



Students' Difficulties in Translating Idiomatic Expressions in English Narrative Text

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigated the students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions in English narrative text and discovered its causes. The descriptive qualitative research design with research instruments in the form of questionnaires and interview guides was employed in this study. The source of data from this study was 33 students from the class XI IPA 1 of SMA Kartika I-2 Medan. This study found that the difficulties that arise when students translate narrative texts with idiom expressions in them are; (1) No equivalents in the TL for idiomatic expressions in the SL, (2) The context of idioms in SL and TL are different, (3) Idioms appear as its literal and idiomatic senses, and (4) The convention

differences of using idioms in writing discourse. This difficulty was felt by 29 of the 33 students in the classroom. In addition, during the translation process, it was found that students can felt more than one form of difficulty when translating a narrative text. Then, this study also found that the most frequent reasons for this difficulty factor are students who do not understand what English idioms really are and also the difficulty of distinguishing English idioms from other sentences that are not idiomatic expressions.

Keywords:

Idiomatic Expressions, Students' Difficulties, Translation

INTRODUCTION

English was widely taught as a foreign and second language in more than 100 countries (Crystal, 1997). In Indonesian schools, English itself has been studied since the junior high school level. Also becoming a local content for several elementary schools. English learning was carried out by focusing on four skills that must be mastered. That is to

read, write, listen, and speak. All these skills are then presented in basic competencies and are also supported by core competencies. In the learning process, English had many parts that must be understood by students. Starting from parts of speech such as nouns, adverbs, and even more complex things such as idioms. In their learning practice, it is also common for teachers used many methods, strategies, and approaches in the classroom. Teachers also often combine several methods and also ways to suit the needs of different students. It is because choosing a good strategy, approach, or method is the role of teachers in increasing enthusiasm, helping students get the right and proper understanding, as well as increasing interest in learning (Ozkazanc & Yuksel, 2015). One of the things that teachers often do to help students understand learning materials is to translate.

Translating helped the student to be able to understand the information that is in the target language that they want to learn. By translating, the message to be conveyed will be more acceptable so that learning can run smoothly. This is a process of translating the meaning of a text into another language in the way the author intended. In the process, the translation must not change the meaning of the source language (Newmark, 1998). One of the written learning resources that are often translated by students is a narrative text, more precisely in the form of folklore or short stories. This caused by several things. Starting from students who used a lot of story reading methods to learn English, narrative texts that seem to have a lot of new words because they are classified as one literary works, to the fact this text is the most discussed text at every level of school because of its entertaining and interesting characteristics for students.

In the process of translating narrative text with idiomatic expressions, students can feel disturbing difficulties which lead to misunderstandings of the meaning of a text. The main difficulties that can be experienced, based on Baker (2018), can be summarized as followed: (a) There were no equivalents in the target language for idiomatic expressions in the source language. This is because the way one language uses idioms to describe a situation is quite different from another. Baker added that sometimes a language can use one word only to express something. However, other languages may use more complex forms such as idioms; (b) Idioms in the source language and target language may have the same equivalent, but the context of their use were different. So, this can cause confusion in the translation process; (c) Idioms could appeared as literal as well as idiomatic senses simultaneously in the source language. This appears a lot in English which used expressions with quite a variety of meanings and (d) There were differences in conventions

for the use of idioms in written discourse, the context of their use, and also their frequency in the source language and target language.

If it is linked back to the use of narrative text, then students often found expressions that are the result of the culture, one of which is the idiom. Idioms can't be translated directly like translations in general, which students often did (Wright, 2002). Therefore, direct or word-for-word translations for idioms couldn't be used. In fact, based on the findings that researcher got from observations, students translated idioms using a word to word translation. Furthermore, after conducting the learning process, the teacher complained that most students didn't understand the content of their learning media. The teacher also stated that sometimes it is difficult to interact with students because the teacher must always translated the content of the media. The fact that students often used media from Smartphone to learn English also made teachers got questions about expressions in English that are not in books but found on the internet, such as slang and idioms. In line with the background of the study, the researcher intended: 1) To investigate students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions in English narrative text and 2) To discover the causes of students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions in English narrative text.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method because this research focused on the difficulties of translating idiomatic expressions and also the reasons. Researchers used this design because data analysis displayed descriptively. This method also used by researchers to described and interpreted the objects in accordance with reality. This method is in accordance with the research that investigate and analyzed the difficulties experienced by SMA Kartika I-2 Medan students and also found why these difficulties can arose. The sources of the data in this study were 33 students of class XI IPA 1 SMA Kartika I-2 Medan who had studied narrative texts in English subject. Therefore, the techniques of data collection used in this study were translation documentation, questionnaire distribution, and interviews.

After the researcher collected data using existing methods, then the data must be analyzed to get the information that wants to be found. In this study, the data analysis that will be used includes the three major phases proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014, p. 31), namely data condensation or reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS

Students have been given and translated a narrative text containing ten idioms. Here are the idioms contained in the text:

Table 1. Idioms in the narrative text titled "*The Unlucky Man*"

No.	Idiomatic Expressions		
	Source Language	Target Language	Meaning
1.	Got the axe	<i>Dipecat</i>	Get fired
2.	Felt down in the mouth	<i>Berwajah sedih, tertekan dan tidak tersenyum</i>	Sad-faced, depressed and unsmiling
3.	Give me a hand	<i>Memberikan pertolongan kepada seseorang</i>	Help someone with something
4.	Hit the sack	<i>Tidur</i>	Someone go to bed and go to sleep
5.	As pale as a ghost	<i>Pucat ketakutan</i>	Someone very pale or fear of something
6.	Miss the boat	<i>Menyia-nyiakan kesempatan</i>	To fail to take advantage of an opportunit
7.	A good egg	<i>Orang yang disukai/baik</i>	A likeable person
8.	Day by day	<i>Pada setiap hari berturut-turut/hari demi hari</i>	On each successive day
9.	Out of the blue	<i>Secara tiba-tiba/tanpa diduga</i>	Situation without warning or very unexpectedly
10.	One fell swoop	<i>Sekali serangan</i>	Single decisive with powerful action

After translating the text containing the idioms above, students then filled out a questionnaire and were involved in the interview process. The data obtained is described below.

Students' Difficulty in Translating Idiomatic Expressions in Narrative Text

In the questionnaire, statements 7, 8, 9, and 10 focus on the type of difficulty that students felt based on the theory presented by Baker (2018) about difficulty in translating idiomatic expressions. The researcher found the data which displayed in the table below.

Table 2. The Data for Difficulties in Translating Idiomatic Expressions

Statements	Difficulty	Percentage
I did not find Indonesian idioms that have the same meaning as English idioms in the text	No equivalents in the TL for idiomatic expressions in the SL	48.5%
I found difficulties to understand	The context of idioms in SL	45.5%

the meaning and intent of the English idioms in the text Statements	and TL are different Difficulty	Percentage
I found difficulties to distinguish between English idioms and literal sentences	Idioms appear as its literal and idiomatic senses	42.4%
I'm not familiar with the use of idioms in written text	The convention differences of using idioms in writing discourse	54.5%

Based on the data obtained by focusing on these statements, and after did the calculation with another responses, the following conclusions are obtained:

- 1) As many as 87.9% of students could not understand the meaning and context of the use of idioms that appear in narrative text. Therefore, in the translation process, difficulties to translate it into the target language arise.
- 2) There are 78.8% of students find it difficult to distinguish idioms from literal sentences. This makes the translation process a little confusing for them
- 3) About 78.5% of students could not find idiom expressions that had the same meaning as the target language.
- 4) There are 69.7% of students find it difficult to translate idioms because they are not familiar with the use of idioms in writing.

Factors of Difficulty in Translating Idiomatic Expressions in Narrative Texts

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher, several similar responses were obtained for reasons or factors from the difficulties to translate the idiom.

Table 3. The First Reasons of Difficulties

No	Interview Responses	Reasons of Difficulties
		Lexical Difficulties
Researcher: In your opinion, what are the biggest factors or reasons that give rise to these difficulties in translating?		
1.	<i>Karena kata-katanya kadang ada yang susah dan berbelit. Juga gak terbiasa dan aneh</i> (Because the words are sometimes difficult and complicated. I also unfamiliar and strange) (Student 4)	The translator did not understand the word
2.	<i>Kesulitan karena saya kurang paham kalimat-kalimat idiom. Saya juga jarang melihat kalimat idiom</i> (It was difficult because I didn't understand the idioms. I also rarely see idiomatic expressions) (Student 9)	
3.	<i>Ada sih, Kak. Contohnya belum pernah dibahas kan tentang idiom. Jadi, saat tesnya dilakukan, saya baru tau dan paham apa itu idiom</i> (Yes, I have. For example, idioms have never been discussed. So, when	

	the test was done, I just knew and understood what idioms are) (Student 15)	
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No	Interview Responses	Reasons of Difficulties
		Lexical Difficulties
4.	<i>Kekurangan kosa kata terus tidak terbiasa dalam idiom itu. Lalu, saya juga kesehariannya jarang belajar bahasa Inggris</i> (The lack of vocabulary also unfamiliar with that idiom. Then, I also rarely learn English) (Student 21)	The translator did not understand the word
5.	<i>Kesulitannya itu karena tidak pernah tahu bahasanya juga. Lalu, belum pernah dibahas</i> (The difficulty was because I never knew the language either. Then, it has never been discussed) (Student 22)	
6.	<i>Saya tidak tau kalau itu idiom. Saya baca teksnya, saya langsung terjemahin. Saya tidak tau itu apa, Kak. Memang gak diajarkan juga di sini</i> (I didn't know it was an idiom. I read the text, I immediately translated. I don't know what it is. It's not taught here either) (Student 25)	

The table shown the data taken from interviews conducted with students. The responses given by students became the data that shows the reasons for the difficulties that arise. A total of six data indicate that students experienced difficulties where they, as translators, did not understand the word. Students stated that the words in idioms could not be understood in which they were not familiar with idiomatic expressions.

Table 4. The Second Reasons of Difficulties

No	Interview Responses	Reasons of Difficulties
		Lexical Difficulties
Researcher: In your opinion, what are the biggest factors or reasons that give rise to these difficulties in translating?		
1.	<i>Pernah, kan waktu itu, yang idiom itu, ada saya merasa kesulitan. Untuk kalimat idiomnya juga saya sulit memahaminya dan menerjemahkannya</i> (Yes, I have. Right at that time, that idiom, I found it difficult. For the idiom expressions I also find it difficult to understand the meaning and to translate it) (Student 12)	The translator found the word is difficult to translate

No	Interview Responses	Reasons of Difficulties
		Lexical Difficulties
2.	<i>Sulit sih.. soalnya kan kadang di alat bantu terjemahan itu gak sesuai sama makna yang sebenarnya. Saya gak terbiasa juga sama penggunaan idiom</i> (It's hard.. The problem is that sometimes the translation tool does not match the actual meaning. I'm not used to the idiom) (Student 16)	The translator found the word is difficult to translate
3.	<i>Saya kan jarang atau tidak pernah melihat idiom, jadi kesulitan saat memahami dan menerjemahkannya</i> (I rarely or never see idioms, so I have difficulty understanding and translating them) (Student 23)	
4.	<i>Untuk idiomnya, kan saya baru tau. Lalu kalimat idiom itu maknannya di luar nalar. Jadi saya bingung kok artinya itu</i> (As for the idiom, I just found out what is it. Then the idiom expressions have a strange meaning. So I'm confused about what that means) (Student 27)	
5.	<i>Memahami kata-katanya aja sih, Kak. Cara saya memahaminya dan membedakannya dengan kalimat biasa itu dari konteks ceritanya. Misalnya teks kemarin kan judulnya <i>The Unlucky Man</i>, yang mana artinya <i>Pria yang Tidak Beruntung</i>. Nah, terus saya lihat di teksnya kok ada "good egg". Kan tidak nyambung, jadi pasti idiom</i> (Just to understand the words. The way I understand it and distinguish it from that literal sentence is from the context of the story. For example, yesterday's text was titled "The Unlucky Man", which means "Unlucky Man". Well, I continue to see in the text how come there is a "good egg". It's not relate, so it must be an idiom) (Student 30)	

As can be seen in the data, most of the students answered that they were unfamiliar with or did not even know about idioms. In addition, students also revealed, even though the teacher has taught them, students do not really understand idioms and also their use in written discourse. This suggests that the biggest factor or reason for the difficulty is the student's lack of understanding of the concept and meaning of idioms.

DISCUSSIONS

The research that has been done, along with observations before the study, the researcher found that some students claimed to have learned about idioms. Some students explain in more detail that they learned idioms not from school but from their families. While some students feel doubtful and state that idioms have never been entirely discussed

in school. Even so, difficulties in translating idiom expressions persisted during the research process.

Based on the data obtained, especially from questionnaire data that focuses more on difficulties, it can be seen that the difficulties felt by students when translating idiomatic expressions are in line with the theory of Baker (2018) about the difficulty in translating. In addition, it is also found from the class that students can feel more than one difficulty in translating as described by Baker when translating a narrative text.

Based on the data from interviews, the reasons and factors that caused difficulty in translating idioms are due to students who are not familiar with idioms. In addition, students felt that the meaning of these idiom expressions seems foreign and not the same as the expressions they have known so far. From the interviews that the researcher conducted also emerged statements from students who said that knowing and understanding the meaning of idioms is important in learning English because it is one part of the language. Some students explain that if left unrefined, there could be miscommunication if they use English outside of the school environment in the future. Then, some students also think that not understanding the idiom will not interrupt their learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research that has been done, the researcher got some findings and answers to research questions that have been described in chapter one. The data from these findings have been presented in chapter four and lead the researcher to draw the conclusions below about students of grade XI IPA 1 difficulty in translating idiom expressions in English narrative text. They are as follows: 1) Students have admitted to having difficulty in understanding and translating narrative text, especially for idiomatic expressions. After translating, it was found from the data that as many as 26 students found it difficult to find equivalents in the TL for idiomatic expressions in the SL. Then, the difficulty related to the context of idioms in SL and TL is different, felt by 29 students. For difficulties related to idioms that appear as their literal and idiomatic senses, 26 students felt it. Then, for the last form of difficulty, as many as 23 students felt the difficulty in the form of the convention differences of using idioms in writing discourse. This data also shows that students can feel two or more forms of difficulty in one moment of translation, and 2) The researcher have conducted interviews to obtain supporting data and reasons

for why these difficulties may arise. This is based on the students' feelings as someone who played a direct role in the translation process. From the data obtained, the researcher can conclude that the most reasons given by students for factors that caused these difficulties are lack of understanding and students who are not familiar with the use of English idioms. Students also described that they had difficulty distinguishing literal sentences from idiomatic expressions. Therefore, it took more time and effort for them to translated the existing text.

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