

## Preserving Cultural Meaning of Idiomatic Expression Translation in “A Family Affair” Subtitles

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**Abstract.** This study analyzes the translation of idiomatic expressions in the Indonesian subtitles of the film *A Family Affair*, focusing on how meaning is preserved across languages and cultures. Using a qualitative method, the research identifies various English idioms and examines how they are rendered in Indonesian through strategies such as dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, modulation, and reduction. The findings reveal that each idiom is adapted based on context, aiming to retain its figurative and emotional intent. While some translations successfully preserve the original meaning, others are reshaped to suit cultural norms and audience familiarity. This study highlights the importance of flexible and culturally aware translation strategies to ensure that idiomatic language remains meaningful, natural, and relatable in subtitle translation.

**Keywords:** *A Family Affair*, Idiomatic expressions, Subtitles, Translation strategies, Cultural substitution.

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Translating idiomatic expressions especially in film subtitles is quite challenging (Chen, 2015; Astiningsih & Nugroho, 2024). Idioms often have meanings that cannot be translated literally, so it is important to preserve the original message. Furthermore, dialogue is not just about conveying information but also about reflecting the cultural and emotional tone of the story (Isnaini & Nugroho, 2024).

Previous studies have looked into how idioms are translated in films like *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Jing, 2010), *Inside Out* (Ninsih, 2020), and *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* (Dewi, 2016). These studies show that translators often use strategies like paraphrasing, omission, or finding culturally appropriate equivalents in the target language (Larassati et al., 2019; Iriawan & Nugroho, 2023). However, the challenge still lies in maintaining the figurative meaning of idioms while adapting them to the target language cultural context. This study focuses on the film *A Family Affair*, analyzing how idiomatic expressions are translated into Indonesian subtitles. It aims to see whether the original meaning of these idioms is kept intact and what strategies are used to address cultural differences and subtitle limitations (Meilany & Nugroho, 2024). The results of this study aim to offer insights into how idioms can be translated effectively while keeping their original meaning and cultural relevance.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The translation of idiomatic expressions in film subtitles is a complex task that requires careful consideration of both linguistic and cultural factors (Basari & Nugroho, 2017). Previous studies have examined various translation strategies used to preserve the meaning and cultural relevance of figurative language while adhering to the constraints of subtitling (Nugroho & Basari, 2019; Sitio &

Nugroho, 2023; Normalita & Nugroho, 2024). These studies provide important insights that inform the analysis of *A Family Affair*.

### **Indry Caesarria Dewi (2016) Audiovisual Translation of English Idioms in *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows Movie*: An Analysis of English to Indonesian Subtitle.**

This research conducted a study on the translation of idiomatic expressions in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* from English to Indonesian. She applied Fernando's Typology of Idioms (1996) to classify idioms into pure, semi, and literal types. The result found that the type of idioms which used in the movie was 50% pure idioms, 35% semi idioms, and 15% literal idioms from 100 items that the researchers found. For the method, paraphrasing was the most frequently used strategy in the subtitles with 41% occurrence, and the second one was transfer with 40% occurrence, expansion 9%, condensation 4%, and the least one deletion and resignation for 3% as it allowed for cultural adaptation while preserving the intended meaning. The writer findings suggest that a similar approach may be employed in *A Family Affair*, where idiomatic expressions may need to be rephrased to ensure they are both culturally and linguistically relevant for Indonesian audiences.

### **Rizky Putri Sakinah (2019) English-Indonesian Translation Strategies of English Idiomatic Expressions in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales Movie* Subtitle)**

This research examined idiomatic expressions in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales* and found that paraphrasing was again the dominant translation strategy. The writer applied Fernando's Typology and Mona Baker's Translation Strategies (2018), which include paraphrase, omission, and substitution. While paraphrasing was effective in conveying the figurative meaning, she noted that it sometimes led to a loss of accuracy. For the example the researchers explained in the research findings that "My god" that translated to "Astaga" was identified as pure idiom which also applied similar meaning and dissimilar form translation strategies. This trade-off between clarity and precision is a key issue in subtitle translation and is also relevant to the translation of idiomatic expressions in *A Family Affair*.

### **Putri Kusuma Ninsih (2020) Translation Accuracy of English Idiomatic Expressions into Indonesian in *Inside Out* Film Subtitle**

This research analyzed the translation of idiomatic expressions in *Inside Out* and found that paraphrasing remained the most common strategy. The writer used McCarthy and O'Dell's Idiom Types and Mona Baker's strategies to assess translation accuracy and noted that, while most idioms were translated accurately, some nuances were inevitably lost. For example, the researchers explain that "Put Up" which translated to Indonesian "pasang" classified into idiomatic expression in the type of compound. This study emphasizes the challenge of balancing accuracy and cultural relevance in subtitle translation, an issue that will be important when analyzing *A Family Affair*.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to examine how idiomatic expressions in the English dialogues of the film *A Family Affair* are translated into Indonesian subtitles (Muhaya & Nugroho, 2024). The primary aim is to analyze how meaning especially figurative and emotional intent is preserved or adapted across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Nugroho et al., 2020; Pratama

et al., 2021). The study focuses on identifying idioms and evaluating the translation strategies used, including dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, modulation, and reduction.

The analytical process consisted of the following steps:

1. Identification and Classification:

Idiomatic expressions were identified and classified according to Fernando's typology. This categorization ensured a linguistically accurate selection of expressions with idiomatic, non-literal meaning (Shalekhah et al., 2020).

2. Comparative Translation Analysis:

Each idiom and its Indonesian translation were analyzed contextually to determine the translation strategy applied (Suryaningtyas et al., 2019). The analysis was guided by an adapted model combining Mona Baker's (2018) translation strategies with Nida's (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence, focusing on how well the translated idioms convey the original message, emotional tone, and cultural resonance. The four primary strategies examined were:

Dynamic Equivalence: rendering the idiom in a way that communicates the intended meaning naturally in the target language,

Cultural Substitution: replacing the idiom with a culturally familiar expression for Indonesian audiences,

Modulation: shifting perspectives or rephrasing the idiom to fit the cultural or syntactic norms of the target language,

Reduction: omitting part or all of the idiom due to subtitle constraints or lack of equivalent meaning.

Each translation was evaluated in terms of how effectively it preserved the idiom's figurative meaning, emotional nuance, and accessibility for the target audience.

3. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility of the analysis, the study incorporated triangulation by referring to prior research on idiomatic translation in film subtitles, including studies on Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Inside Out. Furthermore, expert validation was sought through consultation with a linguist specializing in audiovisual translation. This process helped minimize interpretive bias and reinforced the objectivity of the categorization and strategy identification (Shafira & Nugroho, 2023). By combining linguistic theory with contextual analysis, this methodology offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how idiomatic expressions are adapted in subtitle translation while preserving their figurative and emotional significance across cultures (Nugroho et al., 2019; Pangaksmi & Nugroho, 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The translation of idiomatic expressions in *A Family Affair* reveals various strategies used to preserve the meaning of idioms while adapting them to the cultural and linguistic context of the Indonesian audience. Each idiomatic expression is translated with a distinct approach, including dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, modulation, and reduction. This section discusses the translation strategies employed for each idiomatic expression and examines how they help convey the intended meaning.

"I just think it would be best if we took our foot off the gas a little bit."

That translated to Indonesian:

"Jadi, menurutku ada baiknya kita melangkah pelan-pelan"

This idiom identified as pure idiom with dynamic equivalence translation strategy. The phrase "took our foot off the gas" metaphorically suggests slowing down a relationship. Instead of translating it literally (which would confuse Indonesian viewers), the subtitle uses "*melangkah pelan-pelan*" (step slowly), a phrase that culturally and emotionally resonates in Indonesian. It not only maintains the figurative meaning but subtly implies a desire to pause or even withdraw, matching the original tone. It also reflects modern usage in Indonesian slang among younger audiences as a soft breakup cue.

"And that big step.. Big step away"

That translated to Indonesian:

"Keputusan besarnya, mundur."

This idiom identified as semi-idiom with cultural substitution translation strategy. The phrase "big step away" suggests a significant emotional or relational withdrawal. In Indonesian, the translation uses "*keputusan besar*" (big decision) and "*mundur*" (step back), shifting the metaphor from physical movement to decision making, which fits more naturally in the Indonesian sociocultural context. The core meaning of retreat is preserved through culturally relatable language.

"I'm asking you for help, you are picking on me."

That translated to Indonesian:

"Aku minta tolong tapi malah dikritik"

This idiom identified as semi-idiom with modulation translation strategy. Rather than directly translating the concept of "picking on," the translation emphasizes the unfair criticism that her mother said to Zara. "*Minta tolong tapi malah dikritik*" (asking for help but being criticized instead) highlights the negative aspect of being unfairly treated. This strategy shifts the idiom's meaning to align with the emotional experience, making it more accessible for Indonesian audiences.

"Let me work my magic"

That translated to Indonesian:

"Lihat pengaruhku."

This idiom identified as pure-idiom with dynamic equivalence translation strategy. The phrase "work my magic" implies the granny's intended meaning of causing a positive effect doing something with charm to influence Zara. In the translation, "magic" is replaced with "*pengaruhku*" (my influence), avoiding confusion that might arise from literal notions of magic. The shift captures the essence of impact and effort while ensuring the line sounds natural for Indonesian.

"Such a diva."

That translated to Indonesian:

"Dia banyak tuntutan."

This idiom identified as literal-idiom with modulation translation strategy. The word "Diva" carries cultural connotation, often linked to glamorous celebrities who are difficult or demanding. Rather than using the term "diva," which may not have the same implications in Indonesian, the translator opts for "*banyak tuntutan*" (many demands), which describes Chris' behavior more directly and understandably in the Indonesian context.

"He's a peach."

That translated to Indonesian:

"*Dia tampan.*"

This idiom identified as pure-idiom with cultural substitution translation strategies. The metaphor "peach," which implies sweetness or kindness in English, is substituted with "*tampan*" (handsome) to maintain the admiration towards Chris. The translation shifts from the sweetness metaphor to a compliment related to physical appearance, which maintains the context of dialogue.

"I think you deserve a real shot."

That translated to Indonesian:

"*Menurutku kalian layak diberikan kesempatan.*"

This idiom identified as pure-idiom with dynamic equivalence translation strategy. Instead of using a literal translation of "a real shot," the translation conveys the idea of a genuine opportunity with "*diberikan kesempatan*" (given a chance), which is a more familiar expression to convey the notion of being given an opportunity in Indonesian.

"I'm done standing in the way."

That translated to Indonesian:

"*Aku tak akan menghalangi.*"

This idiom identified as pure-idiom with modulation translation strategy. In this case, the translation shifts from the direct "standing in the way" to "*menghalangi*" (to obstruct), a more common term in Indonesian that conveys the same sense of preventing someone from achieving something.

"An island of one"

That translated to Indonesian:

"*Pelabuhan.*"

This idiom identified as pure-idiom with cultural substitution translation strategy. The word "island." In the English idiom, "island" refers to emotional isolation, while in the Indonesian translation, "*pelabuhan*" (harbor) evokes a similar sense of solitude, but with a more culturally fitting metaphor. A harbor is a place of refuge, offering a relatable image of being alone or in isolation in Indonesian culture.

These types of idiom and idiomatic translations demonstrate a wide range of strategies used to adapt figurative language from English to Indonesian. Whether for pure-idiom, semi-idiom and literal-

idiom. Through dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, modulation, and reduction, the idioms are transformed to ensure they are both linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate. Each translation strategy was selected based on the specific context and the need to maintain the original meaning while making the idioms understandable and relevant to the Indonesian audience.

## CONCLUSION

The translation of idiomatic expressions in *A Family Affair* demonstrates that preserving cultural meaning in subtitles requires context-sensitive and culturally adaptive strategies. The study shows that dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, modulation, and reduction were effectively employed to maintain the figurative and emotional intent of the original language. Rather than relying on literal translation, each idiom was adapted based on cultural relevance, audience familiarity, and narrative tone. This research highlights that effective idiomatic translation in subtitles depends on flexibility and cultural awareness, ensuring that the expressions remain meaningful, natural, and relatable for the target audience. Furthermore, the success of idiom translation lies in balancing linguistic accuracy with cultural resonance to enhance cross-cultural understanding and viewer engagement.

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