

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION OF
THE IDIOMS IN AGATA CHRISTIE'S *Mrs. Mc GINTY'S
DEAD* INTO INDONESIAN IN BUDIYANTO PRAMONO'S
*Mrs. Mc GINTY SUDAH MATI***

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Abstract

Idiom is a number of words which are joined together means something different from the meaning of the words when they stand alone. In order to reproduce the closest natural equivalent in terms of the source context, a translator normally attempts to make adjustments in idioms due to a literal translation of idioms into another language will not make sense.

This paper is mainly aimed at finding out how a translator can translate and discover the natural equivalent of English idiomatic expression. The findings show that there are two types of adjustments that are used in translating the idioms. First, by non figurative expression equivalent and second, by figurative expression equivalent.

I. Introduction

Background and Problems

The existence of translation as one aspect of language is very useful and very helpful especially for the people who are from a non native speaker of the source language, in this case English, in order to grasp the meaning or content of that source text easier. Since English text books, one of them is novel have come to Indonesia, translation is needed.

Many problems to face in translation, these remind us that many aspects are involved in it including communication situation, cultural context of source language text, lexicon and grammar (Larson, 1984 : 3). Whatever the problems of translation are, still they have some processes to transfer the meaning of the source language into the target language. In translation, the meaning which is being transferred must be constant. Only the forms change (Larson, 1984 : 3).

Each language has its own way of expressing meaning through lexical items. The English language and also other languages are rich in vocabularies including its ways of expressing distinctions of meaning and are also rich in figurative expressions. Most of the figurative expressions can be found in novels, and one of them is idiom. Idioms can be defined as a number of words which when taken together will have different meaning from the individual meaning of each word (Seidl, 1988 : 13). In translating the idioms, the translator often find some problems since an idiom cannot be translated literally word for word because it will be meaningless or even convey quite wrong meaning, unless it has

the same form of idiom in the TL text, (idiom for idiom translation) for example: SL. *flesh and blood* (Christie, 1952 : 47) and the TL. *darah daging* (Pramono, 1991 : 89). To find out the closest natural equivalence in translating idioms is sometimes difficult. So, the translator must have a good understanding of the idioms. In the mean time to do an effective translation one must discover the meaning of the source language forms and use the target language forms which express this meaning in a natural way (Larson, 1984 : 6). In this case the writer has a great intention to analyze the idiomatic expression based upon the data which are taken from the novel entitled *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*, written by Agatha Christie and its translation in Indonesian, *Mrs. McGinty Sudah Mati* by Budiyo Pramono.

Aims of Writing

Any scientific writing should have a clear purpose. Generally, this paper is made in order to know about the practice of theory of translation which is applied into this paper.

Specifically, the composing of this paper is for describing how a translator can discover the closest natural equivalent of English idioms in Indonesian based on the meaning and the message of the source language idioms.

Scope of Discussion

Idioms take many different forms or structure. In this case, the form of idioms refers to words, phrases, or clauses. In the work of translation what is transferred is the meaning of the source language forms into the target language forms through semantic analysis, not the forms themselves. The meaning itself is maintained, whereas the forms may be adapted.

Based on the statement above and because of the limit of my knowledge I would like to focus the discussions or analysis on:

- a. How is the process of translation?
- b. How English idiomatic expressions are classified?
- c. How does the translator discover the natural equivalence of English idiomatic expressions in Indonesian?

So it is clear that in analyzing or doing this paper I will base my analysis upon the scope limit and some statements or theories which have been proposed by some experts in the field of translation, especially the statements or theories which are closely related to the scope of discussion of this writing.

In the work of translation, especially in translating idioms, the translator cannot translate them literally because the result will be meaningless or may even convey quite wrong meaning. It can be seen in the following statement that is proposed by Mildred L. Larson in her book *Meaning-Based Translation*.

“The same translation principle applies for idioms as for their figures or speech. Sometimes it will be necessary to translate with a non figurative expression but sometimes a good receptor language idiom may be used. The translator needs to learn to recognize the source text. The real danger comes in translating an idiom literally, since the result will be usually be nonsense on the receptor language (Larson, 1984 : 116),

In this case the translator needs to do some adjustments in translating an idiom to make that language become natural.

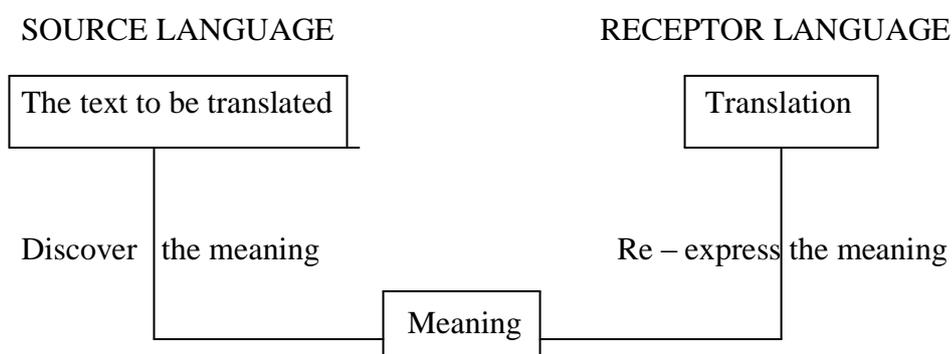
The basic concept of translation is to transfer the meaning from one language to another. It can be seen in the following definition of translation. Translation, by dictionary definition, consists of changing from one state or form to another, to turn into one's own or another's language (The Merriam Webster Dictionary, 1974).

Translating is an attempt to discover the closest natural equivalent of the source language in which the meaning has priority over the forms. It is in agreement on what Nida and Taber proposed in their book *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style (Nida and Taber, 1974 : 12)

The emphasis of the above definition is on the closest natural meaning equivalence. The translators have to make every effort to transfer the meaning and not the grammatical forms of the source language. Transfer means the reproducing of the source language message in the language. It is realized that the result will not be exactly the same, but equivalent (a very close similarity in meaning).

Based on the topic that is about the translation of English idiomatic expression into Indonesian, another theory that can support the analysis is as stated by Palmer in his book "*Semantics, A New Outline*". He says that an idiom is semantically like a single word but it does not function like one. But grammatically an idiom may consist of more than one word. So, the meaning of an idiom cannot be predicted from the meaning of the words that compose it (1976: 98)

And in the process of translation there are some steps that have to be attended. The process of translating could be shown by a diagram that is taken from Larson's Meaning Based Translation (1984: 2) as follows:



It is clearly described above that when the translator is translating, the first step that must be done is to discover and understand the meaning or the message of the source language text. After discovering the meaning of the source language text, the translator then analyzes and looks for natural form of the receptor/target language. Below, it will be given an example of the process in translating according to the diagram processed by Larson:

SL: This no time to lie down on the job.

RL: Sekarang bukan waktu mengabaikan tugas.

(Podo and Sullivan, 1989: 156)

The first step that the translator must analyze is to discover the meaning of the source text. The meaning of the source text at the example above could be grasped that 'someone did not pay attention to the job at that time'. After being able to discover the meaning, the next task of the translator is looking for the natural form of the target language which has the same meaning or message as the source language. It will be very different if the translator probably translate it without paying attention to the meaning or message of the source text and just translate it literally, so that the translation will sound unnatural in the target language, for instance : '*sekarang bukan waktunya berbaring di atas pekerjaan*' that is not commonly used in Indonesian as the target language. So once again, it is emphasized here that in the process of translating, meaning must have priority over the form.

II. Discussions

In the effort to discover the equivalence of the idiom in the TL, the translator might make some adjustments. These adjustments are done in order to make the text that is translated natural in the TL. Idioms are some of the most obvious cases for semantic adjustments. Generally, there are two types of adjustments that are quite understandable:

- A. by nonfigurative expression equivalence that is, the translator translate the idioms in the SL into non-idiomatic expression in the TL.
- B. by figurative expression equivalence, that is, the translator makes substitution of the idioms. The substitution could be done as long as it has the same meaning, message or function.

There will be only ten (10) idioms taken randomly from the novel entitled Mrs. McGinty's Dead written by Agatha Christie, 1952 and its translation entitled Mrs. McGinty Sudah Mati translated by Budiyanto Pramono, 1991.

1. **SL.** She was looking for Hercule Poirot and when she found him she did not *beat about the bush*. (Christie, 1952: 162)

TL. Ia mencari Hercule Poirot dan ketika ditemukannya ia tidak *berbasa basi lagi*. (Pramono, 1991: 162)

The idiomatic expression in the source language above is one type of verbal idiom. The idiom *beat about the bush* by dictionary means *talk indirectly about something*, of which the meaning is *mengatakan sesuatu secara tidak langsung* in Indonesian. In translating an idiom a translator must be able to develop sensitivity to the use of an idiom and use it naturally in the TL. It means that the translation is presented in such a way that it can derive the same response

from the SL text into the TL text. From the above comparison, we can see how the translator discovers the equivalence of the SL text into the TL text. In this case, the idiom *beat about the bush* is translated into *berbasa basi lagi*, which has the same meaning as the meaning intended in the source text idiom. *Berbasa basi* is equivalent to *mengatakan sesuatu secara tidak langsung*, but *berbasa basi* is more natural and more acceptable, so in this case the translator translates the idiom well. *Berbasa basi* is not an idiom. It belongs to a non figurative expression.

2. **SL.** Whether any of this irrelevant matter would be of use, he had no idea. He was *looking through a haystack to find a needle*. But, incidentally, he was learning something about Bessie Burch. (Christie, 1952: 31).

TL. Apakah semua aspek yang tidak relevan ini akan ada gunanya, ia tidak tahu. Ia sedang *mencari sebuah jarum dalam tumpukan jerami*. Tapi dengan tidak sengaja ia memperoleh suatu fakta tentang Bessie Burch. (Pramono, 1991: 80)

From the above comparison, in replacing the context *he was looking through a haystack to find a needle*, the translator translates the context into *ia sedang mencari sebuah jarum dalam tumpukan jerami*, which exists in Indonesian. In this case, the translation of the idiom in the source text can be predicted into the form of idiom in TL. Those idioms are used to describe a person who is doing something very difficult to do or to solve (problem). In this substitution, there is an adjustment in the word order. In this case, we can see that there is a shift of word order. The translator shifts the word order to make it easier in changing the meaning. It belongs to a figurative expression.

3. **SL.** Saying, in effect, that he'd poisoned her. Of course, people do say that sort of thing. She'd been attended by an outside doctor, reputable man, and he seemed to think her death was quite *above board*. (Christie, 1952: 187).

TL. Isinya yaitu bahwa dia meracuni istrinya. Orang memang suka mengatakan hal-hal seperti itu. Istrinya dirawat oleh dokter lain, cukup terhormat, dan dokter itu cenderung berpendapat bahwa kematiannya itu *wajar*. (Pramono, 1952: 342).

Although preposition form a small class of words in English, they frequently combine with other word classes to form idiomatic expression. From the example above, the expression of *above board* can be noted as examples of *idiom with prepositional phrases*. In this case there is a shift of the meaning of that idiom. Actually the meaning of the idiom *above board* is *legal* in the SL text, of which the meaning is *sah* in Indonesian. But the translator uses the word *wajar* instead of *sah*. It is done because the translator wants to avoid the translation from being awkward. And the translation becomes better because the meaning can be conveyed in accordance with the intention of the SL text. It belongs to a non figurative expression.

4. **SL.** Changing her name, the pitiful young girl, seduced in her trusting youth by a *cold – blooded murderer*, left these shore forever to begin a new life and (Christie, 1952: 52)

TL. Setelah mengubah namanya, gadis muda yang malang ini, yang dalam usia mudanya jatuh dalam rayuan seorang *pembunuh berdarah dingin*, meninggalkan tanah ini selamanya untuk memulai hidup baru dan (Pramono, 1991: 103)

Meanwhile in *cold – blooded murderer* which its meaning is *pembunuh berdarah dingin*, it seems that the translator uses the equivalence of the word literary, because the message conveyed from the SL idiom into the TL idiom has the same idea. But in this case there is a shift in the word order. But in this expression it can be noticed that though the translation is literary translated, it seems the meaning intended from the SL text can be understood if it is transferred into the TL text. The idiom *a cold – blooded murderer* is used to describe *a cruel murder(er)*. In this case, the translator must have been familiar with the meaning of the SL idiom, and then he directly translates the SL idiom into the TL text in a natural form of the TL because Indonesian also has such an idiom *pembunuh berdarah dingin*. *Pembunuh berdarah dingin* has the same meaning as in *a cold – blooded murderer*. Therefore, the source text idiom is translated into Indonesian idiom. It belongs to a figurative expression.

5. **SL.** The cinema, more often than not, enraged him by the looseness of its plots – the lack of logical continuity in the argument – event the photography which, *raved over* by some (Christie, 1952: 6)

TL. Nonton film lebih sering membuatnya jengkel daripada senang, jalan ceritanya yang kurang kompaklah – kurangnya kesinambungan yang logis dalam dialognya – atau fotografinya, yang *dipuji-puji* oleh sementara orang. (Pramono, 1991: 14)

In the type which a *verb followed idiomatically by an adverb*, it is seen here, in the idiomatic expression *raved over* which is translated into *dipuji-puji* in Indonesian. From the comparison above, it can be seen that there is an adjustment of grammatical structure due to the effort of the translator to maintain the meaning of the SL idiom. The idiom *raved over* which has a single word equivalent to *laud* in the SL, but in this case the translator translated it into *dipuji-puji* which is equivalent to be *lauded* in English. In this translation there is a shift that is from an active expression into a passive expression. It belongs to a non figurative expression.

6. **SL.** I do not think that actual blackmail ever entered Mrs. McGinty's mind, but she did hope, perhaps, for a 'nice little present', as reward for *holding her tongue* about a piece of bygone gossip which would not have been pleasant for a 'proud' woman like Mrs. Upward. (Christie, 1952: 179)

TL. Saya kira Mrs. McGinty tidak pernah bermaksud untuk memeras, tapi dia berharap, barangkali, memperoleh 'sedikit hadiah' sebagai imbalan untuk *tidak bicara* tentang skandal masa lalu yang tak akan enak bagi wanita yang sombong seperti Mrs. Upward. (Pramono, 1991: 327)

The idiom in the source text above belongs to the *idiom with phrasal verb*. The expression of *holding her tongue* is translated into *tidak bicara* in Indonesian. If it is translated literally the meaning will be meaningless as seen in the

following. *Hold* means *memegang* and *tongue* means *lidah*. In this case, from the meaning of each word, perhaps we can predict the meaning of that idiom. As we know *tongue* is an organ of speech, so if we hold our tongue we cannot speak. Actually, the expression *holding someone's tongue* means *silent* or *diam* in Indonesian. But here, the translator used the phrase *tidak bicara* to make the expression become clearer and natural. Because if he uses the word *diam* it might be understood as *do nothing* or *tidak melakukan apa-apa* in Indonesia. In this case, the translator translates the idiom *holding her tongue* into *tidak bicara* to avoid ambiguous meaning. It belongs to non figurative expression.

7. **SL.** “Well that’s natural enough, isn’t it, Sir? You can’t take it with you, and it’s only right your own *flesh and blood* should get it.” (Christie, 1952: 47)

TL. “Itu wajar, kan Pak? Yang mati tidak bisa membawa uangnya dan bias dibenarkan jika itu diberikan kepada *darah dagingnya sendiri*.” (Pramono, 1991: 89)

The expression *flesh and blood* are the example of *idiom with pairs of nouns*. In this case *flesh* means *soft substance between skin and bones* which is equivalent to *daging* in Indonesia, and *blood* means *red liquid circulating in arteries veins* which is equivalent to *darah* in Indonesian. In this case, we can see that the translator uses the equivalent of the word literally. The translator might have familiar with the meaning of the SL idiom, he then directly translates into the TL text in a natural form of the TL text. Both idioms, the English and Indonesian version have the same meaning that is ‘relationship between parents and their children’. It belongs to figurative expression.

8. **SL.** “You should have to know old Colonel Summerhayes, a regular tartar, *proud as the devil*.”

TL. “Kalau saja anda kenal Kolonel Summerhayes tua, kasar dan pemarah, *sombong seperti setan*.” (Pramono, 1991: 118)

The other type of idiom is *idiom with common comparisons* which is reflected in the example of *proud as the devil*. Here, the translator also translates the SL idiom literally word-for-word. Although it translated word-for-word, it does not eliminate the proper meaning that is intended by the SL idiom. Both comparisons above are used to show one of the human’s characters that is *proud* or *arrogant* or *sombong* or *angkuh* in Indonesian. And actually only the devil or *setan* in Indonesian has this character. So, both the idioms above have those words as the key words in making the comparisons. It belongs to figurative expression.

9. **SL.** Hercule Poirot picked up the beans from the floor where they had scattered *far and wide*. Just as he finished doing so, Mrs. Summerhayes came in again through the door. (Christie, 1952: 27)

TL. Hercule Poirot memunguti buncis-buncis yang terserak *ke mana-mana* did lantai itu. Ketika ia baru saja selesai melakukan itu, Mrs. Summerhayes masuk lagi lewat pintu. (Pramono, 1991: 54)

The expression *far and wide* is the example of *idiom with pairs of adverbs*. In this case, *far and wide* have meaning each as *at or to great distance and broad*,

not narrow. But if those words are joined together, they will have single word equivalence to *everywhere*. From the above comparison it can be seen that there is no much shift between both languages. The translator can translate the English idiomatic expression into Indonesian directly based on the meaning that is intended by the idiom. In this case he translates it into *ke mana-mana* which is equivalent to *everywhere* in English. It belongs to a non figurative expression.

10. **SL.** “Now, ‘he thought,’ I must think about the investigation.” “*It has its perils and merits.*” (Christie, 1952: 23)

TL. “Sekarang aku harus berfikir tentang penyelidikan ini”, pikirnya.
“*Ada bahayanya tapi ada juga untungnya.*”

The expression *it has its perils and merits* is the example of *idiom with pairs of nouns*. *Peril* means *serious danger* or *sangat berbahaya* in Indonesian, and *merit* means *quality of deserving reward; worth; excellence* or *kebaikan* or *jasa*. In the expression *it has its perils and merits*, there is a semantic adjustment due to the shift of meaning occurs when the translator transfers the meaning of *merits* from the SL text into the TL text. The exact meaning of *merit* is *reward* in the SL equivalence. But the translator translates it into the TL as *untung* whereas its equivalence is *lucky* in the source text. So far, it can be accepted, as long as there is not anything lost of the meaning intended from the SL idiom. Moreover, it is due to the attempt to make the translation make sense for the TL readers without eliminating the meaning of the SL text, and even it is more natural. Because, if *merit* which is equivalent to *reward*, is translated into *jasa*, it becomes *ada bahayanya tapi juga ada jasanya*. It makes the translation awkward. So it is clear that the translator emphasizes his work on the terms of communicative translation. It belongs to a non figurative expression.

III. Conclusion

After analyzing the translation of the English idioms into the Indonesian idioms found in the novel *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*, and its translation *Mrs. McGinty Sudah Mati* some conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. In order to reproduce meaning in terms of the source context, the translator attempts to make adjustments in the idioms, he adapts the statement proposed by Larson (1984: 116). “Sometimes it will be necessary to translate idiom with a nonfigurative expression, but sometimes a good TL idiom may be used”. So the translator translates some of the idioms by nonfigurative expression, it is clearly seen on data number: 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 10.
2. It seems that the translator has been familiar with idioms either the SL idioms or the TL idioms. He can translate some of the English idioms into Indonesian idioms. The translator comprehends the message and the function of idioms in the SL before reconstructing them into the TL idioms. It is also in accordance with Larson's statement (1984), it will be necessary to translate idiom with a good TL idiom. In this case he translates the idioms in figurative expression equivalence. It is clearly seen on data number: 2, 4, 7, and 8.

3. In general, it can be concluded that the translator translates the SL idioms into the TL idioms correctly, as they are intended in the SL texts. He can adjust the idioms well; he gives the best equivalence to each idiom. So every translation he does here is natural and acceptable.

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