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The Translation of Idiomatic Expressions in the Karonese Cultural Legend "*Pustaka Sembiring*" into English

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Abstract. This study is about the translation of idiomatic expressions in the Karonese cultural legend "*Pustaka Sembiring*" into English. An idiomatic expression is a combination of words that form figurative meanings, cannot be interpreted from the literal meaning of its forming words , and the meaning is bound to the context, so transferring meaning between two different cultures becomes a challenge for translators in implementing appropriate translation strategies. This research applied the descriptive qualitative method. The source of the research data was a legend entitled "*Pustaka Sembiring*", a Karo-language text contained in the book "*Himpunan Buku Legenda Karo"* pages 171-176 published by *Dinas Pariwisata, Seni dan Budaya Kabupaten Karo* (the Karo District Tourism, Arts and Culture Office) in 2007, and the translation into English translated by Sehati Mitha Sembiring. The purpose of this study was to identify translation strategies applied in translating the idiomatic expressions in the source text into English. Through data collection and discourse analysis, 56 idiomatic idiom were found and then identified based on Baker's (1992) strategies in translating idiomatic expressions. The results showed that the translator used three of four Baker's strategies, namely: 1) Paraphrase (39 or 69.7%) as the most frequently applied strategy, 2) Using Similar Idioms, Different Forms (8 or 14.3%), 3) Using Similar Idioms, Similar Forms (1 or 1.8%). Omission strategy was not found. In addition, there was another translation strategy labeled as Literal Translation (8 or 14.3%) found.

Keyword: Translation, Idiomatic Expression, Translation Strategy, Karonese Legend

1. Introduction

A legend (legere) is a traditional story that is told from generation to generation and is usually associated with events and objects from the past. As a cultural heritage that contains historical sides as well as learning values and rules, legends deserve to be preserved and introduced to every member of the group involved in the legends, even to a larger scope, namely people outside the group.

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In the life of the Karo tribe, one of the largest tribes in North Sumatra-Indonesia, there is a legend regarding the background why the Sembiring clan is divided into nineteen sub-clans, why inter-clan marriages are allowed for some sub-clans, and why some sub-clans of Sembiring are not allowed to eat dog meat. These rules still apply to the Sembiring clan today. This legend has been printed in the book "*Himpunan Buku Legenda Karo*" [1] to inspire the spirit of the Karo generation to dig deeper and develop Karo culture so that it grows so that it has a positive impact on the preservation of Karo culture. One of the challenges that may hinder this goal is social changes in which the current generation is more interested in foreign cultures and less enthusiastic about learning and getting to know their ethnic culture and language.

In order for a legend to persist, it must be shared with many people, even across group and language boundaries. One alternative that can be done is to translate the text into English, which is an international language. However, the existence of different cultural patterns must become an awareness for the translator in matching meanings so that these differences do not damage the real idea transferred from the source language culture to the target language culture. To become an inter-language mediator, a translator must have adequate knowledge of culture and target language [2].

One of the translation difficulties that may be encountered due to cultural differences is dealing with idiomatic expressions. Idioms, or idiomatic expressions, are: "a number of words which, when taken together, have a different meaning from the individual meanings of each word"[3], indicates that the unity of words that form an idiomatic expression must be interpreted as a whole, not just through the literal meaning of the words that construct it.

"*Pustaka Sembiring*" text has a number of idiomatic expressions, one example is 'sada perdakanan' which the literal translation of its meaning can distort the real message. Its literal translation into English becomes "one kitchen" is very different from the real idea: "one group". In order for the real meaning in one language to be conveyed in an acceptable form in another language, the translator must have the skills to outsmart it, namely by implementing a translation strategy. The translation strategy is a translator's plan that has the potential to solve concrete translation problems within the translation framework [4]. Baker (1992) specifically proposes four strategies for translating idiomatic expressions, namely: (1) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form, (2) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, (3) Translation by paraphrase, and (4) Translation by omission; eliminating source text idioms in the target text which may be due to the absence of similar or almost similar equivalents, difficulty in translating them, or stylistic reasons.[5]

Research on the translation of idiomatic expressions has attracted the attention of several researchers. Hashemian investigated the strategy of translating idiomatic expressions in the subtitles of two American films, "Mean Girl's" (2004) and "Bring It On!" (2009), into Persian

based on Baker's (1992) idiom translation strategy, and found that the most widely used in both source texts is Omission [6]. Meanwhile, Winarto and Tanjung found paraphrasing translation as the dominant strategy in translating idiomatic expressions in the English film Transformers III – Dark of The Moon into Indonesian [7]. Agoes identified the strategy for translating idiomatic expressions in the translation of the novel "A Study in Scarlet" by Conan Doyle also found that the translator tend to use the paraphrasing strategy [8]. It is concluded that every translator had his own thoughts and decisions in dealing with idioms; there are translators who prefer not to translate the idioms they find, and there are also translators who feel that the idioms they find must be translated but in a different form and adapted to the conditions of the target culture.

The translator of Karonese text "*Pustaka Sembiring*" into English had their own strategy in dealing with idiomatic expressions as well. In this study, the source text was translated by an English teacher and freelance interpreter named Sehati Mitha Sembiring.

2. Research Method

This study was a descriptive that focused on the product of translation, used a descriptive-qualitative approach with an embedded case research design, meaning that the research put theories as its framework, had been directed at certain boundaries or focuses which were the target of the research [9]. Techniques used were *purposive sampling* and content analysis by focusing on the whole sentence and the context or situation contained in the written text "*Pustaka Sembiring*". The instrument in this study was human. The researcher was also an reviewer, coupled with two reviewers with respective competencies in English and Karo culture. Supporting instruments were the Karo-Indonesian Dictionary published by *Balai Pustaka* in 2001, online monolingual dictionaries of English and Indonesian (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), as well as reading sources from the internet to find out more about the data being discussed.

The research data sources were a text of the Karo cultural legend entitled "*Pustaka Sembiring*" and its translation in English, entitled "*The Holy Book of Sembiring*". The text "*Pustaka Sembiring*" was a sub-title listed on the page 171-186 of a book entitled "*Himpunan Buku Legenda Karo*" published by *Dinas Pariwisata, Seni dan Budaya Kabupaten Karo* (the Karo District Tourism, Arts and Culture Office) in 2007, written in Karonese language as Source Language. "*The Holy Book of Sembiring*" was its translation by Sehati Mitha Sembiring, an English teacher and freelance interpreter.

There were 56 pairs of phrases or clauses identified as idiomatic expressions and their translation, that were taken as data, they were: 1)*nininta nai*➔*the ancestors*, 2)*sada perdakanan*➔*are united as one under Sembiring clan label*, 3) *sisada pengodak sada pengole*➔*lived in tune,* 4) *sada kudin perdakanen*➔*lived as a single clan*, 5) *perjengilen i bas*

jabu➔*conflict within the household*, 6)*mberu lanai terlanglang*➔*whose beauty was undeniable*, 7) *man bana* ➔*(to) marry*, 8) *rembang tengah nge kuakap kam rukur*➔*I don't think your thoughts are biased towards*, 9) *ngatur langkah perdalan*➔*make further plans*, 10) *begu nini nai imbangku*➔*I swear on my life*, 11) *jumpa mata*➔*our eyes to meet*, 12) *angina silumang*➔*blowing breeze*, 13) *mindo Dibata*➔*can't make it*, 14) *mindo taneh*➔*can't make it*, 15) *sengkebah ngenca pagi sengkeruk*➔*step-by-step*, 16) *ngadi me ia lebe pekesahken*➔*he paused to catch his breath*, 17) *kempak matawari sundut*➔*to the west*, 18) *kempak matawari pultak*➔*to the east*, 19) *bagi lacina pane*➔*the size is right*, 20) *ngikutken cakap*➔*as you havesaid*, 21)*manai kin langlang*➔*surely very*, 22)*man bana*➔*will marry*, 23)*nangkih-nangkih matawari*➔*after sunrise*, 24)*enggo tersayat babahndu teriket ranandu*➔*you're bound by a promise*, 25)*rupandu teluna labo lit siberaten* ➔*(in term of appearance) you are equally good*, 26)*dagingndu labo lit situalen*➔*(in term of physical) you are equally good*, 27)*tama-tama ukur*➔*feels offended*, 28) *radu-radu seh nge kita ku je*➔*fair for me and you*, 29) *lanai bo lit pe kesahna*➔*were not (able to run)*, 30) *pekeri gegeh*➔*as hard as they could*, 31) *jadi niningku kam kuban*➔*to make you my grandmother*, 32) *nembah kal jari-jari sepuluh*➔*we are very pleading for (something)*, 33) *bahani kal ajangmu karina*➔*do whatever you want*, 34) *sirang i ture*➔*to separate in the toilet*, 35) *sambari sekali nanamna*➔*change it (the taste)*, 36) *nambari nanamna*➔*change the taste*, 37) *kuahna pe enggom me ciho kal*➔*the broth is very clear*, 38) *ola meciho kuahna e* ➔*the broth not clear*, 39) *manai kin langlang riahna*➔*it's undeniable that (somethings) are very crowded*, 40) *labo ia erkeleng-keleng*➔*very generous*, 41) *man bana*➔*to be his wife*, 42) *jelma enda ibuang-buang*➔*a single human being who can be set aside*, 43) *man bangku gelah kam*➔*marry me*, 44) *man bandu pe aku*➔*I don't mind (to marry you)*, 45) *ngaloken tukur*➔*to accept the dowry*, 46) *tendina enggo sipudunen*➔*their souls have been tied together*, 47) *ngaloken tukur*➔*to accept the dowry*, 48) *nungkun kalak Pandia*➔*a Pandia proposing to me*, 49) *nungkun kalak meliala*➔*a Meliala proposing to me*, 50) *ngerana pe manai langlang karina ulina*➔*their words are always good*, 51) *sada pengodak*➔*had the same thoughts*, 52) *medate karina ngerana*➔*talk softly and gently,* 53) *ngkeriken bana* ➔*to spend everything he have*, 54) *sirang ture*➔*separating in toilet or places for def*ecation*,* 55) *sada kudin perdakanen*➔*used to be only one clan*, 56) *ngerana me date*➔*speak gently.*

The main components of the analysis process in this study were (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, (3) drawing conclusions or verification [10].

3. Result and Discussion

The following is a recapitulation of the idiomatic expression translation strategies found in this study.

Table 1. A recapitulation of strategies for translating idiomatic expressions in the translation of the text "*Pustaka Sembiring*" into English

Strategies	Amount	Percentage
Using an idiom of similar meaning and form	1	1,8%
Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form	8	14,3%
Translation by paraphrase	39	69.7%
Translation by omission	0	0%
Literal	8	14.3%
Total	**56**	**100%**

Firstly, the study used Baker's four strategies in translating idioms as the orientation, but the researcher found another one that could not be classified as either, that was labeled as "Literal". There were four strategies applied in translating idiomatic expressions in the text "*Pustaka Sembiring*" into English, they were: 1) Translation by paraphrase (39 or 69.7%) as the most frequently applied strategy, 2) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form (8 or 14.3%), 3) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form (1 or 1.8%), and 4) Literal Translation (8 or 14.3%). Translation by omission was not found.

a. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

From the total data, the translator applied a translation strategy using idioms with similar meaning and form in 1 data, namely Data 11, *jumpa mata*.

ST: *"...; adi jumpa mata pagi atendu kita, tare pagi ku bintang tinambur.*

TT: *"...; if you want our eyes to meet, point them to the stars scattered in the sky.*

Karonese idiomatic expression *jumpa mata* which actually means "looking into each other's eyes" which is equivalent to "our eyes to meet" which has the same meaning. The construction of "(to) meet (one's) eye (s)" is an idiom meaning 'To make eye contact with one (making eye contact with someone)'. The Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT) have similarities in meaning and are also forms that combine the meet / meet with the eye.

b. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

The translation of idiomatic sentences that applied the strategy useing idioms that have similar meanings but different forms in the target text totaling 8 data, namely Data 3, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 24, and 42.

Although this strategy emphasizes 'Similar Meaning', it is seen from the perspective of the translator who try to present idioms that have the same meaning. In other words, from the researcher's point of view, the meaning contained in the translation in the form of idiomatic expressions was not necessarily true, as in Data 13 and 14, such as:

ST: *Jadikenlah e perjumpanta pagi ntah i ja gia pagin mindo Dibata, ntah i ja gia mindo taneh,*

TT: *Make it our meeting if later we <u>can't make it</u>,*

Literally, *mindo* equal '(to) ask', *Dibata* 'God', *taneh* 'land, soil', so that *mindo Dibata* and *mindo taneh* in literal meaning meant '*God asking*' and '*land asking*'. In the context of Karo culture and the story, either '*mindo Dibata*' or '*mindo taneh*' was a Euphemism or subtle language for '*mate*', that is Karonese word for '*dead*'. In English, some euphemisms that can represent the meaning of "died" are '*passed away*', '*lost (someone's) life/battle*', '*six feet under*' and so on, and the translator chooses one of them, namely idiom '*can't make it*', an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form. The expression *'(to) make it*' has an idiomatic meaning '*to succeed in doing something; to succeed in surviving*' which if put into the ST context will give a choice of multiple meanings, namely "did not survive" or "failed to meet again for some reason (could be due to death or other obstacles)".

c.   Translation by paraphrase

According to Baker (1992), paraphrasing is the most common strategy used when the translator cannot find an idiom that matches the target language or when the translator considers the use of idiomatic expressions in the source text to be inappropriate due to differences in language style. Paraphrasing is a technique of restating the meaning of an idiom by using other words or phrases to clarify the meaning so that it is easier to understand. Paraphrases are often found in the translation of idiomatic expressions in the Karonese text *"Pustaka Sembiring"* into English, which amounts to 38 data, consisting of Data 1, 2, 4, 6-9, 12, 17-23, 25-30, 32, 33, 39-41, 43-45, 47-53, 55, and 56. Example of paraphrases found is Data 2

ST: *kerna kejadian kalak sembiring mergana si <u>sada perdakanan</u> karina,*

TT: *about people surnamed Sembiring who <u>are united as one under Sembiring clan label</u>,*

Idiomatic expression *sada perdakanan* is constructed by *sada + per-dakan-nan*; *sada* means 'one' and *dakan* means 'to cook' in Target Language, meanwhile *perdakanan* is 'cooking place or kitchen',* so this phrase can be interpreted literally as '*one/the same cooking place or kitchen*'. The expression *sada perdakanan* describes several people who have something in common and live as a group on the basis of that similarity, for example in the context of the story the people of Sembiring live in/as *sada perdakanan*/ one kitchen (literal meaning) / one group (idiomatic meaning). The translator tried to convey the message contained in it by transferring the meaning to paraphrase *who are united as one under Sembiring clan label*.

d.   Idiom Translation Strategy: Literal

In translating idiomatic expressions on the data, it was found that several translations were not included in Baker's (1992) idiomatic expression translation strategies. The translator did not transfer the meaning contained in ST by using equivalent idioms in the BSa culture, did not paraphrase, nor did omissions, but translated word-for-word in the idiomatic expression

literally. This translation was included as a finding in this study and labels it as an idiom translation strategy: Literal. This strategy was applied by the translator to the idiomatic expression of the text "Pustaka Sembiring" into English 9 times, namely Data 5, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 46, and 54.

The idiomatic expressions translated by this strategy result in a literal or word-for-word translation, for example Data 54:

ST: *e maka tangkel me kuan-kuan "sirang ture nina Seberaya" ningen nai;*

TT: *there came a proverb "sirang ture nina Seberaya (separating in toilet or places for defecation, Seberaya said) at that time;*

In the clause *sirang ture nina Seberaya,* there is an idiomatic expression *sirang ture*. Literally in English, word *sirang* means '*to separate*' and *ture* refers to either: 1) *toilet or places for defecation,* or 2) *stairs on the house or porch*. In the TT, it was seen that the translator defined the *ture* in the context as "a place to defecate", whereas the actual reference is "stairs or veranda". The translator translated the phrase directly based on the meaning per word of the constituent, became *separating in toilet or places for defecation, Seberaya said*. This translation gives the impression that the translator might not be aware of that expression *sirang ture* has a meaning other than the literal meaning. This expression appears to describe the state of 'others gain, themselves lose'. This term originated from the cremation ashes sweeping ceremony that was previously performed by the Sembiring clan. The ceremony was held lively and everyone present had to be fed until the property of the host had run out of expenses. *Sirang ture* or parting on the steps of the house or veranda means to describe that the guest and the host have separate directions on the stairs or veranda; guests return to their villages, while the hosts go abroad to become laborers because they have fallen into poverty.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

The strategies of translating Baker's (1992) idiomatic expression which were applied by the translator of the Karonese cultural legend "*Pustaka Sembiring*" into English are: Translation by paraphrase (39 or 69.7%) as the most frequently applied strategy, 2) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form (8 or 14.3%), 3) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form (1 or 1.8%), and no Omission. In addition, there was a literal strategy for translating idiomatic expressions (8 or 14.3%). The findings of other strategies outside of Baker's suggestion suggest that the possibility of another idiomatic expression translation strategy outside the boundaries of a theory can emerge. Further analysis of these findings, for example translator ideology or comparison of translation strategies implementation by other translators, can be used as research material for other researchers.

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