the TT. The meaning is similar with the meaning in the TT which is considered as equivalence. The translator applies communicative translation. Although translation shift happens, the most important thing is the meaning can be delivered appropriately. Textual equivalence is applied in this idiom.

**Sample 10.**

(11) ST: “The widow, hey?—and who told the widow she could put in her shovel about a thing that ain’t none of her business?”
TT: Janda itu? Lalu, siapa yang bilang kepada janda itu kalau dia bisa menjelalimu dengan urusan yang sama sekali bukan urusannya?

The idiom in excerpt (11) does not consist of verb which belongs to a partially motivated idiom and a verbless idiom. The word formation is noun+preposition+noun phrase (possessive adjective+noun) in the SL which is changed into noun in the TT. There is a unit shift in intra-system shift where the translation is simplified by the translator in order to make the meaning equivalent in the TT. In the TT, the equivalence of idiom ‘none of her business’ is ‘urusan’ in which the equivalence is achieved. It shows that communicative translation is applied. In the translation of this idiom, there is an equivalence in the TT although the formal correspondence does not meet. The shift was applied by the translator to achieve the textual equivalence.

**Sample 11.**
ST: I’ll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be better’n what he is.

TT: Aku akan belajar membesarkan seorang anak laki-laki yang sombong kepada ayahnya sendiri dan mau jadi lebih hebat darinya.

The idiom ‘put on airs’ in excerpt (12) belongs to a demotivated idiom and a verb idiom. The word formation is verb+preposition phrase (preposition+noun). Meanwhile, the equivalent meaning found causes the word formation is simplified into an adjective. By using an adjective word, the meaning is equivalent. The meaning of ‘put on airs’ according to Dictionary of American Idiom and Phrasal Verb is ‘to act better than one really is’. It has similar meaning with ‘sombong’ in the target text. There is a unit downward rank shift in order to make the meaning equivalent in the TT. The translator applies communicative translation which helps the textual equivalence achieved in the TT.

**Sample 12.**

(13) ST: You just shell it out.

TT: Kau hanya akan menghabiskannya.

In excerpt (13), the idiom ‘shell it out’ belongs to a partially motivated idiom/semi opaque and a verb idiom where it consists of verb+adverb. The translator applies a unit shift in downward rank shift in which the adverbial word ‘out’ is omitted. The translation is simplified into ‘menghabiskannya’. It has similar meaning with the idiomatic expression, where ‘shell out’ means ‘to spend a certain amount of money’. It is a communicative translation in which the translated idiom is close to the meaning in the TT. The downward rank shift is applied to achieve the equivalence of meaning.

**Sample 13.**

(14) ST: ... but now he was a-going to turn over a new leaf..

TT: Berjanji akan membuka lembaran baru.

In excerpt (14), the idiom ‘turn over a new leaf’ belongs to a semi idiom since the word ‘leaf’ used in the figurative meaning, while the other word ‘turn over’ has literal meaning. According to its structure, it is a verb idiom. The form of this idiom is verb+noun phrase. There is an inter-system shift in translating the noun phrase. The word order is a new leaf (determiner+adjective+noun) → ‘lembaran baru’ (noun+adjective). The translator also omits the determiner in the TT, since in the TT, the determiner does not need to be translated. The readers in the TT already understand the meaning although the determiner is not mentioned in the TT. The shift causes this idiomatic expression does not meet the formal correspondence. However, the translator reaches the textual equivalence. The translator applies communicative translation since she can render it naturally and close to the TT.

The shift in the translation of idiomatic expressions in ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ mostly occurs. It is similar with the studies conducted by (Dayan, 2012) and (Farrokh, 2011). The translation from Chinese into English and Persian into English also tries to achieve equivalence in meaning in which translation shift occurs more frequently. The possibility of applying the shift follows Nida et al., 1982, who state that translation is more likely about producing message which is equivalent with the meaning from the TT. Accordingly, meaning is more important than form.

**Conclusion**

The characteristics of idiomatic expressions found in ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Novel’ according to its semantic view are demotivated idioms/opaque, partially motivated idioms/semi-opaque, and semi idioms. In addition, according to its structure, they are verb idiom which consists of verb and other lexical items and verbless idioms which do not include a verb in the formation of idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, the translation of idiomatic expressions is expected...
to achieve textual equivalence in the TT by considering the formal correspondence. Meanwhile, the formal correspondence in the target text mostly do not meet, since most of the idiomatic expressions get translation shifts. However, the application of translation shifts to translate the idiomatic expressions in TT does not always meet the textual equivalence. Some translation shifts in the idiomatic expression are translated communicatively resulting changes in the word formation. Therefore, the textual equivalence could not be achieved in all idiomatic expressions. Moreover, only some expressions have equivalence in meaning. Considering the translation equivalence in meaning, the translation of idiomatic expressions in ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ mostly does not meet the formal correspondence and the textual equivalence occurs on some expressions only.

References


