

TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES FOR IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN SUBTITLING AND DUBBING: A STUDY ON RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON

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Abstract: This study examines the translation equivalence and techniques used in translating idiomatic expressions in the subtitling and dubbing of the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Using a qualitative case study approach, 72 idiomatic expressions were analyzed based on Nida & Taber's theory of translation equivalence and Molina and Albir's translation techniques. Results showed that 51% of subtitling and 52% of dubbing translations were equivalently translated into idiomatic expressions, while the remaining were rendered as non-idiomatic expressions due to the lack of equivalent idioms in the target language. Single translation techniques dominated, accounting for 98% in subtitling and 99% in dubbing, with established equivalence being the most frequently used technique. This highlights the translator's ability to maintain idiomatic meaning and cultural relevance. The study recommends exploring idiomatic translation strategies in diverse audiovisual media and cultural contexts to further enhance the understanding of effective translation techniques.

Keywords: *Translation techniques; idiomatic expressions; subtitling; dubbing; equivalence; established equivalence; audiovisual translation.*

INTRODUCTION

Translation serves as a vital mechanism to bridge linguistic and cultural divides, enabling effective communication and fostering understanding in a globalized world (Creswell, 2009; Munday, 2010; Molina & Albir, 2002). Audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling and dubbing, has emerged as a crucial tool in facilitating the consumption of cross-cultural media, ensuring that audiences from diverse backgrounds can access and appreciate foreign-language films and television (Chen, 2020; Supardi & Putri, 2018; Adianti et al., 2022). Idiomatic expressions, often regarded as culturally

embedded linguistic features, present significant challenges for translators due to their non-literal meanings and dependence on cultural context (Thyab, 2016; Nida & Taber, 2004; Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017).

Ahdillah et al. (2020) discuss strategies used in translating idioms in *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*, emphasizing cultural adaptation for equivalence. Akbar (2020) highlights paraphrasing and substitution as effective techniques, while Al-Jarf (2022; 2023) explores Arabic and English idioms, revealing challenges such as cultural gaps in phrases like "home" and numeral-based

expressions. Polatovna and Ugli (2021) address English-Uzbek idiomatic translation, showcasing the role of linguistic structure in cultural alignment. Kamal (2022) compares idiom translation strategies among Jordanian and Saudi students, highlighting cultural variation. Meanwhile, Gerasimova (2020) investigates animal idioms across languages, focusing on metaphorical divergence. These studies underline the need for culturally adaptive strategies to preserve idiomatic meaning across linguistic barriers.

The choice of translation strategies plays a crucial role in achieving equivalence in idiomatic translations. Andayani et al. (2023) explore idiomatic translations in musical lyrics, where balancing semantic fidelity and cultural resonance is critical. Ardi (2020) and Rozikin (2021) analyze idiomatic translation strategies in TV series and movies, demonstrating the effectiveness of cultural adaptation. Sinurat et al. (2022) examine idiom translation in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, while Su (2021) focuses on metaphorical idioms in *Hongloumeng*, exploring creative approaches. Ramadhan and Wardana (2021) study translation methods in *Earth*, while Fachrizal (2017) and Yulianti et al. (2022) investigate idiomatic subtitling in *The Infiltrator* and *Crazy Rich Asians*, respectively. Rohmawati et al. (2022) address culture-specific challenges in classic novels, emphasizing contextual adaptation. Together, these studies highlight the complex interplay between linguistic equivalence and cultural preservation in translation.

Technological advancements have significantly improved idiomatic translation by incorporating computational tools. Baziotis, Mathur, and Hasler (2022) discuss automatic evaluation of idioms in neural machine translation (NMT), revealing its limitations. Dankers, Lucas, and Titov (2022) and Li et al. (2024) explore models like *IdiomKB*, designed to enhance idiomatic understanding in machine translation. Zhou et al. (2022) and Zeng & Bhat (2021) develop tools for idiom paraphrasing and semantic compatibility. Briskilal and Subalalitha (2022) demonstrate the use of BERT and RoBERTa models to classify idioms, while Tahayna et al. (2022) highlight sentiment annotation for idiomatic expressions. Harmon (2021) examines idioms as a translation technique, proposing theoretical approaches to better integrate technology with human insights. These innovations are revolutionizing idiomatic translation by bridging linguistic gaps through advanced computational techniques.

Idiomatic expressions in media and literature pose unique challenges due to their cultural specificity and contextual nuance. Floranti and Mubarak (2020) analyze idiomatic translation in *This Earth of Mankind*, while Labarta Postigo (2021) examines idiom translation in multilingual TV series. Haider and Shuhaiber (2024) explore Netflix subtitling issues in Egyptian movies, and Shanti Manipuspika and Winzami (2021) assess subtitling idioms in films. Van Thao (2021) highlights idiomatic expressions in Ed Sheeran's lyrics, emphasizing cultural interpretation. Mariana et al. (2021) examine the cognitive processing of idiomatic expressions, providing insights into their functional anatomy. Kovalenko and Martynyuk (2021) investigate verbal and visual puns, while Lada et al. (2024) assess the ambiguity and frequency of Greek idioms. These studies illustrate how idiomatic expressions require a delicate balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural resonance in media and literature translation.

The interdisciplinary nature of idiomatic translation research highlights its complexity and cultural richness. Al-Jarf (2023) and Taxirovna (2023) explore the cultural nuances in translating English and Uzbek stories, while Aripova (2023) examines linguistic and cultural traits influencing idiom translation. Ta'amneh (2021) identifies strategies and difficulties faced by learners, emphasizing the importance of education in understanding idiomatic expressions. Qassem (2021) provides a cultural perspective on translation strategies, while Arifuddin et al. (2020) focus on the application of idioms in hospitality and tourism education. These interdisciplinary insights indicate that translating idiomatic expressions requires a blend of linguistic, cultural, and technological expertise to address the challenges posed by globalization and cultural diversity.

The importance of translating idiomatic expressions accurately has been widely acknowledged in academic discourse, as idioms often encapsulate cultural nuances and figurative meanings that are difficult to convey directly in another language (Zayed et al., 2021; Adianti et al., 2022; Molina & Albir, 2002). Effective translation of idiomatic expressions ensures that the cultural and emotional essence of the source language (SL) is preserved in the target language (TL), making the text relatable and meaningful to the target audience (Munday, 2008; Chen, 2020; Premasari & Widodo, 2021). The challenge lies in addressing the semantic and cultural gaps that arise due to

differences in idiomatic usage across languages (Supardi & Putri, 2018; Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017).

Translation serves as a cultural mediator, bridging the linguistic and cultural divides between source and target audiences. Audiovisual translation (AVT), including subtitling and dubbing, has become a critical tool in this mediation process. Scholars have emphasized that translating idiomatic expressions requires careful attention to cultural context, as idioms often carry meanings that are deeply embedded in their original culture (Munday, 2008; Molina & Albir, 2002; Chen, 2020). Subtitling and dubbing, as primary forms of AVT, aim to preserve the authenticity of the source text while ensuring that the target text remains comprehensible and engaging (Supardi & Putri, 2018; Zayed et al., 2021).

Idiomatic expressions, by their nature, pose unique challenges in translation due to their figurative meanings and cultural specificity. Researchers have highlighted that literal translations often fail to convey the intended meaning, necessitating the use of equivalence-based approaches (Thyab, 2016; Nida & Taber, 2004; Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017). Various techniques, such as modulation, adaptation, and compensation, are employed to address these challenges, ensuring that the cultural essence of idiomatic expressions is retained in the target language (Munday, 2008; Molina & Albir, 2002; Fitriyah, 2020).

Subtitling is characterized by temporal and spatial constraints, requiring concise and effective language use to synchronize with on-screen visuals. This makes the translation of idiomatic expressions particularly challenging, as translators must balance brevity with semantic fidelity (Supardi & Putri, 2018; Agung, 2022; Premasari & Widodo, 2021). Studies have shown that established equivalence is frequently used in subtitling due to its effectiveness in maintaining idiomatic meaning within limited space (Molina & Albir, 2002; Zayed et al., 2021; Lestari, 2019).

Dubbing involves replacing the source language audio with target language audio, requiring precise synchronization of lip movements and intonation. This method allows for greater linguistic flexibility compared to subtitling, enabling translators to employ creative techniques such as paraphrasing and cultural adaptation (Chen, 2020; Supardi & Putri, 2018; Adianti et al., 2022). Studies have noted that dubbing often achieves higher idiomatic equivalence due to its ability to accommodate longer and more nuanced

translations (Premasari & Widodo, 2021; Zayed et al., 2021).

Molina & Albir's (2002) classification of translation techniques provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing idiomatic translation. Established equivalence, modulation, and reduction are among the most frequently used techniques in both subtitling and dubbing (Munday, 2008; Chen, 2020; Pratama & Damara, 2018). These techniques help translators address the semantic gaps between source and target languages, ensuring that the idiomatic essence is preserved (Supardi & Putri, 2018; Agung, 2022).

Comparative studies of subtitling and dubbing have revealed distinct patterns in the use of translation techniques. While subtitling prioritizes conciseness and readability, dubbing focuses on naturalness and synchrony (Supardi & Putri, 2018; Adianti et al., 2022; Agung, 2022). Researchers have observed that idiomatic expressions are more frequently translated equivalently in dubbing due to its linguistic flexibility, highlighting the differing constraints and opportunities of each mode (Premasari & Widodo, 2021; Zayed et al., 2021).

The lack of direct equivalents for idiomatic expressions in the target language often forces translators to make semantic adjustments. This includes transforming idioms into non-idiomatic expressions or replacing them with culturally relevant alternatives (Nida & Taber, 2004; Thyab, 2016; Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017). Such adjustments highlight the importance of cultural knowledge and linguistic creativity in idiomatic translation (Chen, 2020; Molina & Albir, 2002; Fitriyah, 2020).

Researchers have emphasized the role of cultural context in determining the most appropriate translation strategies for idiomatic expressions (Budiarta, 2017; Premasari & Widodo, 2021; Zayed et al., 2021). The use of culturally adapted idiomatic expressions in the target language not only preserves the figurative essence of the source text but also enhances its relatability and authenticity (Chen, 2020; Supardi & Putri, 2018; Agung, 2022).

Theoretical frameworks, such as those proposed by Molina & Albir (2002) and Nida & Taber (2004), have provided valuable insights into the dynamics of idiomatic translation in audiovisual media. These frameworks underscore the importance of semantic equivalence, cultural adaptation, and functionalist approaches in achieving effective translations (Munday, 2008; Zayed et al., 2021; Agung, 2022). By applying these frameworks, researchers have been able to

identify and evaluate the translation techniques that best address the complexities of idiomatic expressions in subtitling and dubbing.

Despite the growing body of literature on idiomatic translation, limited studies have systematically compared the strategies and outcomes of subtitling and dubbing within a single audiovisual work, particularly in contemporary animated films (Premasari & Widodo, 2021; Adianti et al., 2022; Zayed et al., 2021). Existing analyses tend to focus on one mode of translation, leaving a gap in understanding how idiomatic expressions are treated differently or similarly across subtitling and dubbing formats (Chen, 2020; Molina & Albir, 2002). Additionally, while established equivalence is widely recognized as a dominant technique, its application across diverse translation contexts remains underexplored (Supardi & Putri, 2018; Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017).

This study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing the translation equivalence and techniques used in subtitling and dubbing the idiomatic expressions in the animated movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. By examining the same idiomatic expressions in both formats, the research provides unique insights into the comparative effectiveness of translation strategies in audiovisual media. The integration of Nida & Taber's (2004) theory of equivalence and Molina & Albir's (2002) translation techniques offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing the nuances of idiomatic translation.

The findings of this study have practical implications for translators, educators, and researchers in the field of audiovisual translation. By highlighting effective techniques for translating idiomatic expressions, the research contributes to the development of best practices in subtitling and dubbing, ensuring that translated content resonates with the target audience while preserving its cultural integrity (Munday, 2008; Chen, 2020; Premasari & Widodo, 2021). Furthermore, this study enriches the academic discourse on idiomatic translation by providing a comparative analysis of subtitling and dubbing, addressing a critical gap in translation studies literature (Zayed et al., 2021; Molina & Albir, 2002; Agung, 2022).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with a case study design to analyze the translation equivalence and techniques used in subtitling and dubbing idiomatic expressions in the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. The qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of the translation processes, allowing for a detailed

examination of the linguistic and cultural nuances present in the idiomatic expressions (Creswell, 2009; Mohajan, 2018; Morgan, 2022).

The primary data for this research were obtained from the English, subtitled, and dubbed versions of the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. A systematic approach was implemented to ensure accurate and comprehensive data collection. First, the movie was selected based on its rich use of idiomatic expressions and its availability in both subtitled and dubbed formats. This dual availability made it an excellent case for analyzing translation techniques and equivalence (Chen, 2020; Supardi & Putri, 2018).

Next, idiomatic expressions in the source language (SL) and their translations in the target language (TL) were identified through repeated viewings of the movie. This process allowed the researcher to capture the nuanced use of idiomatic expressions and their corresponding translations accurately (Thyab, 2016; Molina & Albir, 2002). Following this, all identified idiomatic expressions were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy in representing the SL and TL dialogues. Transcription played a crucial role in preserving the integrity of the data for further analysis (Morgan, 2022; Supardi & Putri, 2018).

The final step in data collection involved classifying the transcribed idiomatic expressions. Each expression was categorized as either translated equivalently (idiom to idiom) or non-equivalently (idiom to non-idiom). This classification established a clear framework for subsequent analysis, enabling a focused evaluation of translation equivalence and the application of techniques (Nida & Taber, 2004; Chen, 2020).

The collected data were analyzed using theoretical frameworks to evaluate both translation equivalence and the techniques employed. The first step in analysis was the assessment of translation equivalence. Each idiomatic expression was scrutinized to determine whether it retained its idiomatic form in the TL or was converted into a non-idiomatic expression. This evaluation was conducted using the frameworks proposed by Nida & Taber (2004) and Chen (2020), which emphasize semantic adjustments and equivalence.

The next phase focused on identifying the translation techniques used in subtitling and dubbing. The analysis employed Molina & Albir's (2002) classification of translation techniques, categorizing them into single and duplet methods. This categorization facilitated a detailed examination of how translators addressed idiomatic expressions in both formats, ensuring a

nuanced understanding of their approaches (Munday, 2008; Supardi & Putri, 2018).

Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify differences and similarities in the techniques used for subtitling and dubbing. This comparison provided insights into the challenges unique to each format and highlighted the strategies employed to achieve effective translations. It also shed light on the effectiveness of single and duplet techniques in preserving the idiomatic meaning in the TL (Premasari & Widodo, 2021; Zayed et al., 2021).

By following these steps, the study ensured a thorough exploration of the translation practices used for idiomatic expressions in *Raya and the Last Dragon*. This comprehensive approach contributed to a better understanding of translation strategies in audiovisual media.

The data analysis process was validated through triangulation, involving multiple reviews by co-researchers and experts in translation studies to ensure reliability and consistency (Creswell, 2009; Morgan, 2022).

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring that all data used were publicly accessible and appropriately cited, maintaining respect for intellectual property rights (Mohajan, 2018; Munday, 2008). By employing this rigorous methodology, the study aims to provide comprehensive insights into the translation of idiomatic expressions in subtitling and dubbing, contributing to the advancement of audiovisual translation practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research yielded two key findings. First, it aimed to explore the translation equivalence of idiomatic expressions in the subtitling and dubbing of the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Second, the study identified and analyzed the techniques employed in translating these idiomatic expressions.

Translation of idiomatic expressions in raya and the last dragon from English to Indonesian in subtitling and dubbing

The analysis revealed a total of 72 idiomatic expressions in the movie. Using the framework proposed by Nida & Taber (2004) as referenced in Chen (2020), the study categorized these expressions based on their equivalence in translation. The idiomatic expressions were classified into two categories: those translated into idiomatic expressions in the target language and those rendered as non-idiomatic expressions. A

summary of these findings is presented in the following table.

Table 1. *Translation equivalence in subtitling*

No	Translation equivalence in Subtitling	Frequency	Percentage
1	Idiomatic expression into idiomatic expression	38	51%
2	Idiomatic expression into non-idiomatic expression	36	49%
Total		74	100%

Based on the data, it is evident that the majority of idiomatic expressions in the subtitling of *Raya and the Last Dragon* were equivalently translated from English into Indonesian. This indicates that most of the English idiomatic expressions were rendered into their idiomatic counterparts in Indonesian. An example of this is the translation of the dialogue:

Source Language (SL): *Raya: Ba, get up! Come on! Please, we have to keep moving, get up!*

Target Language (TL): *Raya: Ba, berdiri! Ayo! Kita harus terus bergerak. Berdiri! (Excerpt 14, Minute 00:18:55)*

However, in some cases, idiomatic expressions were transformed into non-idiomatic expressions. This typically occurred when the translator could not find an equivalent idiomatic expression in the target language that conveyed the same meaning as the source language. An example of this is:

SL: *Tong: After we win the day, I look forward to filling my eyeball with the joytastic image of my village full again.*

TL: *Tong: Setelah kita menang hari ini, aku akan mengisi bola mataku dengan pemandangan desaku yang indah kembali penuh. (Excerpt 72, Minute 01:15:05)*

Similarly, for dubbing, it was found that most of the idiomatic expressions were equivalently translated into Indonesian idioms. For instance:

SL: *Boun: Back off tidal wave, I'm the professional here.*

TL: *Boun: Mundur, gelombang pasang, aku profesional di sini. (Excerpt 71, Minute 01:14:30)*

Nonetheless, there were instances where idiomatic expressions were translated into non-idiomatic expressions due to the lack of an

equivalent idiom in the target language. An example is:

SL: Boun: Tong will follow up with his giant axe of bad axery.

TL: Boun: *Tong akan melanjutkan dengan kapak raksasanya yang hebat.* (Excerpt 63, Minute 01:05:15)

Table 2. *Translation equivalence in dubbing*

No	Translation equivalence in Dubbing	Frequency	Percentage
1	Idiomatic expression into idiomatic expression	38	52%
2	Idiomatic expression into non-idiomatic expression	35	48%
Total		73	100%

Translation techniques used in translating idioms in Raya and The Last Dragon

To effectively convey the meaning of the text from the source language (English) to the target language (Indonesian), translators employ various translation techniques. These techniques ensure that the translated content maintains its quality and comprehensibility. The translation techniques in this study were analyzed using the framework proposed by Molina and Albir (2002). The analysis categorized the techniques used and calculated their respective percentages, as summarized in the following table.

Table 3. *Single translation techniques in dubbing*

No	Translation Technique	Number of Data Subtitling	Percentage
1	Amplification	1	1%
2	Compensation	6	8%
3	Description	8	11%
4	Established Equivalent	37	51%
5	Linguistic Amplification	4	6%
6	Linguistic Compression	7	10%
7	Literal Translation	1	1%
8	Reduction	6	8%
Total		70	98%

The table reveals that 70 sentences in the subtitling of *Raya and the Last Dragon* utilized single translation techniques to render idiomatic expressions, distributed across eight categories. The analysis indicates that 98% of the subtitled

content employed single translation techniques, with "established equivalence" emerging as the most frequently used approach. An example of this technique is demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Source Language (SL): Raya: Tuk tuk!, come on! Focus! Thank you!

Target Language (TL): Raya: Tuk tuk!, *ayo! Focus!* Terimakasih! (Excerpt 3, Minute 00:04:28)

Table 4. *Single translation techniques in subtitling*

No	Translation Technique	Number of Data Dubbing	Percentage
1	Amplification	4	6%
2	Compensation	1	1%
3	Description	8	11%
4	Discursive Creation	2	3%
5	Established Equivalent	37	51%
6	Generalization	1	1%
7	Linguistic Amplification	5	7%
8	Linguistic Compression	6	8%
9	Literal Translation	1	1%
10	Modulation	3	4%
11	Reduction	3	4%
Total		71	99%

The table indicates that 71 sentences in the dubbing of *Raya and the Last Dragon* employed single translation techniques for idiomatic expressions, spanning 11 categories. The analysis reveals that 99% of the dubbed content used single translation techniques, with "established equivalence" being the most frequently applied method. An example of this technique is as follows:

Source Language (SL): Raya: Wait a second. This feels too easy.

Target Language (TL): Raya: *Tunggu sebentar, ini terasa terlalu mudah.* (Excerpt 4, Minute 00:05:35)

In addition to single techniques, the study identified the use of duplet translation techniques, where two methods are applied to translate a single sentence. The table below summarizes the findings for sentences using duplet translation techniques.

Table 5. *Duplet translation techniques in subtitling*

No	Translation Technique	Number of Data	Percentage
1	Description and Linguistic amplification	1	1%
2	Reduction and Established equivalent	1	1%
Total		2	2%

The table shows that two sentences in *Raya and the Last Dragon* utilized duplet translation techniques for translating idiomatic expressions, distributed across two categories. This analysis indicates that 2% of the total translations employed the duplet technique, combining two methods to convey the intended meaning.

Table 6. *Duplet translation techniques in dubbing*

No	Translation Technique	Number of Data	Percentage
1	Reduction and Established equivalent	1	1%
Total		1	1%

The table indicates that one sentence in *Raya and the Last Dragon* employed the duplet translation technique for idiomatic expression translation, categorized under a single classification. This represents 1% of the total instances where two techniques were combined to convey the intended meaning.

The analysis is divided into two main parts: semantic adjustments in translation equivalence and the application of translation techniques. Regarding the first research question, 72 idiomatic expressions were identified in the movie. However, the data revealed slight variations between subtitling and dubbing, with subtitling involving 74 instances of translation techniques (100%) and dubbing involving 73 (100%). The findings show a near balance between equivalent and non-equivalent translations, though most English idiomatic expressions were rendered as idiomatic expressions in Indonesian. This highlights a strong tendency to achieve equivalence in both subtitling and dubbing.

For the second research question, 72 idiomatic expressions were analyzed. The study identified 8 translation techniques, both single and duplet, in subtitling and 11 techniques in dubbing. Across these expressions, a total of 147 translation techniques were applied, categorized into single and duplet techniques. The findings show that 70 sentences in subtitling (98%) and 71 sentences in

dubbing (99%) utilized single translation techniques, while 2 sentences in subtitling (2%) and 1 sentence in dubbing (1%) employed the duplet translation technique.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the translation of idiomatic expressions in the subtitling and dubbing of the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*, focusing on translation equivalence and the techniques employed. The analysis identified 72 idiomatic expressions in the movie, with most being translated equivalently from English into Indonesian. This indicates a strong effort by translators to maintain idiomatic accuracy and cultural relevance in the target language.

Regarding the techniques used, the study revealed 147 translation techniques across subtitling and dubbing, categorized into single and duplet methods. Single translation techniques dominated, accounting for 98% in subtitling and 99% in dubbing, with "established equivalence" being the most frequently applied method. Duplet techniques were less commonly used, representing 2% in subtitling and 1% in dubbing.

These findings highlight the translators' ability to adapt idiomatic expressions while preserving their meaning and cultural context. The study underscores the importance of employing appropriate translation techniques to achieve equivalence, ensuring that the translated content resonates with the target audience and maintains the intended impact of the original dialogue. This research contributes to the understanding of translation strategies for idiomatic expressions in audiovisual media and provides insights for future translation practices.

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