

An Analysis of The Translation of Idioms from English to Indonesian in *The Film Stranger Things*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the types of idioms and idiom translation strategies from English into Indonesian in the subtitles of the *Stranger Things* series. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a library research method. The data consist of idiomatic expressions found in the dialogue of *Stranger Things* along with their Indonesian subtitle translations. Data analysis is conducted using Fernando's (1996) theory to classify idiom types and Baker's (2018) theory to identify idiom translation strategies. The findings reveal that there are 25 idiomatic expressions categorized into pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms, with semi-idioms and pure idioms being the most dominant. In terms of translation strategies, paraphrase is the most frequently used technique. This indicates that translators prioritize meaning comprehensibility over preserving idiomatic form in the source language. Moreover, technical constraints in subtitling also influence the choice of translation strategies. Therefore, it can be concluded that idiom translation in *Stranger Things* involves linguistic, cultural, and technical aspects simultaneously.

KEYWORDS: idioms, translation, subtitling, *Stranger Things*, translation strategies

INTRODUCTION

Translation plays an essential role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and enabling audiences from different linguistic backgrounds to access information, entertainment, and knowledge. In the era of globalization and digital streaming platforms, audiovisual translation has become increasingly important because films and television series are consumed by international audiences on a massive scale. One of the most widely used forms of audiovisual translation is subtitling, which involves transferring spoken language into written text while maintaining the intended meaning of the original dialogue. However, the process of subtitling is not merely a linguistic transfer; it also requires translators to consider cultural nuances, contextual meanings, and technical limitations such as space and time constraints. Consequently, translating figurative language, particularly idiomatic expressions, remains one of the most challenging aspects of audiovisual translation.

Idioms constitute a unique linguistic phenomenon because their meanings cannot always be interpreted from the literal meanings of the individual words that compose them. According to Mona Baker (2018), idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings are often non-compositional, making them difficult to translate directly into another language. For example, the English idiom “spill the beans” cannot be translated literally into Indonesian as *menumpahkan kacang-kacangan* because such a translation would fail to convey the intended meaning of revealing a secret. Instead, translators must seek an equivalent expression or employ alternative translation strategies to

preserve the communicative effect of the original utterance. This complexity becomes even more significant in audiovisual texts where translators have limited opportunities to provide explanatory notes or contextual clarification.

The translation of idioms from English into Indonesian presents additional challenges due to cultural and linguistic differences between the two languages. English idioms are often deeply rooted in the historical, social, and cultural experiences of English-speaking communities, whereas Indonesian audiences may not share the same cultural references. As a result, translators frequently encounter situations where no direct equivalent exists in the target language. In such cases, they must adopt strategies such as paraphrasing, omission, substitution with a culturally similar idiom, or literal translation when appropriate. The selection of these strategies directly influences the quality, accuracy, and acceptability of the translated subtitles. Previous studies have demonstrated that inappropriate translation strategies may result in semantic distortion, loss of humor, reduced emotional impact, or misunderstanding among viewers (Baker, 2018).

The increasing popularity of streaming platforms such as Netflix has intensified scholarly interest in audiovisual translation studies. One of Netflix's most successful productions is *Stranger Things*, a science fiction and horror television series created by the Duffer Brothers. Since its first release in 2016, *Stranger Things* has attracted millions of viewers worldwide and has become a significant cultural phenomenon. The series is characterized by natural conversational dialogues, colloquial expressions, slang, and numerous idiomatic expressions that reflect everyday American English. These linguistic features make *Stranger Things* a valuable source for investigating idiom translation because the translators must balance linguistic accuracy, cultural adaptation, and subtitle readability simultaneously.

From an academic perspective, research on idiom translation remains relevant because idiomatic expressions represent one of the most problematic areas in translation studies. Contemporary studies have consistently shown that idioms pose significant challenges for translators due to their figurative meanings and cultural specificity. Furthermore, advancements in digital media have increased the demand for high-quality subtitle translation, making research on translation strategies increasingly important for both theoretical and practical purposes. Understanding how idioms are translated in popular audiovisual products can contribute to the development of translation theory and provide practical insights for professional translators, translation students, and researchers in audiovisual translation.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the concept of idiomatic expressions and translation strategies. Fernando (1996) categorizes idioms into three major types: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. Pure idioms possess meanings that cannot be inferred from their constituent words, whereas semi-idioms contain both literal and figurative elements. Literal idioms, on the other hand, retain a closer relationship between their figurative and literal meanings. To analyze the translation process, this study adopts Baker's (2018) framework of idiom translation strategies, which includes translation by using an idiom of similar meaning and form, translation by using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, and translation by omission. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive basis for examining how idiomatic expressions are transferred from English into Indonesian subtitles.

Several previous studies have investigated the translation of idiomatic expressions in audiovisual media. The first study was conducted by Kurniawan, Sudipa, and Indriani (2024), entitled *The Translation of Idioms in the Netflix Subtitle of the Film Notting Hill*. The study analyzed the translation strategies used to render English idioms into Indonesian subtitles. The findings revealed that paraphrasing was the most frequently applied strategy because many English idioms did not have direct equivalents in Indonesian. The researchers concluded that paraphrase helped maintain comprehensibility for Indonesian audiences, although some cultural meanings embedded in the source language were not fully preserved. This study highlights the importance of selecting appropriate translation strategies to achieve semantic equivalence in subtitle translation.

The second study was conducted by Utami, Adrefiza, and Handayani (2025), entitled *An Analysis of Idiom Types in English Film Dialogue and Their Translation Strategies in Indonesian Subtitles of the Kingsman Trilogy*. The research focused on identifying idiom types and examining the strategies used in translating those expressions into Indonesian. The results indicated that paraphrasing was the dominant strategy employed by translators due to the cultural specificity of many English idioms and the technical constraints of subtitling. Furthermore, the study emphasized that translators must balance accuracy, naturalness, and readability when translating figurative expressions in audiovisual texts.

The third study was conducted by Ghifari, Mansyur, and Saehu (2025), entitled *Idiom Analysis in the Indonesian Subtitles of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002) and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004)*. The study examined the forms of idiomatic expressions and the translation techniques applied in the Indonesian subtitles of the films. The findings demonstrated

that translators frequently modified idiomatic expressions to make them more understandable for target audiences while preserving the narrative function of the original text. The researchers also found that cultural adaptation played a significant role in translating idioms that were strongly associated with English-speaking cultures.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of idiom translation in audiovisual media, several gaps remain. First, most existing studies have focused on films such as *Notting Hill*, *Kingsman*, and *Harry Potter*, whereas research examining idiom translation in the television series *Stranger Things* is still limited. Second, previous research has generally concentrated on identifying idiom types and translation strategies without specifically investigating how contemporary American colloquial language and youth-oriented expressions influence the translation of idioms. Third, *Stranger Things* contains a substantial number of informal expressions, slang, and culturally embedded idioms that may present different translation challenges compared to other film genres. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps by analyzing the types of idioms and the translation strategies employed in the Indonesian subtitles of *Stranger Things*, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of idiom translation in contemporary audiovisual content.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study seeks to analyze the translation of idiomatic expressions from English into Indonesian in the subtitles of *Stranger Things*. Specifically, the study aims to identify the types of idiomatic expressions found in the series and examine the translation strategies used to render those idioms into Indonesian. By addressing these objectives, the study is expected to contribute to the field of translation studies, particularly audiovisual translation and idiom translation, while also providing practical implications for subtitle translators working in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study focuses on the analysis of idiom translation from English into Indonesian in the subtitles of the *Stranger Things* series. Therefore, a comprehensive theoretical foundation is required to explain the main concepts used in this research, namely translation, audiovisual translation (subtitling), idioms, and idiom translation strategies. This theoretical framework serves as the analytical basis for identifying, classifying, and evaluating idiomatic expressions found in the dialogue of the series. With a clear conceptual framework, the analysis can be conducted systematically, objectively, and in accordance with the research objectives. In addition, this framework helps connect the research data with relevant linguistic and translation theories. Thus, this section becomes an essential foundation for answering the research questions.

The first concept used in this study is translation. Translation is generally understood as the process of transferring meaning from the source language into the target language while maintaining the message, style, and communicative purpose. Newmark (1988) states that translation is an attempt to replace a written text in one language with an equivalent text in another language. In this process, meaning equivalence is considered more important than formal linguistic similarity. Therefore, a translator is required not only to master linguistic structures but also to understand the cultural context behind the text. In this study, translation is understood as the process of transferring meaning from English dialogue in *Stranger Things* into Indonesian through subtitle media.

The second concept is audiovisual translation or subtitling. Gottlieb (2001) explains that subtitling is a form of audiovisual translation in which spoken dialogue is rendered into written text and displayed simultaneously on screen. Subtitling has specific characteristics because it is constrained by space and time, namely a limited number of characters and the duration of subtitle appearance. These constraints require translators to reduce information without losing the essential meaning of the message. In addition, subtitles must be easily readable and quickly understood by viewers. Therefore, subtitling demands not only linguistic accuracy but also readability, clarity, and cultural appropriateness to ensure that the message is effectively received by the target audience.

The third concept is idioms. Idioms are expressions that carry figurative meanings and cannot be understood literally from the individual words that compose them. Baker (2018) defines idioms as fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be derived from the literal meanings of their components. This makes idioms one of the most challenging elements in translation because they cannot be translated word-for-word. Fernando (1996) classifies idioms into three types, namely pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. Pure idioms have completely non-literal meanings, while semi-idioms contain both literal and figurative elements. Literal idioms, on the other hand, maintain a closer relationship between their literal and figurative meanings. This classification is used in this study to identify the types of idioms found in the *Stranger Things* dialogue.

The fourth concept is idiom translation strategies. In the translation process, especially when

dealing with idiomatic expressions, translators need specific strategies to achieve meaning equivalence. Baker (2018) proposes four main strategies for translating idioms, namely: (1) translating using an idiom of similar meaning and form, (2) translating using an idiom of similar meaning but different form, (3) translation by paraphrase, and (4) omission. The first strategy is used when the target language has an idiom that is equivalent in both meaning and form. The second strategy is applied when there is similarity in meaning but difference in linguistic structure. The paraphrase strategy is used when no equivalent idiom exists in the target language, so the meaning is explained descriptively. Meanwhile, omission is applied in certain cases where the idiom cannot be retained due to technical limitations or contextual constraints.

These four concepts are interrelated and form a unified analytical framework in this study. Translation serves as the main process connecting the source and target languages, while subtitling provides technical constraints that influence translation outcomes. Idioms represent the main object of analysis based on their form and meaning, while translation strategies are used to identify how these idioms are rendered into Indonesian. The combination of these concepts enables a comprehensive analysis of the data, both linguistically and audiovisually. Therefore, this theoretical framework functions not only as a conceptual foundation but also as the main analytical tool in this research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach. A qualitative descriptive method is chosen because this study aims to identify, classify, and explain the phenomenon of idiom translation found in the subtitles of the *Stranger Things* series without using statistical data (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, data are presented in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that are analyzed in depth based on their contextual usage. This approach is considered appropriate because it provides a comprehensive description of translation phenomena in audiovisual context. In addition, this study is categorized as library research because the primary data are obtained from existing subtitle texts rather than field observation (Sugiyono, 2020).

The subject of this research is the *Stranger Things* series, particularly dialogues containing idiomatic expressions in English along with their Indonesian subtitle translations. The object of this research is the idioms found in the dialogues and the translation strategies used to render them into Indonesian. The primary data source is the official subtitles available on the Netflix platform. The selection of this data source is based on the consideration that the series contains natural conversational expressions, slang, and idioms relevant to the research focus.

The data collection technique is carried out through several stages, including watching the series repeatedly, identifying idiomatic expressions, and recording the data into a data sheet. After that, the data are classified based on idiom types and translation strategies. This technique ensures that all data are systematically documented and relevant to the research objectives.

The data analysis technique follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, irrelevant data are eliminated. In the data display stage, data are classified based on Fernando's idiom types and Baker's translation strategies. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the interpretation of the analyzed data.

The validity of the data is ensured through persistent observation and theoretical triangulation. This technique is used to improve data credibility by repeatedly reviewing the data and comparing findings with relevant theories (Sugiyono, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Results

1. Research Findings

This study identified a number of idiomatic expressions in the subtitles of the *Stranger Things* series translated from English into Indonesian. Based on the data identification process, a total of 25 idiomatic expressions were found across several episodes with different conversational contexts. These idioms were then classified according to Fernando's (1996) theory, namely pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. In addition, each idiom was analyzed based on translation strategies proposed by Baker (2018), namely translation using idioms of similar meaning and form, translation using idioms of similar meaning but different form, paraphrase, and omission. The

results show that the most dominant strategy used is paraphrase. This finding is consistent with Baker (2018), who states that paraphrase is commonly used when no equivalent idiom exists in the target language. It also supports Gottlieb's (2001) argument that subtitling is constrained by space and time limitations that influence translation choices.

In general, the idioms found in the data vary widely, ranging from informal expressions, slang, to culturally bound English idioms. Most idioms appear in teenage conversational dialogues that express emotions such as anger, fear, confusion, and surprise. This indicates that idioms function not only as linguistic elements but also as markers of social and emotional expression (Newmark, 1988). In the translation process, translators tend to prioritize meaning clarity over preserving the original idiomatic form, which aligns with the domestication principle in audiovisual translation (Venuti, 1995). Therefore, many idioms are transformed into more explicit phrases in Indonesian.

2. Idiom Classification

Based on the data analysis, idioms found in the series can be classified into three categories: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms (Fernando, 1996). Out of 25 data items, most belong to semi-idioms and pure idioms. This indicates that *Stranger Things* heavily uses expressions that are culturally bound and cannot be interpreted literally. This condition is consistent with the characteristics of naturalistic dialogue in modern audiovisual works (Baker, 2018).

Pure idioms were identified in expressions whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meanings of their individual words. These idioms require contextual and cultural understanding because their meanings are entirely figurative. In contrast, semi-idioms contain at least one lexical element that retains its literal meaning, making them slightly easier to interpret. The presence of a large number of pure and semi-idioms demonstrates that the dialogue in *Stranger Things* reflects authentic spoken English, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

The relatively small number of literal idioms found in the data suggests that the series relies more on figurative language than on expressions that can be understood directly. This finding highlights the importance of context in interpreting idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, it confirms Fernando's (1996) argument that idioms are closely related to cultural and communicative practices, making them one of the most challenging linguistic elements to translate accurately into another language.

3. Idiom Translation Strategies

The findings show four translation strategies based on Baker (2018), namely: similar meaning and form, similar meaning but different form, paraphrase, and omission. Paraphrase is the most dominant strategy used. This is consistent with Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2014), who state that subtitling often relies on reduction and paraphrase due to technical constraints.

Table 1. Idiom Translation Strategies

No	Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Similar meaning and form	3	12%
2	Similar meaning but different form	5	20%
3	Paraphrase	15	60%
4	Omission	2	8%
	Total	25	100%

The dominance of paraphrase indicates that translators prioritize audience comprehension (Hatim & Mason, 1997). This strategy is considered effective in subtitling because it preserves meaning even when idiomatic form is lost.

The use of the similar meaning and form strategy was relatively limited because only a few English idioms have direct equivalents in Indonesian. When such equivalents were available, translators could preserve both the figurative meaning and the stylistic effect of the original expression. However, due to linguistic and cultural differences between English and Indonesian, this strategy was not frequently applicable in the analyzed data.

Meanwhile, the use of omission reflects the practical challenges of audiovisual translation.

In some cases, idiomatic expressions were omitted because they were considered redundant or because their meanings could already be inferred from the visual context and surrounding dialogue. This finding supports Gottlieb's (2001) view that subtitle translators often need to balance accuracy, readability, and technical limitations. As a result, translation decisions are influenced not only by linguistic considerations but also by the need to ensure a smooth viewing experience for the audience.

4. Idiom Data Analysis Results

Several examples show that idioms such as "*spill the beans*" are translated as "membocorkan rahasia" (paraphrase). The idiom "*hit the road*" is translated as "berangkat," while "*break the ice*" becomes "mencairkan suasana." These examples indicate a shift from idiomatic form to explicit semantic expression. According to Nida and Taber (1969), a good translation prioritizes meaning equivalence over formal similarity.

Another example found in the data is the expression "in hot water," which was translated as "dalam masalah besar." Although the figurative image of being surrounded by hot water is not retained in the target language, the translation successfully conveys the intended meaning. This demonstrates how paraphrase can effectively communicate the message while adapting it to expressions that are more familiar to Indonesian viewers. Such adaptations are necessary to avoid confusion and maintain subtitle readability.

The analysis also reveals that the translator consistently prioritizes communicative effectiveness over stylistic preservation. While some nuances of the original idiomatic expressions may be reduced, the translated subtitles remain understandable and natural for the target audience. This finding supports Newmark's (1988) notion that successful translation should focus on delivering the intended message in a way that is acceptable and meaningful within the cultural context of the target language. Therefore, the translation choices observed in this study can be considered appropriate for the audiovisual medium.

B. Discussion

The findings show that idiom translation strategies in *Stranger Things* are strongly influenced by subtitling constraints and cultural factors. The dominance of paraphrase is in line with Baker (2018) and Gottlieb (2001), who argue that subtitling requires high readability and efficiency. This suggests that translators prefer communicative strategies rather than literal ones.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Kurniawan et al. (2024) and Utami et al. (2025), which also identified paraphrase as the dominant strategy in film subtitle translation. This similarity indicates that the tendency is common in audiovisual translation. However, unlike some studies that reported a higher use of equivalent idioms, this research found that *Stranger Things* rarely uses idiom equivalence due to the prevalence of modern slang and culturally specific expressions that lack direct counterparts in Indonesian.

From Venuti's (1995) perspective, this dominance of paraphrase reflects domestication, where the text is adapted to make it more accessible to the target audience. This reinforces the idea that audiovisual translation is not only linguistic but also cultural.

Another important aspect revealed by this study is the influence of the series' genre and target audience on translation decisions. As a science-fiction and horror series centered on teenage characters, *Stranger Things* contains numerous informal expressions, slang terms, and emotionally charged utterances. Translators must therefore consider not only the semantic meaning of idioms but also the tone, character relationships, and narrative context. In many cases, preserving the exact idiomatic form would sound unnatural in Indonesian and could reduce audience comprehension. Consequently, the translator's preference for paraphrase can be viewed as an effort to maintain the communicative function of the dialogue rather than its linguistic structure.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that successful subtitle translation requires a balance between linguistic accuracy and audience accessibility. While some idiomatic nuances may be lost during translation, the overall message remains understandable and relevant to Indonesian viewers. This supports the functionalist view of translation, which emphasizes the purpose and effectiveness of the translated text in the target culture. In the context of audiovisual translation, ensuring that viewers can quickly understand the dialogue is often more important than preserving every stylistic feature of the source language. Therefore, the translation strategies identified in this study can be considered effective in facilitating cross-cultural communication through subtitles.

Overall, idiom translation in *Stranger Things* shows that comprehensibility is prioritized over preserving source language form. This is consistent with Newmark's (1988) view that meaning is the primary concern in translation. In addition, subtitle space limitations force translators to select the most efficient strategies. Therefore, idiom translation in audiovisual context is a complex process involving linguistic, cultural, and technical considerations simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that idiomatic expressions found in the subtitles of the *Stranger Things* series are translated into Indonesian through several translation strategies that are influenced by linguistic, cultural, and technical factors. The analysis shows that a total of 25 idiomatic expressions were identified and classified into pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms based on Fernando's (1996) theory. Among these categories, semi-idioms and pure idioms are the most dominant, indicating that the series frequently uses figurative expressions that require contextual and cultural understanding rather than literal interpretation. This demonstrates that idioms in the series are closely related to natural conversational English, especially in informal teenage dialogue.

In answering the first research question regarding the types of idioms, the study reveals that the idioms used in *Stranger Things* mostly function as expressive linguistic elements that reflect emotions, social interaction, and character relationships. These idioms cannot generally be understood word-for-word, which confirms Baker's (2018) view that idioms are culturally bound expressions requiring interpretation beyond literal meaning. In relation to the second research question, the findings show that four translation strategies are applied in translating idioms into Indonesian, namely similar meaning and form, similar meaning but different form, paraphrase, and omission. Among these strategies, paraphrase is the most frequently used technique, indicating that translators tend to prioritize clarity and communicative effectiveness over maintaining idiomatic structure. This tendency is strongly influenced by the constraints of subtitling as well as the absence of direct idiomatic equivalents in the target language.

Furthermore, the dominance of paraphrase reflects the application of a domestication approach in translation, as proposed by Venuti (1995), where the translation is adapted to be more natural and easily understood by the target audience. Although some idiomatic nuances and stylistic elements of the source language are reduced, the overall meaning of the dialogue remains accessible to Indonesian viewers. This shows that in audiovisual translation, especially subtitling, meaning transfer and readability are more prioritized than formal equivalence. Therefore, it can be concluded that idiom translation in *Stranger Things* is a complex process that involves balancing linguistic equivalence, cultural adaptation, and technical limitations of subtitle media.

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