Strategies Used in Translating Idioms in the *Iron Man* Movie

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ABSTRACT

The strategies used by translators will have impact on transferring meaning of idioms. The strategies chosen may also have relatioship with the type of idioms.The theory of four strategies of translation has been used by a number researhers in their study about idiom translation. However, these four strategies cannot accomodate to identify all the strategies applied by the translators of the subtitle of *Iron Man* film. This study aims to identify the types of idioms in the *Iron Man* film and investigate the strategies applied by two translators, in the Indonesian subtitle in the film of the original CD by Marvel and that is from a website subscene.com. The identification of idioms in the film is based on the theory by Makkai (1972). While the categorization of the idioms is based on the theory by Fernando (1996). The theories proposed by Baker (1992) and Molina & Albir (2002) are used in analyzing the translation strategies of the idioms. The results shows there are 130 idioms classified into pure idioms (25%), semi idioms (23%) and literal idioms (51%). The most frequent strategy applied is paraphrasing both in the subtitle from the original CD by Marvel (77.6%) and from a website subscene.com (82.2%). Literal translations are also applied, showing the lack of translation competencies of the translators which potentially causes poor translation quality which resulted from the subtitling demand.

Keywords: Source language language, target language, idioms, translation strategies, types of idioms.

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that subtitles are supposed to help spectators understand the movie stories including all the dialogues. However, in a number of cases, due to the translator's skill, the accuracy and the acceptability of the translation is still questionable and may lead to the possibility of losing the meaning of the story. Moreover, the dialogues involve idiomatic expressions which naturally require the right strategy to translate. To complicate more, subtitling also necessitates condensation and synchronicity making it higher challenge for the translator to maintain the closest possible understanding. This has become a problem which seems to occur in subtitling of *The Iron Man* movie which contains a wide range of idioms used by the main character protagonist, Tony Stark, who is portrayed as a sarcastic and witty character.

Idiom is one the problems of non-equivalence (Baker, 2018). Besides, Dwiek and Thalji (2016) (as cited in Ali & Al-Rushidi, 2016) states that translating idioms needs a

competency of source language and target language, good cultural knowledge, and the strategies in translating the idioms in order to transfer the message. The translators must pay attention to the cultural aspect and meaning when transferring the message from the source language into the target language. The translators should replace the idioms with target language equivalence without changing what the original writer means.

Five similar articles have been reviewed, namely, Subtitle Analysis of the Idiomatic Expressions Used in the Subtitles of *That Thing You Do!* Movie by Annisa Kusumastuti (2019), The Translation of Idioms in Bahasa Indonesia Subtitles of Hotel Transylvania 2 by Miftahul Novianna (2018), The Translation Strategy of Idiomatic Expression in English Indonesian Subtitle of The Infiltrator Movie by Aji Fachrizal (2018), Translation of Idioms in TV Subtitling by Ana-Marija Bujić (2014), and Strategies Employed in Translation of Idioms in English Subtitles of Two Persian Television Series by Ahmad Mohseni (2013).

The above five articles have something in common in the way that they identify the strategy in translating idioms. The most dominant strategy found, particularly in the second and the last articles, is the omission concluding that the safest possible way is not to translate especially the pure idioms or the type in figurative language which is culturally bound expressions. This manner shows that the translators are trying to be on the safe side given that the spectators are provided with the scenes and the context captured so that the dialogues make sense rather than distorted by inaccurate subtitles. These five studies also imply that idiom carries cultural depth and that careful strategy should be applied. Nevertheless they have not shown the types of deviations commonly occurring given that there are restrictions in the subtitling strategy.

Purpose

Firstly, the present research, apart from identifying the strategies of translating idioms, attempts to discuss the potential distorted meaning even if the "safe" translation strategy dominates such as literal translation for some of the phrasal verbs. Secondly, the study tries to also investigate whether the deviation has been caused by the subtitling demand which involves among others condensation and synchronicity which is called dynamic equivalence as proposed by Melanova (2015).

Interjection can be conveyed to the other person in spoken and written form. It is used to express some feelings and emotions of someone in handling or expressing the feeling that cannot be expressed easily in common sentences because interjection used to give a different meaning in various situations or actions (Dubois, 2001). Written forms of interjection can be found in novels, poems and comics. "It is perhaps true that apart from nouns and verbs, interjections–those little words, or 'non-words', which can constitute utterances by themselves – are another word class found in all languages" (Ameka, 1992, p. 101). One example of comic as written form is Dragon Ball. It contains interjections to make every event in the comic live. Without interjection, the conversation in the comic will feel flat because in interjection there is a representation of the expression or mood of the speaker.

There are some studies and articles about interjection that related to the research. The first one is Interjection in English Comic Book "Scooby-Doo Where Are You" (Anggoro, 2013). This research found 20 types interjection words based on their function which are divided into four (emotive, conative, cognitive, and phatic). Another research which studied Interjection in Comics "Les Schtroumpes" by Peyo conducted by Palumian (2014) showed there are 5 types of interjection whose functions are emotive function, phatic function, and conative function.

This study is similar to the previous studies but uses different data source. The data for the study were taken from *"Dragon Ball Super Vol.04"* by Akira Toriyama. Therefore, the aims of the study are to describe the types and function of the interjection contained in the comic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation

There have been common notions that, fundamentally, translation refers to rendering the meaning and the message which is re-exposed in the target language. In addition, the theorists also assert that the stronger the message is culturally bound the more complicated the strategy will be in order to maintain the meaning as closest as possible. To translate idioms Mona Baker (1992) proposed the following strategies as follows:

a) Using similar meaning and form (SMF) in which the translator use a target langage idiom which has the same meaning and lexical item.

b) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form (SMDF) in which the translator uses an idiom with the same meaning, but different lexical items.

c) Using a paraphrase which is commonly used in case the translator could not find any equivalent idiom in the target language, and the translator uses different lexical and/or style.

Mona Baker (1992) proposed four strategies for translating idioms, that has been used by a number of researhers in their study about idiom translation. However, these four strategies cannot accomodate to identify all the strategies applied by the translators of the subtitle of *Iron Man* film; the translators also use literal tanslation. (Molina & Albir, 2002).

Idiom and Translation

It has been a common understanding that idiomatic expressions derive from daily and casual language as opposed to formal and academic language. Thus, this is related the frequent involvement of cultural aspects (history, geography and the likes). Xiao Geng, in his 2009 paper An Analysis of the Cultural Phenomena explains:

> Idioms reflect the environment, life, history and culture of the native speakers, closely associated with their innermost spirit and feelings. Idioms have so close relationship with historical background, economy, geographical environment, custom, etc. of the nation concerned that they more typically represent the cultural characteristics of a language than words. (https://lingo-star.com/idioms-language-through-culture/, retrieved 09.32, Friday 31/01/20)

Understanding idioms means understanding the underlying aspects of the expressions and this requires deeper knowledge on all the above mentioned aspects of the society and the environment. In the context of second or foreign language users, this may lead to the gaps or missing logic if perceived or interfered by the cultural background of the users. Thus, in the case of translation, idioms require certain process.

Most of the study about idiom translation focuses on one or two problems out of the three problems: categorizing types of idioms, categoring translation strategies, and analyzing the quality of translation. For example, the first source Arumsari (2013) does

not categorize the idioms, Fachrizal (2018) and Fadhillah (2017) do not assess the quality of the translation, and Pratama (2016) does not examine the translation strategies. This study identifies idioms and categorizes types of idioms, and analysing strategies applied by two different translators using the theory by Baker (1992) and *literal tranlation* from Molina and Albir (2002).

Mona Baker (1992) proposed four strategies for translating idioms, that has been used by many researhers in their study about idiom translation. However, these four strategies cannot accomodate to identify all the strategies applied by the translators of the subtitle of *Iron Man* film; the translators also use literal tanslation.

Translation is the process of transferring a message from one language into another language, which consists of meaning and style (Nida, 1969). To translate idioms Mona Baker (1992) proposed the following strategies:

a. Using similar meaning and form (SMF): The translator use a target langage idiom which has the same meaning and lexical item.
b. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form (SMDF): The translator use an idiom which has the same meaning, but different lexical items.
c. Using a paraphrase: This strategy is commonly used in case the translator could not find any equivalent idiom in the target language. The translator uses different lexical and/or style.
d. Using omission: If the translator could not find any equivalent idiom in the target language, the translator often omits the idiom if the message can still be conveyed in the context.

As seen above Mona Baker (1992) proposes four strategies in translating idioms used by many researchers in their study about idiom translation. However, these four strategies cannot accommodate to identify all the strategies applied by the translators of the subtitle of Iron Man film; the translators also use literal translation. (Molina & Albir, 2002).

Fernando (1996) categorizes idioms into (1) Pure idiom which cannot be understood lierally from each word. The idiom "*ring any bells*" in *the McGrawHill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs* means to cause someone to remember

something they have known before. The meaning of the idiom itself has nothing to do with bells. (2) Semi idiom having one or more literal elements that have correlation with the meaning of the idiom and one having meaning that does not make sense literally. (3) Literal idiom which is usually less complex than the other two types of idiom. Although the expression is familiar, it is easier to understand.

Translation in Subtitling

Malenova (2015) basically states that subtitling, given that it belongs to multi-modality bilingual communication, involves aspects which complicate the techniques for the purpose of fast capture and synchronized with the dialogues, yet accurate content. Thus, he suggests that the translation be more dynamic:

> In other words, we can say that the formal equivalence is a kind of "word-to-word" translation or "text-oriented translation". Dynamic equivalence can be reached by providing the definite influence upon the target text addressee and getting the definite response, which will tend to be the same as the response of the source text addressee. (Melanova, 2015: 2892)

The challenge that is faced by subtitle translators refers to the strategy to "win both" the accuracy and the dynamic equivalence of the aspects as above mentioned. The study, however, shows that it is still hard to "win both" but they still have to maintain the flow of the story in the movie as closest to the original storyline.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research. The subject is the translation of idiomatic expressions in the English subtitle of the *Iron Man* film and the object is the translated idiomatic expressions in the Indonesian subtitle from official CD and free subtitle downloaded from a website called subscene.com translated by LuckMan. The data has been gathered through the identification and classification of idioms proposed by Makkai (1972).

In analyzing the data, the first step is finding the meaning of idiomatic expressions in the film by using *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and online dictionary as

Oxford Phrasal Verbs Dictionary and TheFreeDictionary.com. The next is analyzing the translation strategies of idioms found in the films, based on the theory of idiom translation from Mona Baker (1992) and literal translation from Molina and Albir (2002)

DISCUSSION

There are 130 idioms that can be found in the *Iron Man* film. The theory from Fernando (1996) was used in order to categorize the idioms based on its form.

Table 1: Categorization of Types of Idioms Found in Ironman

Type of Idioms	Frequency	Percentage
Pure idioms	33	25%
Semi Idioms	30	23%
Literal idioms	66	51%

The table shows that there are three types of idioms used in the *Iron Man* film. From 130 idioms found in the film, the most dominant type of idiom from the film is literal idiom with 66 idioms (51%), followed by pure idiom with 33 idioms (25%) and the last is semi-idiom with 30 idioms (24%).

Translation Strategies

There are five strategies identified in the subtitle as show in the table below.

Table 2: Distribution of the translation strategies both in the official subtitle from CD and the Internet

Translation strategies	Subtitle from official CD		Subtitle from subscene.com	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
SMF	5	3.9	5	3.9
SMDF	4	3.1	8	6.2
Translation by paraphrase	101	77.6	107	82.2
Translation by omission	15	11.5	3	2.3
Literal translation	5	3.9	7	5.4
TOTAL	130	100	130	100

The table shows that, in subtitle from official CD, the most common applied strategy is translation by paraphrase with 77.6%, followed by translation by omission with 11.4%, then SMF and literal translation with 3.9%. The lowest distribution of translation strategy is SMDF with 3.1%. The table also shows that there are five translation strategies used in the subtitle of the *Iron Man* film taken from a website called subscene.com. The most used strategy is translation by paraphrase in the subtitle with 82.3%. Next is SMDF with 6.2%, followed by literal translation with 5.4%, then SMF with 3.9%, and the least used strategy is translation by omission with 2.3%.

Thus, the most frequent strategy is translation by paraphrase both in the subtitle from original CD by Marvel (77.6%) and from a website called subscene.com (82.2%). Paraphrasing in translation requires longer process which involves paraphrasing in the original language before the meaning is rendered and put it into the target language. However, in the case of the subtitling translation in this study, it is clear that this strategy is the "safest". In addition, the dynamic equivalence which must concord the synchronicity and very limited time frame of capture.

CONCLUSION

The most frequent strategy used by the translator in translating the idioms is translation by paraphrase with 77.6% from the subtitle in the original CD by Marvel and 82.2% from the subtitle taken from subscene.com. The least translation strategy that the translators used are similar meaning and form (SMF) for the subtitle in the original CD and translation by omission for the subtitle taken from subscene.com. This means that the translator is very much aware of the consequence that wrong strategy can cause the meaning to deviate.

The figure also implies that literal translation in translating pure idiom into Bahasa Indonesia may result in fatal misunderstanding because pure idiom cannot be understood literally. This can be prevented if the translators have good knowledge of idioms in both languages. If the translators do not know the meaning of the idioms, s/he can look up in a reliable dictionary.

Using SMF and SMDF strategy might provide better result to the translation. However, if the translators have inadequate idiom repertoire in English and Bahasa Indonesia, the meaning of the idiom might be lost or not acceptable in the target language, especially in translating pure idiom and semi idiom. If the translator could not find any target language idiom equivalent, s/he could use paraphrase rather than translated it literally which results in meaning and cultural loss.

This conclusion is applicable in the case of idioms and culturally-specific expressions. In other words, if direct equivalents for idioms or cultural expressions are not available, "omission" would be used as another strategy for target audience. Furthermore, it can be inferred that this research can aid translating movies, idioms, and cultural expressions, using equivalents from the TL in an effective and acceptable way.

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