

THE TRANSLATION STRATEGY OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE INTERN FILM SUBTITLE

Paulina Mariela Charita¹, Gratiana Sama², Yuliana M. D’Karmel Kara³,
Marianus Roni⁴

^{1,2,3} (*English Literature Study Program Flores University*).

antaaclaritaaa@gmail.com¹

samagratiiana@gmail.com²

melkar076@gmail.com³

ronimarianus@gmail.com⁴

ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji strategi penerjemahan ungkapan idiomatik pada subtitle film *The Intern* dengan menggunakan teori Baker (1992) mengenai strategi penerjemahan ungkapan idiomatik yang mencakup empat strategi, yaitu penggunaan idiom dengan makna dan bentuk yang sama, penggunaan idiom dengan makna sama tetapi bentuk berbeda, penerjemahan melalui parafrasa, dan penerjemahan dengan penghilangan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan sumber data berupa subtitle bahasa Inggris dan terjemahan bahasa Indonesiannya. Dari 25 data idiom, ditemukan tiga strategi yang digunakan: penggunaan idiom dengan makna dan bentuk sama (4 data), penggunaan idiom dengan makna sama tetapi bentuk berbeda (9 data), serta penerjemahan melalui parafrasa (12 data). Strategi penghilangan tidak ditemukan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi parafrasa paling dominan karena dinilai lebih fleksibel dalam penyesuaian konteks bahasa sasaran. Penelitian selanjutnya diharapkan menganalisis objek berbeda dan mempertimbangkan aspek prosedur serta kualitas terjemahan.

Kata kunci: *Terjemahan, ungkapan idiomatik, strategi, subtitle.*

ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine the translation strategies of idiomatic expressions in the subtitles of the film *The Intern* using Baker's (1992) theory of idiomatic expression translation strategies, which includes four strategies: using idioms with the same meaning and form, using idioms with the same meaning but different forms, translating through paraphrasing, and translating through omission. The research method used was descriptive qualitative with data sources in the form of English subtitles and their Indonesian translations. From 25 idiom data, three strategies were found to be used: the use of idioms with the same meaning and form (4 data), the use of idioms with the same meaning but different forms (9 data), and translation through paraphrasing (12 data). The omission strategy was not found. The results of the study show that the paraphrasing strategy is the most dominant because it is considered more flexible in adjusting to the target language context. Further research is expected to analyze different objects and consider aspects of procedure and translation quality.

Keywords: *Translation, idiomatic expression, strategy, subtitle.*

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a crucial activity in transferring meaning from a source language into a target language in order to produce an equivalent and comprehensible message. Beyond academic and scientific texts, translation also plays an essential role in rendering literary and audiovisual works such

as novels, short stories, and especially films into languages accessible to wider audiences. In the current era of global media circulation, English-language films reach Indonesian viewers primarily through subtitling. Subtitling, as defined by Gambier (in Ratusmanga & Napu 2019), “Subtitling represents one of the two ways of translating film dialogue, in which the original audio remains unchanged while the translated text appears at the bottom of the screen.” Within this process, translators are required to transform spoken language into concise written text under spatial and temporal constraints. The task becomes more complex when the dialogue contains idiomatic expressions, whose figurative meanings cannot be directly inferred from their literal components.

Idiomatic expressions are fixed combinations of words that carry culturally embedded and context-dependent meanings. According to Baker (1992), translating idioms requires specific strategies, such as using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but different form, paraphrase, or omission. Since idioms often lack direct equivalents in the target language, translators frequently employ paraphrase to convey the intended meaning naturally and accurately. In film subtitling, this strategic choice must also consider brevity, readability, and cultural appropriateness. Therefore, translating idiomatic expressions in subtitles demands not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity to ensure that the message, tone, and pragmatic effect of the original dialogue are preserved in Indonesian.

Although numerous studies have explored the translation of idiomatic expressions in audiovisual media, research specifically examining idiom translation strategies from English into Indonesian in film subtitling remains limited. Previous studies, such as Nuraini (2024) and Suriadi and Kirana (2022), mainly focused on identifying strategies and measuring translation accuracy in the subtitles of *Soul* and the *Wednesday* series using different theoretical frameworks. However, these studies do not provide a focused analysis based on Mona Baker’s classification of idiom translation

strategies within a single contemporary film. Therefore, this study offers a more specific contribution by analyzing the strategies used to translate idiomatic expressions in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Intern*, aiming to identify the dominant strategies applied by the translator and to explain how idiomatic meanings are conveyed under the constraints of subtitling.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, which aims to analyze and describe findings in detail based on real data without statistical measurement. This approach aligns with Creswell's (in Nuraini, et al, 2023) view that qualitative research relies on text-based analysis, making it suitable for examining translation strategies used for idiomatic expressions in the subtitles of *The Intern*. The data source consists of the English and Indonesian subtitle versions of the film, focusing on idiomatic expressions found in words, phrases, and sentences. Data were collected by repeatedly watching the film, observing both subtitle versions while listening to the dialogue, identifying potential idiomatic expressions, and confirming them using reliable idiom dictionaries such as Webster's and Oxford. After collection, each idiom was classified according to Baker's theory. The final step involved analyzing how meaning was transferred from the SL to the TL and draw conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the research data based on Baker's theory on *The Intern* film subtitle, the researcher found 25 cases of translation strategy of idiomatic expressions. Specifically, using an idiom of similar meaning and similar form was found in four (4) idioms, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form appeared in nine (9) idioms, and translation by paraphrase was applied in twelve (12) idioms. Furthermore, the strategy of translation by omission was not found in the data, showing that the translator translated all idiomatic expressions without leaving any untranslated.

The discussion based on the Baker's theory. Several data of translation strategy of idiomatic expressions are presented as follows:

Similar Meaning and Similar Form

SL: "***Come rain or shine***, I'm at my starbucks by 7:15".

TL: "***Walaupun hujan atau panas***, Aku selalu ada di starbucks pukul 7:15". (00:01:52'

The Intern)

The idiomatic phrase ***come rain or shine*** is translated into Indonesian as ***walaupun hujan atau panas***. According to *Webster Idiom Dictionary*, the phrase ***come rain or shine*** means *a strong commitment or consistency in doing something*. The phrase ***walaupun hujan atau panas*** in the target language has a connotative meaning that emphasizes steadfastness, consistency, and resilience in facing various conditions. The word *walaupun* is essential in capturing this figurative force. According to *the Great Dictionary the Indonesian Language* the word *walaupun* means *even though, despite, or even if*, and is used to indicate that a certain condition does not prevent another action or event from occurring. Literally, *hujan* and *panas* refer to weather conditions, but in idiomatic context, they represent a range of situations or challenges a person might face in daily life. In this case, the phrase ***walaupun hujan atau panas*** indicates that regardless of the circumstances whether facing obstacles, a busy schedule, or unsupportive conditions the action (*being at Starbucks at 7:15*) still takes place consistently. The translator chose the phrase ***walaupun hujan atau panas*** because it is idiomatically acceptable and familiar in the target language, allowing the message to be conveyed naturally and clearly without sounding forced or awkward.

This translation aligns with Baker's strategy of similar meaning and similar form, in which the target idiom conveys the same meaning as the source idiom and consists of equivalent lexical items. In this case, *hujan* corresponds to *rain* and *panas* corresponds to *shine* (referring to sunny or hot

weather), while *atau* mirrors the conjunction *or*. Moreover, the word *come* in the source idiom implies certainty and determination that the action will happen regardless of the situation, which is effectively represented by the word *walaupun* in the target idiom, as it signals that no condition or obstacle can prevent the action from occurring.

SL: “Because you have to **set the tone**”.

TL: “Karena kau harus **mengatur ritme**”. (00:12:06’ *The Intern*)

The idiomatic phrase **set the tone** is translated as **mengatur ritme** in the target language. According to *Webster Idiom Dictionary* the phrase **set the tone** means *to establish a quality, feeling or attitude by a manner of speaking or writing*. In the context of the film, the idiomatic expression refers to the moment when Cameron responds to Jules’ question about why she should work with a senior intern. Jules had previously expressed his discomfort by saying, “*First of all, I’m not great with older people. You know how I’m with my parents,*” (00:12:00’) revealing his hesitation and uncertainty. Cameron's use of the phrase “**set the tone**” directly responded to this moment, encouraging her to take the initiative and create the professional atmosphere she desired. In the target language, the phrase **mengatur ritme** carries a connotative meaning related to initiating and managing the direction or flow of a situation. According to *the Great Dictionary the Indonesian Language*, the word *mengatur* means *to make or arrange something in a more orderly or neat manner*, while the word *ritme* though originally referring to regular patterns in music suggests a sense of tempo, sequence, or flow. In this context, the word *ritme* is understood more broadly as the pacing or momentum of actions and interactions in a professional setting.

In translating the phrase *set the tone* as *mengatur ritme*, the translator applied Baker’s strategy of *similar meaning and similar form*, in which the target idiom conveys the same meaning as the source idiom and consists of equivalent lexical items. In this case, *mengatur* corresponds to *set* as a

verb meaning “to arrange or organize,” and *ritme* corresponds to *tone* in the sense of controlling the tempo or atmosphere. The definite article *the* in the source phrase functions only grammatically and is omitted in Indonesian without altering meaning. The pairing of verb + noun in both phrases preserves the original lexical structure while maintaining idiomatic naturalness in the target language. This translation sounds natural and acceptable in the target language because the phrase “*mengatur ritme*” is commonly used and effectively delivers the intended figurative meaning without sounding forced or awkward.

SL: “Well, ***better late than never***. Do you want some help?”.

TL: “***Lebih baik terlambat dari pada tidak***. Kau ingin bantuan?”. (00:53:12’ *The Intern*)

The idiomatic phrase ***better late than never*** is translated into Indonesian as ***lebih baik terlambat dari pada tidak***. According to *Oxford Idiom Dictionary* the phrase ***better late than never*** means *it’s preferable for something to happen or be done belatedly than not at all*. In the context of the film, this phrase is used by Jules when Ben says he just joined Facebook 10 minutes ago. Jules replies with the phrase to reassure him that although he joined late, it’s still a good step rather than not joining at all. The Indonesian phrase ***lebih baik terlambat daripada tidak*** is also idiomatic and conveys the same figurative meaning as the original. It is commonly used in everyday Indonesian and is easily understood by native speakers. However, it omits the word *sama sekali*, which is commonly used in the complete Indonesian version: *lebih baik terlambat dari pada tidak sama sekali*. While the translation version ***lebih baik terlambat dari pada tidak*** remains understandable and contextually appropriate, the omission slightly weakens the emphasis of the original idiom. This omission slightly changes the level of emphasis. The word *tidak* in Indonesian only indicates simple negation, meaning not doing something. Meanwhile, in the original English idiom, the word *never* carries a stronger, absolute negation, meaning not at any time or not at all. If the translator had used the phrase ***lebih baik***

terlambat daripada tidak sama sekali, it would more accurately reflect the full meaning and emphasis of the original idiom.

In translating the idiomatic phrase the translator applied Baker's strategy of *similar meaning and similar form*. Both idioms convey the same figurative meaning and consist of equivalent lexical items, with matching comparative construction (better/lebih baik), adjective (late/terlambat), and contrasting clause (than never/daripada tidak). Although the Indonesian version omits sama sekali, it maintains the core idiomatic sense and fits naturally within the casual tone of the scene. The equivalence is evident as lebih baik terlambat daripada tidak can be translated back into better late than never with similar meaning and similar form.

Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form

TL: "I **bust my ass** for her 14 hours a day".

SL: "Aku **membanting tulang** untuk dia 14 jam sehari" (01:02:04' *The Intern*)

The idiomatic phrase **bust my ass** is translated into **membanting tulang** in the target language. According to *Oxford Idiom Dictionary* the phrase *bust my ass* means *try very hard to do something*. In the context of the film, this expression shows Becky's disappointment because she works very hard for 14 hours a day but feels unappreciated and ignored by her boss, Jules. The translation *membanting tulang* is an Indonesian idiomatic expression that also means to work very hard or with great effort, often to the point of exhaustion. It serves as an appropriate idiomatic equivalent in Indonesian, as it captures the meaning of hard work and sacrifice contained in the original phrase, highlighting Becky's exhaustion and the lack of appreciation she receives for her efforts.

This shows that the translator uses Baker's strategy of using an idiom of *similar meaning but dissimilar form*. As Baker states, "It is often possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a similar meaning to that of the source idiom or expression, but which consists of

different lexical items.” In this case, while *bust my ass* and *membanting tulang* convey the same meaning: working hard with full effort. Structurally, *bust my ass* uses a verb + pronoun + noun with informal, slightly vulgar imagery, while *membanting tulang* follows an affixed verb + noun pattern rooted in traditional metaphor. The expression *membanting tulang* is idiomatically and culturally appropriate in Indonesian, making the meaning easily understood by the target audience.

SL: “How in one generation, have men gone from guys like Jack Nicholson and Harrison Ford to.... Take Ben here, **a dying breed** you know?”

TL: “Bagaimana dalam satu generasi, punya lelaki yang berawal dari pria seperti Jack Nicholson and Harrison Ford sampai.... Misal Ben disini, **jenis yang terancam punah** kau tahu?” (1:17:11’ *The Intern*)

According to *Oxford Idiom Dictionary*, the phrase **a dying breed** means *a types of person or thing that is becoming rare*. The idiomatic phrase **a dying breed** translated into **jenis yang terancam punah** in the target language. In *The Intern*, the phrase **a dying breed** refers to the moment when Jules praises Ben as a rare kind of gentleman who represents old-fashioned values and class that are disappearing in modern times. She compares him to iconic figures like Jack Nicholson and Harrison Ford, highlighting how men like Ben are hard to find in today’s generation. The word *jenis* means *kind* in English. According to *the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language*, the word *terancam* means *in a state of danger*, and the word *punah* means *completely gone or nothing left*. The word *yang* functions as a relative pronoun that links the noun *jenis* with the descriptive clause *terancam punah*. This reinforces the figurative meaning of the idiom **a dying breed**, as the phrase **jenis yang terancam punah** conveys the idea of a kind of person who is gradually disappearing effectively capturing the original idiom’s tone, emotional weight, and implied rarity.

This exemplifies Baker’s strategy of similar meaning but dissimilar form: the meaning is the

same referring to a type that is becoming rare while the lexical form shifts. English uses a compact adjective noun unit *dying breed*, whereas Indonesian uses a fuller structure: noun, relative clause, and adjective *jenis, yang terancam, punah*. The structure changes, but the message is preserved. Despite the different lexical form, the core message that Ben represents a rare and disappearing type of man is clearly and correctly delivered in the target language.

SL: “Well, it’s a **brave new world**.”

TL: “Ini **dunia baru yang menantang**.” (00:28:41’ *The Intern*)

The idiomatic expression **brave new world** is translated into **dunia baru yang menantang** in the target language. According to *Webster Idiom Dictionary*, the phrase *brave new world* means *a future world, situation or development; also a recent development or recently changed situation*. In *The Intern*, this expression appears when Ben responds to Fiona after she comments that it’s cool for someone like him to become an intern. Ben uses the phrase to describe the modern workplace he has entered something unfamiliar. According to the *Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language*, the word *dunia* means *environment or sphere of life*. In the context of the film, it refers to the workplace environment Ben is entering an entirely new field of experience in his later years. The word *baru* means *never existed or seen before* this matches the novelty of the situation Ben is facing, as he steps into a modern startup company that is completely different from what he was used to. The relative pronoun *yang* serves to link the noun *dunia baru* with the adjective *menantang*, forming a descriptive clause. The word *menantang* means *to confront or to oppose*. These meanings, when combined in the phrase *dunia baru yang menantang*, convey the idea of entering a new, unfamiliar world that requires courage and adaptability an interpretation that aligns with the meaning of the idiomatic expression *brave new world*.

The translator applied Baker’s strategy of *similar meaning but dissimilar form*, as both

expressions convey the same idea. The idea conveyed in both expressions is about facing a new and unfamiliar environment that brings certain challenges capturing Ben's situation as he adjusts to a modern workplace. In terms of structure, the source phrase *brave new world* consists of an adjective (*brave*) modifying a noun phrase (*new world*), where *new* functions as an adjective and *world* is the head noun. In the target phrase *dunia baru yang menantang*, *dunia* serves as the noun, and *yang menantang* is a relative clause, with *yang* functioning as the relative pronoun and *menantang* as the predicate that describes the noun. The context supports that Ben is referring to changes in his work environment something new, different, and challenging and this translation maintains the casual and adaptive tone of the original expression.

Translation by Paraphrase

SL: "I used all the miles I'd saved and traveled the globe. The problem was, no matter where I went, as soon as I got home, the nowhere to be thing hit me like ***a ton of bricks***".

TL: "Aku gunakan semua simpananku dan berkeliling dunia. Masalahnya adalah kemanapun aku pergi, secepat pula aku sampai rumah, bahwa rasa bosan itu lama-lama ***membunuhku***". (00:01:42' *The Intern*)

The idiomatic phrase ***a ton of bricks*** is translated into ***membunuhku*** in the target language. According to *Webster Idiom Dictionary*, the idiomatic phrase *a ton of bricks* means *very hard or severely*. The idiom is used by Ben as he explains that after retiring and losing his wife, his routine travels left him feeling empty and hit him hard like a ton of bricks. The idiom is used by Ben as he explains that after retiring and losing his wife, his routine travels left him feeling empty and hit him hard like a ton of bricks. In the target language, the translator expresses the emotional intensity of the idiom through the word *membunuhku*, which means "*killed me*" and is used metaphorically to convey

a strong emotional burden. Based on *the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language*, the word *membunuh* means *taking or extinguishing a life* meanwhile, the suffix *-ku* is a possessive pronoun meaning *me* or *my*, which adds a personal impact to the expression and it reflects the same emotional impact as the source idiom. Although the translation does not maintain the original imagery of *a ton of bricks*, it still delivers the same meaning and intensity, making it a suitable and natural expression in the target language. Thus, the phrase *lama-lama membunuhku* conveys the idea of something that slowly but severely drains or overwhelms a person capturing the emotional weight and severity expressed by the idiom *a ton of bricks*.

This indicates the application of Baker's *paraphrase* strategy, where the idiomatic meaning is retained by using a different expression in the target language because there is no natural or culturally equivalent idiom in Indonesian. Therefore, the use of *membunuhku* effectively conveys the original message and emotional intensity in a natural and impactful way within the target language context. Although the translator did not use idiomatic expression in the target language, the use of paraphrasing successfully captured the intended meaning in the source language and conveyed it naturally in context.

SL: "But okay if we take ***a rain check***?"

TL: "Apa taka apa jika kita ***tunda dulu***?" (00:04:20' *The Intern*)

The idiomatic phrase ***a rain check*** is translated into ***tunda dulu*** in the target language. According to *Oxford Idiom Dictionary*, the idiomatic phrase ***a rain check*** means *said when politely refusing an offer, with the implication that you may take it up a later date*. The idiom refers to the context of the film when Patty invites Ben to have dinner with her that night, but Ben declines and suggests having dinner another time. According to *the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language* the word *tunda* means postpone meanwhile, the word *dulu* adds the nuance of doing it *for now or*

temporarily, suggesting that the action may still happen later. Thus, the phrase *tunda dulu* expresses the idea of polite delay something with the possibility of rescheduling just as *rain check* implies in English. Therefore, the translation conveys the original meaning accurately and aligns well with the context.

The translator applies Baker's strategy of *paraphrase*, as the original idiom has no direct or natural equivalent in Indonesian. Rather than translating it literally, the meaning is rephrased into a more neutral and culturally appropriate expression that effectively delivers the same idea of polite postponement. The message in the source language is clearly and fully conveyed into the target language without any ambiguity. In the context where Patty invites Ben to have dinner, Ben politely declines and suggests postponing it to another time.

SL: "because I am gonna **save your ass**".

TL: "karena aku akan **membantumu**". (01:04:36' *The Intern*)

The idiomatic phrase **save your ass** is translated into **membantumu** in the target language. According to *Webster Idiom Dictionary* the phrase *save your ass* is a variation of *save one's ass*, which means to help someone else in an important way. In the context of the film, this expression is used when Ben offers help to Davis by letting him stay at his house while Davis looks for an apartment, showing support in a difficult situation. According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)*, the word *membantu* means *providing support or assistance to make something stronger, more stable, or successful*. The suffix *-mu* is a second-person possessive pronoun meaning *your*, which adds a personal and direct tone to the expression. So, *membantumu* captures the intention behind the original idiom offering meaningful help and fits naturally within the context of the scene.

The translation follows Baker's strategy of *paraphrase*, which, according to Baker, when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language

in the target text due to differences in stylistic preferences between the source language and target language. In this case, the idiom *save your ass* in the source language is translated into the non-idiomatic expression *membantumu*, which conveys the same intended meaning in a form that is natural and culturally acceptable for Indonesian audiences.

SL: "It's kind of **a big deal**, right?".

TL: "Ini cukup **penting**, benar?". (01:06:49' *The Intern*)

The phrase **a big deal** is translated into **penting** in the target language. According to *Oxford Idiom Dictionary* the phrase *a big deal* means *a thing considered important*. In the context of the film the idiomatic expression spoken by Matt to show that his presence in the classroom with Paige holds significant meaning and should not be taken lightly. According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)* the word *penting* or *important* in the target language means essential; very important, which matches the context of the film where Matt sees being with Paige as snack leader as meaningful. It also reflects the idiomatic meaning something considered important or special making the translation appropriate both contextually and culturally.

The translation strategy is in lining with Baker's theory of *paraphrase*, instead of translating a big deal literally, the translator chose *penting*, a natural and contextually appropriate word that preserves the intended meaning and emotional tone of the scene. The word *penting* appropriately represent the importance expressed by the speaker without distortion of meaning.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how idiomatic expressions in *The Intern* were translated into Indonesian, focusing on the strategies applied by the translator. Using Baker's framework, the analysis identified three main strategies: translation by paraphrase (12 data), using an idiom of similar meaning but

dissimilar form (9 data), and using an idiom of similar meaning and similar form (4 data). Among these, translation by paraphrase was the most frequently applied, showing that the translator often adapts expressions when no direct equivalent exists in Indonesian.

These findings indicate the need for further refinement in both theoretical application and analytical scope in future research. Future studies are encouraged to expand the scope by applying more recent or varied theoretical perspectives on idiom translation to enrich analytical depth. It is also recommended that researchers utilize reliable idiom dictionaries in both languages to ensure more precise equivalence and stronger translation accuracy.

REFERENCES

- Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words; A course book of translation*. New York: Routledge.
- Nuraini, R., & Sayogie, F. (2024). Translation Accuracy of English Idiomatic Expression into Indonesian in Soul Film Subtitle by Disney+ Retail. *Linguistik Terjemahan Sastra (LINGTERSA)*, 5(1), 30-37. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32734/lingtersa.v5i1.12317>.
- Ratusmanga, Z., & Napu, N. (2019). An analysis of subtitling strategies: A case of English and Indonesian language pair. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies*. Vol. 2 (1), 38-49. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.3368322>.
- Suriadi, M. A., & Kirana, P. M. (2024). Translation Strategy And Accuracy Of Idiomatic Expression In Wednesday Series (2022). *Journal of Language and Literature*, 12(2), 190-205. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.35760/jll.2024>.