

# TRANSLATING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS: A STUDY OF TRANSLATION METHODS IN OMNISCIENT READER WEBTOON

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## ABSTRACT

*This research investigated the translation methods used to analysis idiomatic expressions from English into Indonesian in the Omniscient Reader webtoon. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method, which is suitable for analyzing non- numerical data such as idiomatic expressions in translated webtoon texts. Using Peter Newmark's translation theory as a framework. Twenty episodes were analyzed with a focus on eight methods of translation: word for word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, idiomatic translation, communicative translation, free translation, and adaptation. The findings showed that communicative translation and free translation were most commonly used, reflecting the translator's aim for naturalness and audience comprehension. This research emphasizes the need for strategic adaptation in idiom translation and confirms the relevance of Newmark's framework for modern multimodal narratives.*

*Keywords: idiomatic expressions, translation method, webtoon, Newmark's theory, translation analysis*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Translation extends beyond the mere substitution of lexical items between languages; it constitutes a complex process of transferring meaning across linguistic, cultural, and contextual boundaries. This complexity is further intensified when translating idiomatic expressions, particularly within multimodal media such as webtoons, where visual cues, cultural nuances, and character interactions intricately shape the interpretation of meaning (Ahmadi et al., 2020; Park, 2021).

Idiomatic expressions present distinctive difficulties for translators because of their figurative meanings and departure from literal interpretation. A direct or word for word translation frequently results in the loss of the idiom's original sense and its embedded cultural significance. Consequently, translators need to adopt strategies that maintain not only the semantic equivalence but also the pragmatic force of the source message (Sipayung, 2020; Gita, 2021). Newmark's framework of translation methods which includes semantic, communicative, idiomatic, faithful, and free translation, among others provides a comprehensive foundation for examining how translators handle such intricate linguistic challenges (Newmark in Sitorus et al., 2021; Swarniti, 2021).

The translation of webtoons offers a particularly fertile ground for scholarly inquiry, as it merges visual and verbal modes of storytelling. Previous research, such as that of Anisah Sitorus et al. (2021), indicates that free and idiomatic translation methods are predominantly employed to enhance readability and ensure cultural accessibility. Likewise, studies by Wulandari (2021), Swarniti (2021), and Suastini highlight the crucial role of idiomatic awareness in translating comics and other forms of digital narratives. The translation of comics, in particular, requires sensitivity to both textual form and narrative content, as idiomatic expressions often intersect with elements of humor and emotional resonance (Naskah Publikasi, 2023).

Several research, including Ari (2020), Nugraha et al. (2017), and Al-Adwan (2020), have emphasized the necessity of maintaining a balance between literal accuracy and interpretative fidelity in comic translation. In a similar vein, Park

(2021), in her research, underscored the significance of adapting figurative language particularly idiomatic expressions in global media translation to prevent potential misinterpretations. Building upon these perspectives, the present research seeks to explore the translator's strategies in rendering idiomatic expressions by examining the English to Indonesian translation of the Omniscient Reader webtoon.

## 2. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, deemed appropriate for examining non numerical data such as idiomatic expressions found in translated webtoon texts. As noted by Miles and Huberman (1994, in Ahmadi et al., 2021), this methodological framework allows researchers to systematically observe, categorize, and interpret linguistic patterns through contextual analysis and interpretive insight.

The primary data of this research comprise idiomatic expressions extracted from both the English and Indonesian versions of the Omniscient Reader webtoon, specifically from episodes 1 through 20. Data collection was conducted through purposive sampling, focusing on utterances that exhibit idiomatic features. The identified expressions in the source language (SL) and target language (TL) were subsequently examined using Peter Newmark's (1988) framework of translation methods, with particular attention to faithful, semantic, idiomatic, communicative, and free translation approaches.

The classification of data in this research followed the procedure outlined by Sitorus et al. (2021), which involves mapping each idiomatic expression to Newmark's categories while considering stylistic nuances and cultural adjustments. This analytical approach is further reinforced by the frameworks proposed by Suastini (2021), Wahyudi (2021), Swarniti (2021), and Gita (2021), all of whom employed idiom centered analyses in their respective studies of wise sayings, short stories, and comic translations. In addition, Hartati et al. (2023) and Wulandari (2021) emphasize the importance of contextual fidelity in idiom translation to maintain the clarity and coherence of the narrative.

Furthermore, insights from Ari (2020), Naskah Publikasi (2023), and Park (2021) underscore the increasing importance of adapting idiomatic expressions in the translation of digital native narratives. Each idiom in the dataset was examined based on three key aspects: (1) the translation strategy employed, (2) its cultural appropriateness, and (3) its contribution to narrative coherence. This triangulated approach strengthens the validity of the analysis and supports a comprehensive interpretation of the translator's decision-making process.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the analysis reveal the application of various idiom translation methods in rendering the Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint webtoon (episodes 1–20) from English into Indonesian. The detailed explanation of these methods and their contextual realizations is presented in the following section.

According to Newmark's (1988) theory, there are eight recognized methods of translation. However, this research identified only five of these methods in the English Indonesian translation of the Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint webtoon, namely communicative, idiomatic, faithful, free, and semantic translation. The remaining three methods word for word, literal, and adaptation were not observed in the analyzed data. A detailed explanation of these findings is presented in the following discussion.

- 1) Faithful Translation
  - a) SL: (Episode 1)  
*get sucked into your phone*  
TL: (Episode 1)  
*Kau bisa masuk ke dalam handphone*
  - b) SL : (Episode 5)

*The chances are fifty-fifty anyways*

TL: (Episode 5)

*Karena kemungkinannya 50 banding 50*

c) SL: (Episode 7)

*We're nothing but grasshoppers to him*

TL: (Episode 7)

*Benar kita ini seperti belalang di mata dia*

In this first datum, the expression *get sucked into your phone* is rendered as *kau bisa masuk ke dalam handphone*. The translator preserves both the syntactic and lexical composition of the SL, reflecting a direct correspondence between the verb phrase *get sucked into* and *masuk ke dalam*. The figurative nuance of being absorbed or drawn into the digital world is retained without cultural adaptation. This demonstrates a faithful translation approach, as the TL mirrors the original semantic content and structural form while maintaining the intended imagery.

The translator maintains the numerical idiom *fifty-fifty* as *50 banding 50*, a literal transfer that preserves the original statistical equivalence. The addition of *karena* serves a pragmatic function to align with conversational flow in the TL but does not alter the propositional meaning. The translation thus exemplifies faithfulness through semantic and structural consistency, demonstrating the translator's attempt to reproduce meaning precisely without interpretative modification.

This utterance contains a metaphorical comparison in the SL (*grasshoppers*) symbolizing inferiority. The translator retains the metaphor directly as *seperti belalang*, rather than substituting it with a culturally equivalent idiom. This decision preserves the figurative imagery and emotional tone of the source text. The translation is therefore classified as faithful since it maintains the original metaphorical structure and meaning without domestication.

## 2) Semantic Translation

a) SL: (Episode 4)

*It was Namwoon Kim who drove a wedge into the crack Destroyed the sense of morality that had been binding society together.*

TL: (Episode 4)

*Dalam keadaan di mana dunia dengan moral yang samar mulai hancur .yang membuat keretakan adalah Namwoon Kim.*

In this datum, the SL employs a figurative expression *destroyed the sense of morality that had been binding society together* which metaphorically depicts the disintegration of collective ethical values. The translator does not render the metaphor literally but restructures the sentence to fit Indonesian linguistic and cultural norms, producing *dunia dengan moral yang samar mulai hancur*. This rephrasing maintains the semantic essence of the original namely, the decay of moral order while reformulating the expression to achieve fluency and naturalness in the TL.

## 3) Free Translation

a) SL: ( Episode 1)

*Third-rate College*

TL :( Episode 1)

*Universitas desa kelas kambing*

b) SL:( Episode 4)

*It was Namwoon Kim who drove a wedge into the crack . Destroyed the sense of morality that had been binding society together.*

TL: (Episode 4)

*Dalam keadaan di mana dunia dengan moral yang samar mulai hancur .yang membuat keretakan adalah Namwoon Kim*

c) SL: (Episode 6)

*Jeez , you know-it-alls are all the same.*

TL: (Episode 6)

*Memang, semua orang kolot itu sama.*

In the first datum, the phrase *third-rate college* is a derogatory idiom in English referring to a poor quality or unprestigious educational institution. The translator rendered this as *universitas desa kelas kambing*, which carries an exaggerated connotation in Indonesian, equating it with a rural, low status university. This is not a literal translation but a cultural and humorous reinterpretation of the source phrase. Therefore, free translation was applied, as the translator focused on delivering the message creatively rather than preserving the original form.

Based on the second datum, the idiom *Namwoon Kim who drove a wedge into a crack* was translated as *yang membuat keretakan adalah Namwoon Kim*. The metaphor in the source language, which signifies deepening a division or conflict, was omitted in favor of a more direct statement. The translator prioritized clarity and cultural familiarity, resulting in a rendering that communicates the meaning without preserving the metaphor. Thus, free translation was applied, as the focus was on communicating the idea over literal or idiomatic accuracy.

In the third datum, the idiom *know-it-alls* refer to people who are arrogantly opinionated or believe they know everything. The translator adapted this into *orang kolot*, which typically refers to old fashioned or stubborn individuals in Indonesian. Though this does not carry the exact connotation, it preserves the dismissive and critical tone of the original. Because the translator abandoned a literal approach and instead chose a culturally relevant expression, free translation was used to better suit the target audience.

#### 4) Idiomatic Translation

##### a) SL : (Episode 6)

*I knew what he was going to do, it was like i could read his mind*

TL : (Episode 6)

*Aku bisa tahu dengan jelas seperti membaca isi hati namwoon kim*

##### b) SL: (Episode 7)

*They are the most mysterious being in TWSA and the masterminds behind this treagedy who livestream the scenarios from across the universe.*

TL:(Episode 7)

*Keberadaan paling misterius di dunia TCBHDH dan dalang yang duduk menyaksikan semua cerita tragis ini dari puncak nebula yang jauh itu.*

##### c) SL:( Episode 16)

*H-how could you be so cold-blooded*

TL : (Episode 16)

*Sa-sadis sekali*

In the first datum, the English idiom *read his mind* expresses intuitive understanding or an ability to predict someone's thoughts. The translator renders it as *membaca isi hati*, a culturally familiar Indonesian idiom that conveys a similar intuitive perception. Rather than a literal transfer, this adaptation uses an equivalent idiomatic structure in the TL, effectively preserving both the semantic intent and the emotional nuance of the original. This demonstrates idiomatic translation in practice, where linguistic and cultural equivalence are prioritized over structural correspondence.

Based on the second datum above the term *masterminds* in the SL refers to individuals who secretly orchestrate events. The translator substitutes it with the Indonesian term *dalang*, a culturally embedded metaphor derived from traditional *wayang* (shadow puppetry), symbolizing a figure who controls actions from behind the scenes. This substitution preserves the idiomatic meaning while enriching the translation with local cultural color. The use of *dalang* thus exemplifies idiomatic translation, as it captures both the figurative sense and cultural relevance of the original expression within the TL context.

The idiom *cold-blooded* denotes a lack of empathy or extreme cruelty. In the TL, it is rendered as *sadis*, an Indonesian lexicalized term carrying equivalent emotional and moral connotations. While *sadis* is not a literal translation, it mirrors

the figurative force and affective tone of *cold-blooded*. This demonstrates the translator's idiomatic sensitivity selecting a term that resonates naturally with Indonesian readers while maintaining the expressive impact of the SL.

- 5) Communicative Translation
  - a) SL: ( Episode 13)  
*You are pissing of me*  
TL: ( Episode 13)  
*Kau benar- benar membuatku kesal*
  - b) SL: ( Episode 17)  
*What a joke. those two faced bastards...*  
TL:( Episode 17)  
*Ha, Lucu ya. padahal tadi sok ragu- ragu..*
  - c) SL: (Episode 20)  
*You can point fingers at me all you want. I am a despicable grown up*  
TL: (Episode 20)  
*Tidak ada gunanya menyebutku kejam. karena aku adalah orang dewasa yang licik*

Based on the first datum above the phrase "*pissing off*" is an informal and emotionally charged expression used to show irritation or anger. Rather than translating it literally, the translator uses "*membuatku kesal*", a natural and context-appropriate equivalent in Indonesian. This translation conveys the intended emotion clearly and accessibly for the target audience. The goal here is not to preserve the idiomatic structure but to ensure the message is understood effectively, making this an example of communicative translation.

In the second datum that sentence includes informal, harsh expressions like "*what a joke*" and "*two-faced bastards*". The translator simplifies and softens the tone in the TL by rephrasing it as "*padahal tadi sok ragu-ragu,*" which still communicates the speaker's sarcasm and judgment. The specific insult is omitted, but the tone and message remain. This reflects a choice to prioritize natural communication over literal form, fitting the communicative translation method.

Based on the third text above, the figurative expression "*point fingers at me*" is translated into "*menyebutku kejam*", a phrase that aligns with how blame is culturally expressed in Indonesian. The TL also adapts "*despicable grown-up*" into "*orang dewasa yang licik*", which is slightly less dramatic but effectively conveys the meaning. This adaptation ensures that the emotional impact and message are delivered naturally to the target audience, demonstrating a clear case of communicative translation.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research examined the translation methods applied in rendering idiomatic expressions from English into Indonesian in the Omniscient Reader webtoon. The analysis employed Peter Newmark's theoretical framework, focusing on idiomatic expressions identified across Episodes 1 to 20. Among Newmark's eight proposed translation methods, five were found in the corpus: faithful, semantic, free, idiomatic, and communicative translation. The results indicate that the translator prioritizes meaning equivalence and cultural naturalness over rigid structural correspondence. Faithful and semantic methods were primarily used to retain the core meaning and metaphorical depth of the source text, whereas free and communicative translations were adopted to ensure fluency and readability in the target language. Additionally, idiomatic translation was effectively utilized to replace English idioms with culturally analogous Indonesian expressions, thereby maintaining both emotional resonance and stylistic tone within the translated text.

This research highlights that translating idiomatic expressions in webtoons requires a high degree of strategic flexibility. The translator's ability to alternate between different translation methods illustrates an intentional effort to balance readability, narrative tone, and cultural resonance. The findings extend the scope of applied translation studies by revealing how idioms operate within multimodal

and serialized storytelling environments such as webtoons. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the significance of idiom awareness and methodological adaptability in both literary and digital translation practices, reaffirming the continued relevance of Newmark's framework as a valuable analytical model for examining idiom translation in contemporary media discourse.

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