



## **THE TRANSLATION ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE ADOLESCENCE SERIES BASED ON MONA BAKER'S STRATEGIES**

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### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi yang digunakan dalam menerjemahkan ungkapan idiomatis ke dalam teks terjemahan takarir bahasa Indonesia pada serial drama remaja *Adolescence* dengan menerapkan kerangka non-ekivalensi pada tingkat kata dari Mona Baker (1992). Idiom, yang sering bersifat spesifik budaya dan memiliki makna metaforis, menghadirkan tantangan signifikan dalam penerjemahan takarir karena maknanya yang kiasan serta tidak memiliki padanan langsung. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis 66 ungkapan idiomatis yang ditemukan dalam empat episode serial tersebut. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa parafrasa (75,76%) merupakan strategi yang paling banyak digunakan, diikuti oleh penggunaan idiom dengan makna serupa namun bentuk berbeda (19,70%) dan penghilangan sebagian idiom (1,52%). Strategi peminjaman dan penghilangan total tidak ditemukan dalam data, yang menunjukkan bahwa transfer langsung atau penghapusan keseluruhan idiom umumnya dihindari dalam konteks ini. Hasil ini mengindikasikan bahwa penerjemah takarir memprioritaskan kejelasan makna, kewajaran bahasa, dan kesesuaian budaya dalam menerjemahkan idiom, dengan memilih strategi adaptif yang mampu mempertahankan makna sekaligus memenuhi keterbatasan teknis produksi takarir. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas dalam studi penerjemahan terkait cara mempertahankan, memodifikasi, atau menghilangkan makna idiomatis dalam penerjemahan takarir, khususnya pada media yang ditujukan untuk remaja, di mana keaslian bahasa dan pemahaman audiens menjadi aspek yang krusial.

**Kata kunci:** Ekspresi Idiomatik, Penerjemahan Takarir, Strategi Mona Baker, Non-Ekivalensi, Terjemahan Bahasa Indonesia, Drama Remaja, Bahasa Kiasan.

### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the strategies used in translating idiomatic expressions into Indonesian subtitles in the youth drama series *Adolescence*, applying Mona Baker's (1992) framework of non-equivalence at the word level. Idioms, which are often culturally specific and metaphorical in nature, present significant challenges in subtitle translation due to their figurative meanings and lack of direct equivalents. Using a qualitative approach, this research identifies and analyzes 66 idiomatic expressions found in four episodes of the series. The findings reveal that paraphrasing (75.76%) is the most frequently applied strategy, followed by using idioms with similar meaning but different form (19.70%) and*

*partial omission (1.52%). Both borrowing and complete omission were not found in the dataset, suggesting that direct transfer or full removal of idioms is generally avoided in this context. These results indicate that subtitlers prioritize clarity, naturalness, and cultural appropriateness when translating idioms, opting for adaptive strategies that preserve meaning while meeting the technical constraints of subtitle production. The study contributes to broader discussions in translation studies on how idiomatic meaning is preserved, modified, or omitted in subtitle translation, particularly in youth-oriented media where linguistic authenticity and audience comprehension are critical.*

**Keywords:** *Idiomatic Expressions, Subtitle Translation, Mona Baker's Strategies, Non-Equivalence, Indonesian Translation, Youth Drama, Figurative Language.*

## INTRODUCTION

Translation plays a vital role in facilitating intercultural communication, particularly in today's globalized media landscape. As international audiences increasingly consume foreign films, television series, and other multimedia content, the demand for subtitle translations that are not only accurate but also culturally appropriate becomes more urgent. Within Translation Studies, subtitling is a specialized area that poses unique challenges due to time and space constraints, especially when dealing with linguistic and cultural nuances such as idiomatic expressions.

Idiomatic expressions, which are often metaphorical and culture-bound, are considered one of the most challenging aspects of translation. These fixed expressions convey meanings that cannot be directly inferred from the meanings of their individual words and are typically loaded with cultural values, humor, and figurative language. This makes literal translation ineffective and often misleading. As noted by Newmark (1988, as cited in Baker, 1992), idioms are highly context-sensitive and deeply rooted in the source culture. Similarly, Baker (1992) describes idioms as expressions whose meanings are unpredictable from their components and therefore require specific strategies for accurate rendering.

Beyond their linguistic complexity, idioms also play an important role in both academic and everyday communication. In academic discourse, idioms reflect cultural logic and rhetorical conventions, influencing how arguments and ideas are framed. In everyday use, idioms add color, emotion, and authenticity to speech, especially in informal and youth-oriented contexts. Understanding how idioms are translated is therefore not only relevant to the field of Translation Studies but also contributes to a deeper appreciation of cross-cultural communication.

A number of previous studies have addressed idiomatic translation in subtitling. Rinanto (2023) investigated idiomatic expressions in *Divergent* and found that paraphrasing and omission were the most frequently used strategies. Nuraini and Sayogie (2024) conducted a similar study on *Soul* and highlighted the use of idiomatic substitution and paraphrasing. Arly and Hilman (2023), in their analysis of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, observed that five out of six strategies proposed by Baker (1992) were applied, with idioms of similar meaning but different form (33%) and paraphrasing (24%) being the most prominent. These studies indicate a tendency among subtitlers to prioritize naturalness and contextual relevance over formal equivalence when translating idioms. However, most of these studies focus on action or animated films, leaving a gap in the analysis of youth dramas, which are rich in idioms and emotional nuance.

This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing idiomatic expressions in the Indonesian subtitle translation of the youth drama series *Adolescence*. The series is known for its informal, dynamic, and idiom-laden dialogue that reflects the everyday speech of

Generation Z. These characteristics make Adolescence a valuable resource for exploring how idiomatic meaning is transferred in subtitle translation.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze the translation of idiomatic expressions in the Indonesian subtitles of the series Adolescence. A qualitative approach is well-suited to examining how meaning is transferred between languages, especially in cases involving figurative language, connotation, and cultural specificity (Creswell, 2014). Through this method, the study seeks to interpret and evaluate the subtitler's choices within their linguistic and cultural contexts.

The data were collected by closely analyzing all four episodes of Adolescence. Idiomatic expressions were identified from the English-language dialogue and corresponding subtitles, and then compared with their Indonesian subtitle translations. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- (1) The expression must be idiomatic in nature, meaning that its figurative meaning cannot be derived from the literal definitions of its individual words; and
- (2) It must appear in both the spoken dialogue and its subtitle version to allow for direct comparison.

In this study, Baker's (1992) framework of strategies for handling non-equivalence at the word level is used to analyze the translation strategies employed. These strategies include:

1. Using an idiom with a similar meaning and form,
2. Using an idiom with a similar meaning but different form,
3. Borrowing,
4. Paraphrasing,
5. Partial omission, and
6. Complete omission.

Each idiomatic expression was analyzed to determine which strategy had been used. The analysis also evaluated the effects of these strategies on the preservation of meaning, the naturalness of the target-language expression, and the readability of the subtitle, taking into account general subtitling limitations such as screen space, timing, and viewer comprehension.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the empirical findings from the analysis of 66 idiomatic expressions identified in four full episodes of the Adolescence series. The idioms were categorized and examined based on Mona Baker's (1992) classification of translation strategies, including paraphrase, omission, and translation using idioms with similar meaning and/or form. The goal was to determine which strategies were most commonly used and to interpret how those choices affected the delivery of meaning to the target audience.

The frequency and percentage of each strategy applied in the dataset are summarized in Table 1.

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Idiom with similar meaning and form	2	3.00%
Idiom with similar meaning but different form	13	19.40%
Borrowing	0	0.00%
Paraphrase	50	74.60%

Translation by omission of a play on Idiom	1	1.50%
Translation by omission of entire idiom	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen from the above table, paraphrasing was the most commonly used tactic, appearing in 50 out of 66 idioms (75.76%). Similar meaning but distinct form idioms made up 19.70% of the total, whilst similar meaning and form idioms made up 3.03%. Both borrowing and total omission were absent, while partial omission only occurred once (1.52%).

Mona Baker (1992) proposed six strategies commonly used to translate idiomatic expressions: (1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form, (2) using an idiom of similar meaning but different form, (3) borrowing the idiom from the source language, (4) paraphrasing, (5) omitting part of the idiom, and (6) omitting the idiom entirely. The analysis of idiomatic expressions in the Adolescence series reveals that only four of these six strategies were applied in the dataset. Each identified strategy is discussed below with a corresponding datum.

This datum applies the strategy of translation using an idiom of similar meaning and form, which involves replacing the source idiom with a target-language idiom that shares both meaning and structural similarity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “know thyself” is an idiomatic expression meaning “to be aware of your own character, feelings, and limitations.” It cannot be interpreted literally, as the meaning extends beyond simply knowing factual information about oneself.

#### **Datum 1**

(00:01:44 – 00:01:45)

SL: “**Know thyself**”

TL: “Kenali dirimu.”

The Indonesian translation retains both the literal form and the idiomatic essence, though the form is slightly modernized to suit contemporary usage. The philosophical implication of self-awareness is preserved, showing that the translator maintained both the meaning and stylistic effect of the source idiom.

The second strategy, translation using an idiom of similar meaning but different form, maintains the figurative function of the idiom while adapting the lexical form to align with the norms of the target language. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines “tear something apart” as “to destroy something violently”. This meaning is figurative and cannot be interpreted from the literal sense of tearing a physical object.

#### **Datum 2**

(00:26:36 – 00:26:38)

SL: “They **tore the house apart**”

TL: “Rumah kami diubrak-abrik.”

The Indonesian idiom “diubrak-abrik” uses entirely different lexical components but conveys the same connotation of chaotic destruction. This adaptation preserves the intensity and emotional weight of the original while ensuring cultural appropriateness.

The third strategy, borrowing, was not found in any of the data. Borrowing refers to directly transferring the source idiom into the target language without translation. As Baker (1992) notes, this is rarely suitable for idioms, particularly when cultural and linguistic differences make the idiom unfamiliar to the target audience. Its absence in this dataset supports the translator’s focus on clarity and naturalness.

The fourth strategy, paraphrasing, is employed when no equivalent idiom exists in the target language or when a literal translation would sound unnatural. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary explains “that’s the name of the game” as meaning “that is the way

something works” or “that is the accepted or expected way to do things”.

### **Datum 3**

(00:26:42 – 00:26:45)

SL: “When the death’s taken place, **that’s the name of the game**”

TL: “Saat ada kematian akibat kekerasan, itu biasa.”

The metaphorical imagery is removed, but the pragmatic meaning is preserved. This simplification makes the subtitle accessible to audiences unfamiliar with the original idiomatic reference.

The fifth strategy, omission of part of the idiom, occurs when only a portion of the idiom is translated, usually to simplify or shorten the subtitle. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines “strip search” as “a search of someone’s body in which all or most of their clothes are removed”.

### **Datum 4**

(00:35:31)

SL: “I need to conduct a **strip search**”

TL: “Aku harus melakukan penggeledahan.”

The translation retains the general idea of searching but omits the specific and sensitive detail of “strip”, likely due to cultural sensitivity and time constraints.

The sixth strategy, complete omission, was not found in the dataset. Similar to the absence of borrowing, this indicates that the subtitler avoided removing idiomatic expressions entirely, likely to preserve the narrative tone and character voice.

In conclusion, the application of Baker’s strategies in the subtitling of *Adolescence* demonstrates a strong tendency toward adaptation rather than direct equivalence. Paraphrasing and idiomatic substitution are favored to ensure clarity, cultural relevance, and coherence in the target language, particularly for a teenage audience. The limited use of omission reflects the subtitler’s attempt to preserve meaning wherever possible, while the absence of borrowing and complete omission aligns with Baker’s view that idioms are often too culturally bound to be transferred directly. Each strategy presents distinct advantages and trade-offs: paraphrasing ensures accessibility, substitution retains idiomatic tone, and omission is selectively used to avoid ambiguity or cultural mismatch. Overall, the subtitler’s choices reflect not only theoretical considerations but also the practical limitations of subtitle production.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of idiomatic expression translation in the Indonesian subtitles of *Adolescence* reveals a clear tendency toward adaptive translation strategies. Of the 66 idioms examined, paraphrasing emerged as the dominant method (75.76%). This high percentage indicates that the subtitler prioritized semantic clarity and cultural accessibility over preserving the original idiomatic form. In many cases, the source idioms lacked direct equivalents in Indonesian, or a literal translation would have produced awkward or unintelligible phrasing. Paraphrasing enabled the subtitler to maintain the intended meaning while adjusting the wording to match the grammatical structure, communicative style, and cultural expectations of the target audience. This approach also addressed the spatial and temporal constraints of subtitles, ensuring that viewers could process the text comfortably within the limited on-screen duration.

The second most frequently used strategy, using idioms with similar meaning but different form (19.70%), reflects the subtitler’s effort to preserve the figurative and emotional force of the original expression while adapting its form to align with established idiomatic usage in Indonesian. This choice demonstrates that, when a culturally familiar

equivalent existed, the subtitler favored idiomatic substitution over paraphrase, thereby maintaining both the stylistic tone and rhetorical effect of the source dialogue.

The absence of borrowing (0%) confirms Baker's (1992) view that idioms are often too culture-bound to be transferred directly without risking misunderstanding. Without cultural context or prior exposure, audiences may fail to interpret the meaning correctly. Avoiding borrowing also eliminates potential ambiguity, which is crucial in the fast-paced environment of subtitle reading.

Similarly, the absence of complete omission (0%) and the minimal use of partial omission (1.52%) indicate that the subtitler made a conscious effort to retain idiomatic meaning whenever possible. Partial omission occurred only when preserving the entire idiom would have exceeded subtitle character limits, slowed down reading speed, or introduced culturally sensitive elements unsuitable for the viewing context. In these rare cases, omission served as a last-resort strategy to maintain narrative flow and ensure viewer comfort.

Overall, these findings suggest that the translation of idiomatic expressions in *Adolescence* was driven more by functional considerations—such as audience comprehension, cultural relevance, and reading ease—than by strict formal equivalence. The subtitler's strategic preferences reflect an awareness of both the linguistic gap between English and Indonesian idioms and the technical constraints inherent in subtitle production. This approach ultimately ensured that the translated subtitles remained natural, accessible, and faithful to the communicative intent of the original dialogue.

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