STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION FROM ENGLISH INTO INDONESIAN

Dian Paramita Ayuningtyas[1*], Muhimatul Ifadah[2], Siti Aimah[3]
Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang
Indonesia
*dianprmita13@gmail.com

Abstract

This research is about the difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions. It is aimed to find out about how students translate the idiomatic expressions, and the difficulties experienced by students during the translating process.18 English Education students were taken as the sample of the study by purposive sampling. The students were given translation test which contained idiomatic expressions. The students' translation results were analyzed to know the accuracy level. The result of accuracy level then leads to the analysis of students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions. Therefore, questionnaire and short interview were employed to gain further data. The research found that 15% of students' translations were totally inadequate, 23% were inadequate, 10% were adequate, 14% were almost successful, and 38% were successful. The fact that the amount of the inaccurate translation result was more than the accurate translation result indicated that the students experienced difficulties during the translating process. Meanwhile, the translation difficulties experienced by students were lexical difficulty at 73%, stylistic difficulty at 67.5%, cultural difficulty at 66%, and 64% for grammatical difficulty. Based on the result, it is suggested for the students to improve their knowledge of English idiom and the translating ability. In addition, the students should optimize the use of dictionary to help produce good translation. For teachers, the result of the research can be used to reflect the students' difficulties in translation, so that they are expected to overcome the difficulties by considering students' ability and background knowledge in translation.

Keywords: difficulties, translation, idiom

Introduction

Translation isan actual issue to be discussed in the scope of foreign language learning. According to Bell in Ordudari (2008) translation is about transferring the meaning from source language into target language. From the definition, we know that translation is not simply about literary changing word to word, sentence to sentence in source language into target language. Yet, it also requires knowledge and understanding to choose the closest and the most proper equivalence in target language to properly convey the message contained in source language into target language.

However, translator often encounters some difficulties during the translation process, especially in translating figurative language. Figurative language isnormally found in any literary works such as novel, poetry, and prose, in a form of metaphor, proverb, or idiomatic expressions. However, figurative language is also used in formal writing such as article or news in magazines and newspaper. One of the expressions of figurative language that can be found either in literary works or formal writing is idiomatic expression. Idiomatic expressions are often being included either in English or in *Bahasa Indonesia.*

The use of idiomatic expression in any kind of material often requires Indonesian students to find and translate idiomatic expression from their language into English and vice versa. During the process of translating idiomatic expression, the problems of translation may show up. As mentioned by Wright (2002, p. 10), translating idiom is considered to be difficult, since idiom cannot be translated as word for word. Translator should understand the meaning first before translating the whole meaning.

2nd English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC)
Proceedings – (ELLiC Proceedings Vol. 2, 2018)

Electronic ISSN: 2579-7263
CD-ROM ISSN: 2579-7549

During the process of translation, there are some difficulties that might be encountered by translator. As proposed by Hartono (2009, pp. 62-89), those difficulties are classified as: (1) Lexical difficulties, (2) Stylistic difficulties, (3) Grammatical difficulties, and (4) Cultural difficulties.The translation difficulties can also be represented by the quality of a translation product. Maghfur (2013) concluded if only less than half of the translation results were successfully translated, it means that the students still have several difficulties in translating the meaning of idiomatic expressions. Therefore, the researcher will also try to find out the quality of students' translation products using the rubric of translation accuracy assessment by Waddington (2001, p. 315) in which there are five levels of translation accuracy as listed below:

Table 1. Translation Quality Assessment Rubric

	Accuracy level	Indicator	Mark
Level 1	Inadequate transfer of ST content. Not worth revision	Total lack of ability in transferring message	1-2
Level 2	Serious inaccuracies in transferring the message. Need thorough revision.	Almost the entire text reads like a translation. Continual errors	3-4
Level 3	Succeed transfer of the general idea but with a number of inaccuracies. Considerable revision	Certain parts read like an originally written in TL, but other like translation. Considerable errors	5-6
Level 4	Almost complete transfer, one or two inaccuracies. Little revision	Large section read like originally written in TL. Number of errors.	7-8
Level 5	Complete information transfer. Minor revision	Completely read like originally written in TL. Minor errors	9-10

Based on the fact above, the researcher would like to find out the difficulties encountered by students in translating idiomatic expression from English into Indonesian by first knowing the quality of their translation product. Therefore, the objective of the research are (1) to find out how the sixth and eighth semester educational program students of University of Muhammadiyah Semarang in the Academic Year 2016-2017 translate idiomatic expression from English into Indonesian, and (2) to find out the students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expression from English into Indonesian.

Methodology

This research used descriptive qualitative method as the research methodology. Descriptive qualitative study is aimed to record an event, situation, or circumstance (Fraenkell and Wallen 2012, pp. 459). In addition, Fraenkell and Wallen also state that qualitative research is a study that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. Therefore, the researcher described students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expression from English into Indonesian, in which the researcher collected and analyzed the data without experimental manipulation, then drew conclusion based on the data analysis.

The researcher used purposive sampling in choosing 18 students of English education program at University of Muhammadiyah Semarang as the sample of the research. The consideration is based on the achievement of the students that the sixth and eighth semester students of English Education program have taken English – Indonesian translation and English idioms subject. Therefore, it is hoped that the sample were able to represent the data needed for the research. In collecting the data, the researcher used translation test to gain data about translation accuracy and further to identify the translation difficulties. The translation test was in a form of written test consisted of 15 sentences with idiomatic

expressions taken from *Jakarta Post* daily newspaper. The result of the translation test was also supported by the questionnaire and interview data about students' background knowledge and translation difficulties. Most of the data analysis of this research was conveyed in non-statistical analysis. However, the researcher also provided data to see the percentage and frequencies to support the research. Especially in analyzing the questionnaire, the researcher used the formulation from Sugiyono (2010, p. 94) to calculate the finding of the Likert scale questionnaire.

Findings and Discussion

1. Translation accuracy assessment

The translation test was used by the researcher to gain data about students' translation accuracy. The test consisted of 15 numbers of written translation test which was distributed to the 18 students. As the result, there were total 270 translation data collected. For detail, here is the table of the general finding as the overview of the students' accuracy level.

Table 2.Students' Translations Accuracy Assessment

Level	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Data	41	62	28	39	100	270
(%)	15	23	10	14	38	100

The accuracy levels of the students' translation were calculated by collecting the 270 idioms translated by the students. Hence, there are total 270 data which are classified into five levels. The rate 1 accuracy level represents the totally inadequate translation, rate 2 accuracy level represents the inadequate translation, rate 3 accuracy level represents the adequate translation, rate 4 accuracy level represents the almost completely successful translation, and meanwhile rate 5 accuracy represents the successful translation of the students.

a. The Totally Inadequate Translation

The totally inadequate translation refers to the rate 1 accuracy level which means that the students were not able to

adequately transfer both of the meaning and the form of idioms. In this case, the students have to try doing the translation again instead of revision. For example, the idiom "it goes without saying" of which the student mostly translated into "*sangat jelas*" or "obvious" in English was inadequately translated by one of the students as written bellow.

(I) ST : "it goes without saying …"
    TT : "*itu yang kita usah dikatakan …*"

The translation above made the whole sentence in targetlanguage seems awkward or even cannot be understood.

b. The Inadequate Translation

Some of the idioms translation which were considered into the level 2 were "close call". According to Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, "close call" means a narrow escape from danger or disaster. In *Bahasa Indonesa*, that kind of situation is said with "*dalam keadaan terhimpit*". Or else, there is Indonesian Idiom which has the same idea with that situation; "*berada di ujung tanduk*". However, most of the students translated the idiom by words so that they were unable to find the equivalence in *Bahasa Indonesia*. They cannot even guess the meaning of the idiom. Most of them were misguided because of the word "call", so that they translated the idiom with something related to the "call" which means "*panggilan*" or "*telepon*" in *Bahasa Indonesia*. The students' translation for the idiom "close call" among others were "*panggilan yang dekat*,"*komunikasi*", "*kenalan*", "*telepon yang sangat akrab*", and"*kedekatan*".

c. The Adequate Translation

The idiom of which the translation categorized into the rate of 3 accuracy levels is "stand any chance of". Based on the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, this idiom is used to state when someone has a prospect of success or if it is able to survive. In *Bahasa Indonesia*, it can be replaced with "*membuka peluang untuk*" or "*bertahan dari*".

However, most of the students translate the idiom as "*ingin*", "*berusaha*", "*mampu*", "*banyak kesempatan*", and "*ingin mendapat kesempatan*".

Those translations categorized into the translation accuracy level 3 since the translation contained the main idea of the idiom "stand any chance of" which is related to "effort to try something". However, the forms of words chosen to translate the idiom were unsuitable to the given context. In order to form a perfect translation which is read as originally written in target language, the translator should both choose the suitable equivalence and the form of word according to the context.

d. The Almost Completely Successful Translation

The almost completely successful translation refers to the rate 4 accuracy level which means that there may be a few insignificant inaccuracies that require revision. One of idioms which were almost completely translated by the students was "look forward to". According to Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, the idiom means "to wait eagerly". Meanwhile in this sentence, the idiom tended to convey something which is eagerly expected in the future. Therefore, the most suitable translation for the idiom in *Bahasa Indonesia* is "*berharap*" or "*berharap kedepannya*".In the case of student J, she had translated the idiom "look forward to" into "*berharap lebih*", which is correct according to the dictionary. However, if we thoroughly read the translation, it created the slightly different message than the initially intended in the sentence.

(J) ST : "We see that Indonesian Belarus may become significant trading partners. Therefore, we **look forward to** more Indonesian citizens visiting Belarus in the future."

TT : "*Kami melihat bahwa Indonesia dan Belarus mungkin menjadi mitra dagang yang signifikan. Karena itu kami sangat **berharap lebih** warganegara Indonesia*

mengunjungi Belarus di masa depan.

Just like student J, some students have also successfully translated the main idea of the idiom, however it still need some revision to result a natural translation.

e. The Successful Translation

The successful translation refers to the rate 5 accuracy level which means that there is a complete transfer of the Source Text Idioms and only minor revision needed. One of the idiom translation categorized in this level was the idiom "get rid of". The idiom "get rid of" in the dictionary means dispose of, "destroy", "remove", "eliminate", and etc. However, according to the context, "throw away" or "*membuang*" in *Bahasa Indonesia* is the most suitable word to translate the idiomatic expression in this sentence. From the result, it can be seen that 14 from the total 18 students had been successfully translated the idiom "get rid of".

2. ***Background Knowledge of the Students***

The questionnaire and interview were used to gain data about students background related to translation and idiomatic expressions. The result of students' background knowledge from the questionnaire can be seen as follow:

Table 3.Students' Background Knowledge about Idiom

Question	Indicators	Result	
		Percentage (%)	Category
1	Ability in identifying Indonesian idiom	74	High
2	The involvement with Indonesian idiom	76	High
3	The involvement with English idiom	61	High
4	The use of English idiom dictionary	54	Relatively high
5	The use of various sources other than idiom dictionary	80	High
6	The process of translation involving understanding of the	78	High

meaning before translating into the proper equivalence

From the interview, it is revealed that most of them were not used to translating activities. This condition influenced the translation product of the students. There were only 5 out of 18 students who accustomed more to translating activities. Related to the students' background knowledge about idiom, the researcher concluded that students' familiarity with the form of Indonesian idiom is high. Most of them know about idiomatic expressions as "*ungkapan*" in *Bahasa Indonesia*. They found that idiom and proverb is the different thing. However, two of them mentioned that "*peribahasa*" or proverb included into idiomatic expressions. As stated above, idiomatic expressions can be in various forms, such as phrasal verbs, compound words, and proverbs. Therefore, the students' knowledge about English idiom can be categorized as high. It was proved by how they describe about what is idiom and the example of idioms they know. However, the percentage of their acquaintance toward English idiom is lower compared to Indonesian idiom. Some students even stated that they were not familiar with the idiom used in the translation test.

In translating the idiomatic expressions, there are some tools which were used to help them during the translation process. Other than dictionary, students preferred to look up the meaning of the idiom from various online sources such as website or online dictionary. Besides, in term of understanding the meaning, 74% of students tried to understand the meaning of the idiom first, before looking up the idiom equivalence in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Therefore, the process of translating the idiom did not directly transfer the English idiom into Indonesian idiom, but also involved the process of finding and understanding meaning of the idiom in source language.

3. Translation difficulties

Related to the difficulties in translation, it was highly found that the students experienced significance difficulties during the translation process. The percentage showed by the data was 76%. The data of translation difficulties gained from the questionnaire is listed as follow:

Table 4. Students' Difficulties in Translating Idiomatic Expressions

Question	Indicators	Result	
		Percentage (%)	Category
7	Difficulties during the translation process	76	High
8, 10, 11	Lexical difficulty	73	High
14, 15	Stylistic difficulty	67.5	High
12, 13	Cultural difficulty	66	High
9	Grammatical difficulty	64	High

a. Lexical difficulty

Based on the data, the lexical difficulty encountered by students was 73%. This difficulty was drawn since most of the students were unable to identify the idiomatic expressions contained in the sentences. Students' inability in identifying the idiomatic expressions was mainly caused by the lack of vocabulary mastery. In addition, the idiomatic expressions used as the translation test were taken from *Jakarta Post* of which the vocabularies used in the news were less familiar for the students. Therefore, the lexical difficulty appeared during the translation process was because the students did not understand the vocabulary used in the translation test. As the result, the idiomatic expressions sometimes translated literally just like the common words.

On the other hand, some students were able to identify the idiomatic expression. They were able to differentiate between the literal word and the idiomatic expressions. However, they misunderstood the meaning of the idiom. The misunderstanding was happened since the students thought that they understood the

meaning, but they failed in transferring the meaning of the idiom into the proper *Bahasa Indonesia*. In addition, there were only few of students who were able to get the meaning of the whole sentence. As the result, they failed in understanding or guessing the meaning of the idiom. It means that the context of the sentence was a significant element to help students in understanding and further translating the idiomatic expressions from English into *Bahasa Indonesia*.

b. Grammatical difficulty

The grammatical difficulty might occur because of some grammatical issues in English – Indonesian translation. In this research, the grammatical difficulty found was limited in the aspect such as the form of word. For example, in case of translating verbs, the word that should be translated as passive voice was translated into active form, and vice versa. One of the factors contributed in the translation failure is the improper use of dictionary. We know that most dictionaries, in this case English - Indonesian dictionary offers the active form translation of verbs. On the other hand, the students who looked up for the meaning of a word by using dictionary tend to instantly take the word from the dictionary and put it into the sentence without any adjustment. Besides, the fact that Indonesian students are used to translate the verb –ing form into active verb was also related to the translation failure. Nevertheless, the verb –ing form in English is not always present a verb.

c. Cultural difficulty

Since idiomatic expression is one of the culturally related expressions, it is common for the translator or students to have difficulty in cultural category. In this study, the data showed that the cultural difficulty experienced by students during the translation process reached 66%. It was indicated by students' acquaintance with idiom either in *Bahasa Indonesia* or English. The students stated that their acquaintance

with Idiomatic expressions involved in the text used as instrument was not high enough. They were just able to recognize few numbers of the idiomatic expression used. The students' acquaintance and awareness toward English idiom may be affected by some factors. One of these is that the students did not know much about English culture, especially the culturally related language such as idiomatic expression. Therefore, the idiomatic expressions they found in the translation test seemed unfamiliar to them. To cope with the difficulty, students should put their concern toward English idiom, so that they will understand the meaning, and further they are accustomed to use the idiomatic express either in their writing or utterance. When they understand the meaning of idiomatic expressions, it will be easier for them to look up the idiom equivalence in *Bahasa Indonesia*.

d. Stylistic difficulty

As mentioned before that the students' acquaintance toward idiom is not culturally high enough, it was also difficult for students to give the perfect translation in a matter of style. In the other words, cultural difficulty also influenced the stylistic difficulty. Actually, most of the students translate the idiom into the same unit of language. However, the translation only employed the literal word for word translation.

To perform a perfect translation of idiomatic expressions, the students should be able to give the idiom equivalence in the target language. For example in translating idiom "close call", the first thing do is finding the meaning. The meaning of "close call" according to Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, "close call" means a narrow escape from danger or disaster. In *Bahasa Indonesia*, that kind of situation is said with "*dalam keadaan terhimpit*". After finding the meaning, students can start to look up for Indonesian Idiom which has the same idea with that situation, which is "*berada di ujung*

tanduk". Therefore, the translation product in *Bahasa Indonesia* will not only give the meaning of the idiom, but also contain the idiomatic expression in the source text's idiom. In addition, to cope with the stylistic difficulty, students should improve their knowledge by reading and practicing more translation so that they will have more experience in translating idiomatic expressions.

Conclusions

The students translated the idiomatic expressions mostly by word for word translation. They translated the idiomatic expressions only by transferring the meaning without transferring the English idiom into the equivalent form of Indonesian idiom. The students were also assisted with any information they browsed mostly from the internet to find the meaning of the idiom. As the result, only 100 from the total 270 translation data or the percentage is 38% which were able to be categorized as accurate translation, because they produced good translation products which were read like originally written in target language.The result revealed that the unsuccessful translation data were as the consequence of the difficulties encountered by students during the translation process. The students' difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions were (1) lexical difficulty on 73%, (2) stylistic difficulty on 67.5%, (3) cultural difficulty on 66%, (4) grammatical difficulty on 64%. The researcher draws the conclusion above after analyzing the collected data. Based on that conclusion, it is suggested that:

1. The students should improve their ability in translating by doing more practice of translation, either from English into Indonesian or vice versa.
2. The students should optimize the use of dictionary to help the students in producing good translation product. The recommended dictionary is the English dictionary such as *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.
3. The students should improve their awareness and knowledge of English idiom by reading various materials in English such as articles, papers, news from online media, English newspaper or magazine, song lyrics, and even movie's subtitles in English.
4. The students should pay more attention to the meaning of the idioms in order to get the clear meaning of the idioms, so that it is better if the students also use the English idiom dictionary.
5. The result of the research can be used to reflect the students' difficulties in translation, so that the teachers and teacher candidates are expected to be able to overcomethe difficulties by applying the most suitable approach during the translation classrelated to the students'ability and their background knowledgein translation.

References

Fraenkel, J. Wallen, N. and Hyun, H. (1990) *.How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012.

Hartono, Rudi. (2009). *TeoriPenerjemahan (A Handbook for Translators).* Semarang: Cipta Prima Nusantara

Maghfur, Anif. (2013). *Accuracy Level of Student English-Indonesian Translation of Idiomatic Expressions* .A final project of undergraduate degree. Semarang. State University of Semarang.

Ordudari, Mahmoud. (2008). Good Translation: Art, Craft, or Science?.*TranslationJournal.*Retrieved January 22, 2017 from http://translationjournal.net/journal/43theory.htm.

Sugiyono.(2010). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan (Pendekatan Kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*). Bandung: Alfabeta

Waddington, C. (2001). *Different Methods of Evaluating Student Translations: The*

Question of Validity.
http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/004583ar
(Downloaded on November 14, 2016).

Wright, John. (2002). *Idioms Organizer; Organized by metaphor, topic and keyword*. Boston: Heinle. (Downloaded at
http://predmet.sinergija.edu.ba/pluginfile.php/4795/mod_folder/content/1/Idioms%20Organiser.pdf?forcedownload=1 on November 11, 2016).