# Strategies to Translate Idiomatic Expressions in HBO Series *Succession*

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**Abstracts:** This research is aimed at identifying translation strategies for idiomatic expressions found in the first season of the HBO TV series entitled *Succession* from English into Indonesian. The main theories used are referred to Baker's (2018) idiom translation strategies and Fernando's (1996) classification of types of idioms. This research was conducted by using a descriptive qualitative method, with note-taking as the main data collection method. The findings revealed that the idiom found were classified into pure idiom, semi idiom, and literal idiom. Five translation strategies were applied to translate them. They cover the strategy to translate by paraphrasing, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, using an idiom of similar meaning and form, omission of the play on the idiom, and omission of the entire idiom.
Keywords: idiomatic expression, translation, strategies, TV series.

## INTRODUCTION

Translation is known to be a complicated task. It is a process of rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way author intended in the text (Newmark, 1988:5). Translation in practical way can bring in a new perspective, since it allows communication and the spread of information between cultures, ranging from knowledge to entertainment.

Meaning is the key of translation. It is worth noting that each language has its own distinctive form for representing the meaning (Larson, 1998:10). Translation could be considered good if it sounds natural. Therefore, it is not sufficient to produce a proper translation if we only use literal approach of the language.

With this mandatory adjustment, some difficulties cannot be avoided. The fact that language differs from one another results in the lack of equivalence between source and target language. Hence, different kinds of non-equivalence require different strategies. According to Baker (2018:94), equivalence related to lexical resources of the source and target languages concerned two main categories, word level and above word level. Non-equivalence at word level means that the target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text. Whereas above word level deals with lexical patterning, which has to do with certain word combinations that have certain restriction in order to convey the meaning. One of the forms of lexical pattern in a language is idiomatic expression.

Idiomatic expressions are multi-word phrases whose overall meanings are idiosyncratic and largely unpredictable, reflecting speaker meanings that are not derivable by combining the literal senses of the individual words in each phrase according to the regular semantic rules of the language (Hurford, 2007:328). Idiom simply has different meaning than the actual word they conveyed. Idiom is of three types which include pure idioms, semi-idioms, andliteral idioms (Fernando 1996).

The main difficulties in translating idiom are dealing with interpreting the idiom and rendering the meaning. In addition to that, idiom tends to be culturally specific. Consequently, in translating, it is difficult to achieve the same sensitivity that native speakers seem to have for judging when and how an idiom can be manipulated (Baker, 2018:70). Six strategies were proposed. They include strategies by using an idiom of similar meaning and form; using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form; borrowing the source language idiom; translation by paraphrase; translation by omission of a play on idiom; and translation by omission of entire idiom (Baker, 2018).

Furthermore, English idiom is used quite often in everyday language. Idiom can be depicted through media, like film and television. This means that the strategies to translate idiomatic expressions

are important to be investigated. Several researches dealing with translation strategies have been conducted (Susini et al., 2018 ; Sekret, 2020; Susini & Sujaya, 2021). The researches conducted were in different objects of research. By using translation strategies (Baker, 2018), this study is to examine the translation strategies applied in translating idiomatic expression in television serries.

## METHODS

The data in this research was taken from HBO's television series by Jesse Armstrong, *Succession*. Method of data collection used in the research was observation method by note-taking. The English and Indonesian subtitle from the first season of *Succession* released in 2018 was used as the primary data source. In total there are ten episodes and every episode has around 50 minutes duration. The show is available on HBO GO and HBO GO mobile app was used to watch the series.

The data was collected by conducting purposive sampling. The sample elements judged to be typical, or representative were chosen from the population (Ary et al., 2010:156), so idiomatic expression as the samples was interpreted from each of episode as a data.

The data collected were analyzed by both distributional and identity methods. According to Sudaryanto (2015:18), distributional method is a method in which the determining tool comes from the language concerned in the research. Distributional method was used to interprete the meaning of idiomatic expression found in the series using Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (Sierfing, 2004) and Mc Graw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms (Spears, 2005). The idioms found were sorted into each category based on idiom classifications by Fernando (1996). Whereas in identity method, the concerns were coming from outside the language. This method with equalizing technique was used when comparing the idioms found in the series with their translation in Indonesian to identify the translation strategies based on Baker's (2018) idiom translation strategies.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, only five strategies were applied from the six strategies by Baker (2018) to translate idiomatic expressions. The strategies used are using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, translation by the omission of a play on the idiom, and translation by the omission of an entire idiom. The strategy to borrow source-language idiom was not found in the series.

All the strategies were applied in various types of idioms, such as pure idiom, semi idiom, and literal idiom. There was a total of 143 idioms found in the series. Table 1 shows the distributions for each strategies applied in *Successions* series below.

Table 1. Translation strategies for Idiomatic Expression in Succession Season 1

| **Translation Strategies** | **Number** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Using an idiom of similar meaning and form | 3 | 2,1% |
| Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form | 13 | 9,1% |
| Borrowing the source language idiom | - | - |
| Translation by paraphrase | 124 | 86,7% |
| Translation by omission of a play on idiom | 2 | 1,4% |
| Translation by omission of entire idiom | 1 | 0,7% |
| Total | 143 | 100% |

### Translating Idiom by Using an Idiom of similar Meaning and Form

Occasionally, this strategy could be achieved if there are rough equivalents between source and target language idiom. In the first season of *Succession*, three idioms are translated by using this strategy.

Datum (1):

S1E4 [00:37:14]

ST: There's dinner rolls ripping out there as we speak! I am a **laughing stock**!

TT: *Kalian mengacaukan... makan malam yang sedang diadakan saat ini! Aku jadi* ***bahan tertawaan****!*

Based on the datum (1), *laughing stock* is considered semi idiom because the meaning of the idiom is represented by the word *laughing* in the expression, indicating the characteristics of semi idiom. According to the book *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms,* this idiom means "someone who does something very stupid which makes other people laugh at them". In the Indonesian subtitle, this phrase is translated into *bahan tertawaan*, which means "an object to laugh at" (kbbi.web.id). Both expressions from the source and target language are in the same form and meaning.

This idiom is used in the series by a character named Connor, Logan's oldest son from his first marriage. He is in charge of arranging an annual charity dinner. When some issues happened with the food, he instantly exploded to the kitchen staff. Later, one of the staff told him that some minor mistakes are common, especially for an event that serves so many people.

Datum (2):

S1E1 [00:06:19]

ST: No, it isn't. **Take care**, dude.

TT: *Tidak, tidak akan.* ***Jaga dirimu****, Bung*.

*Take care* in the datum above could be categorized as literal idiom because the word *take* conveys literal and idiomatic meanings. The idiom is used to say goodbye and wishes someone healthy (Spears, 2005:671). The subtitle translated into *jaga diri* has meaning in English as "to be careful and avoid difficulty". The source and target language idioms are in different forms but have the same meaning.

In the first episode of the season this idiom was used by Lawrence, the CEO of Vaulter, the company Waystar wanted to acquire. In the final board meeting, they could not reach an agreement. As Lawrence walked out of the meeting, Kendall tried to make the deal. Lawrence just responded that the deal would not work out and used the idiom *take care* as seen in datum (2).

**Translating Idiom by using an Idiom of Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form**

Although idioms from English into Indonesian often have no direct equivalent, an idiomatic expression can convey the same meaning despite having a different lexical. In the series, 15 idioms were translated by using this strategy.

Datum (3):

S1E2 [00:32:56]

ST: Gerri, excuse me but I've always thought of you, and I mean this in this in the best possible way as a **stone-cold** killer bitch.

TT: *Gerri, maafkan aku, aku selalu menganggapmu, ini dalam artian baik, sebagai wanita* ***berdarah dingin.***

Referring to datum (3), *stone-cold* is categorized as a semi idiom due to the word *stone* that could be interpreted figuratively. However, the word *cold* or *dingin* has a literal meaning. The idiom *stone-cold* means *"*having no warmth or completely cold" (Makkai, 2004:339). In the subtitle, this expression is translated into *berdarah dingin* or "cold-blooded*"*. It is an idiom in Indonesian which has the meaning "have no feelings or compassion*"* (Chaer, 1997:40). The two idioms are in different forms but have the same meaning. Thus this idiom is translated by using a different form of idiom with similar meaning.

In the series, this idiom is used by Roman during his conversation with Gerri. He originally wanted Gerri to be the CEO temporarily instead of his brother Kendall. When she eventually rejected it, Roman could not understand why and he expressed his respect towards Gerri in his way with the idiom stated in datum (3).

Datum (4):

S1E6 [00:22:41]

SL: Okay, I **got to level** with you because if I eat any more songbirds I'm gonna hurl. My Grandpa already bought me dinner tonight.

TT: *Baiklah, **terus terang** saja, jika aku makan burung penyanyi lagi aku akan muntah. Kakekku sudah membelikanku makan malam.*

Based on datum (4), it can be seen that there is the use of semi idiom in the sentence. *Level with someone* means "to be straightforward with someone about something" (Spears, 2005: 400). This idiom is translated by using this strategy, and it can be seen that the idiom is translated into Indonesian as *terus terang*. This expression means "sincere or truthful" in English (kbbi.web.id). Both have the same meaning but different forms.

In the series, this idiom is used by Greg in conversation with his boss, Tom. In the scene, Greg is invited by Tom to an expensive restaurant to teach him how to live like an actual rich person. After several fancy dishes later, Greg finally said he no longer can eat because already had dinner with his grandfather earlier. When Tom asked what his Canadian grandfather was doing in New York, it turns out his visit had to do with Logan and the upcoming board meeting of Waystar.

Datum (5):

S1E4 [00:25:25]

ST: Everyone we could, we paid off, we **hushed up**. But there are emails, there's correspondence. It's ready to blow. It's a f**king time bomb.

TT: *Semua yang bisa, kita sogok, kita **tutup mulut**nya. Ada surel ada koresponden, semuanya siap meledak. Ini adalah bom waktu.*

In datum (5), it can be found another example of semi idiom in the series. The idiom *hushed up* can be interpreted from each of the words from the constituents, so it can be considered a literal idiom. It carries the meaning of making someone quiet (Spears, 2005:316). In the Indonesian subtitle of the series, this idiom is translated into *tutup mulut*. When it is translated literally it means "to make someone's mouth shut". Figuratively, this expression means "to be silent, left without word" (kbbi.web.id). The same meaning is carried in the translation by using different form of idiom.

In the series, Tom shared a finding with Greg, his assistant, who is also cousin to the Roy siblings. Tom discovered records of scandal and abuse happening within the cruise line. He was trying to find a way to take care of it without taking down any of them with his position as the new Head of Cruise Division.

**Translating Idiom by Paraphrasing**

This strategy involves transforming the idiom to the target language by paraphrasing the expression. Often, the translation result is the idiom's meaning, so the translation is not in idiom form.

Paraphrasing is the most common strategy to translate idiomatic expression. This also goes in the Succession series Season 1. Out of 143 idioms found, 124 of them were translated by using this strategy. So, based on the findings, paraphrasing is the most preferred strategy to translate idioms in the series.

Datum (6):

S1E2 [00:32:15]

ST: So, we were thinking, general counsel, you **know where the bodies are buried**.

TT: *Jadi menurut kami, sebagai penasihat umum, kau **tahu semua rahasia disini.***

Based on datum (6), the use of pure idiom can be found. According to the book entitled *Oxford Dictionary of Idiom,* the idiom *know where the bodies are buried* means "to have the security deriving from personal knowledge of an organization" (Sierfing, 2004:32). So, it does not correlate with the lexical meaning and conveys an entirely different meaning. It is paraphrashed into *tahu semua rahasia disini* or "to know every secret"

The expression used by a character in the series, Roman, to convince Gerri, the general counsel in Waystar. Since Gerri had worked with Waystar for years, so Roman wanted her to be the one who replaced his father, Logan, as the CEO of Waystar temporarily instead of his brother, Kendall. However, Gerri eventually declined.

Datum (7):

S1E4 [00:43:21]

ST: Good luck tonight. You're going to **knock it out of the park**

TT: *Semoga berhasil. Kau pasti **berhasil**.*

Based on the form of the idiom in datum (7), *knock it out of the park* could also be considered a pure idiom because the literal meaning itself would not make sense. Figuratively, this idiom means "to do something extremely well" (dictionary.cambridge.org). In Indonesian subtitle, it is translated into *berhasil* or in English it means "succeeded". Thus, it could be considered to use paraphrasing strategy with the meaning of the original idiom. This idiom appears four times throughout the series with the same meaning to express someone to do something extremely well.

This expression was used by Gerri to Logan in the fourth episode of the series. All the characters were at a charity dinner. Kendall felt uneasy because suddenly Logan wanted to deliver a speech, despite not being recovered from his sickness. Concerned that his dad would embarrass himself, Kendall asked Gerri to convince Logan not to do the speech. He would do the speech instead, just as planned. However, as soon as Gerri greeted Logan, she told Logan some encouragement with the idiom in Data 4 instead, implying that she was not on Kendall's side at all.

Datum (8):

S1E1 [00:52:53]

ST: Frank's **out of the picture**.

TT: *Frank **sudah bukan masalah.***

The idiom *out of the picture* in datum (8) is considered semi idiom with the word *out* in the expression. This idiom describes someone who is no longer relevant to a situation or departed (Spears, 2005:483). Translating using paraphrasing strategy is used in the Indonesian subtitle. It can be seen that the expression is translated with the equivalent *bukan masalah* in which in English it means "not a problem".

In *Succession* series, the idiom found was used by Logan to his children. Between his birthday celebration, he fired Frank, the Vice Chairman of Waystar. Roman later asked what that conversation with Frank was all about. Logan said that Frank was no longer in the company with the idiom in Data 1. With that, Logan offered his children a higher position in the company, a way to convince Roman, Shiv, and Connor to sign the contract that made Marcia, Logan's current wife, his primary successor.

Datum (9):

S1E8 [00:27:43]

ST: Roman, could you maybe **back off** for like twenty minutes?

TT: *Roman, bisa **pergi** sebentar?*

It can be seen in datum (9) another example of literal idiom with *back off*. The idiom means "to withdraw physically from someone or something". (Spears, 2005:29). Paraphrasing strategy can be seen because in the Indonesian subtitle the idiom is translated into *pergi* or "to go" in English.

In Episode 8 of *Succession*, this idiom was used by Kendall to his younger brother, Roman. During Tom's bachelor party, Kendall met with Sandy Furness again through his old friend, Stewy. When the two discussed a business offer, Roman suddenly joined the conversation. Kendall felt annoyed by Roman's interruption and told him the sentence in Data 4. Roman was tricked into thinking that Stewy offered the possible business opportunity with Sandy to him while they were actually interested in Kendall.

**Translating Idiom by Omission of a Play on Idiom**

In this strategy, the playful use of the expression is omitted. Therefore, only the literal sense of the idiom is translated. In the *Succession series*, two expressions are translated by using this strategy.

Datum (10):

S1E1[00:48:11]

ST: I don't know why you're smiling. I'm **dead serious.**

TT: *Aku tidak tahu kenapa kau tersenyum, aku **serius**.*

Based on datum (10) an example of semi idiom occurs. *Dead serious* means "to be absolutely serious; not joking" (Spears, 2005:144). The idiom is only translated into *serius* that means "serious". It can be concluded that a part of the idiom that is the word *dead* that emphasizes the meaning figuratively is omitted in the translation of the subtitle. Despite that, the meaning can still be conveyed.

This idiom can be found in the first episode of the season. After having a birthday lunch for Logan's birthday, all the family went on an outing and played a baseball game together. In the middle

of the game, Roman ordered the helper's child to play with them. He said he would give a 1 million dollar check to him if he could do a home run. Of course, the kid did not believe this ridiculous offer. Later the kid is convinced by Roman by using the idiom in datum (10).

Datum (11):

S1E6 [00:49:38]

ST: **Take it like a f**king man**. You're out. You're f**ked. You tried to kill me, but you failed, and you're dead.

TT: ***Terima saja**. Kau dipecat. Kau coba membunuhku, tapi kau gagal.*

Another example of the strategy to omit the play on idiom can be found in datum (11). The idiom *take it like a man* means "to suffer misfortune stoically" (Spears, 2005:672). The idiomatic and literal meanings are represented by the word *take*, hence it is categorized into semi idiom type. It can be seen that some parts of the idiom are also omitted. The subtitle translated the idiom into *terima saja* or in English means "just accept it". The playfulness of idiom represented by *like a man* is omitted in the Indonesian translation. The idiom from the SL also can be seen using slang as a variation.

The utterance using this expression happened in Episode 6, after Kendall attempted to hold a vote of no confidence in the latest board meeting, an act to overthrow his father. This enraged Logan, who ended up still winning the vote. He fired half of his board members who sided with Kendall, including the Vice-chairman of the company, Frank. When Frank confronted whether this was a good idea for the company, he told him to simply accept his decision with the idiom *take it like a man.*

**Translating Idiom by Omission of Entire Idiom**

Sometimes idioms are entirely omitted when they are translated into the target language. Often the case, the idiom from the source language is not translated into the target language. This is due to a lack of equivalence of idioms between the two languages. Also, in some cases, the full meaning of a sentence can still be transferred into the target language without translating the idiom. In the series, there is one expression of semi idiom type which was translated by using this strategy.

Datum (12):

S1E5 [00:02:41]

SL: Hey. So what you **got cooking**?

TL: *Ada apa?*

Based on datum (12), it can be found that the expression *got cooking* is entirely omitted from the sentences. The idiom from SL means to arrange or plan something with someone (Spears, 2005:123). However, despite the omission, the main message of the sentence is still conveyed in the context of the conversation.

In the scene where this idiom is used, Kendall and Roman are asked to have a meeting with Logan. The idiom from the Data 1 is the first thing Kendall said after he arrived in his father's office. Logan later told them about his move to make an acquisition of several local tv stations. Both Kendall and Roman were not happy with this idea because local television is a very outdated business to them.

Idiomatic expressions can be found in the series and translated by using several strategies. Out of 6 strategies, there are only 5 strategies applied. These strategies included; translation by using an idiom of similar meaning and form, translation by using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, translation by the omission of a play on the idiom, and translation by the omission of an entire idiom. The strategies to translate by borrowing source-language idiom cannot be found in the series.

The most preferred strategy to translate idiomatic expression of the series is using paraphrasing strategy. Out of 143 idioms, 124 idioms are translated by paraphrasing (86,70%). This is because most of the idioms used in *Succession* are very specific, and paraphrasing is considered the most suitable for subtitle formats. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form is applied in 13 idioms (9,09%). Followed by strategies by using an idiom of similar meaning are applied in 3 idioms (2,09%), strategies by omission of the play on the idiom in 2 idioms (1,4%), and by omission of the entire idiom in 1 idiom (0,7%). The strategies are applied in types of idioms, according to Fernando (1996), which include pure idiom, semi idiom, and literal idiom.

## CONCLUSIONS

Equivalence of the idiomatic expressions can be successfully achieved through the strategies applied. Paraphrasing becomes the characteristics in the translation of HBO Series *Succession*.

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