

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING IDIOM IN THE FILM OF WEDNESDAY (2022)

Novelina Silalahi¹, Lastri Wahyuni Manurung², Bolat Khasenov³

^{1,2}Universitas HKBP Nommensen Medan, ³Karaganda Buketov University, Karaganda, Kazakhstan
Email: novelina.silalahi@student.uhn.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study, entitled "Translation Strategies in Translating Idioms in the Film of Wednesday (2022)" analyzes the strategies used to translate English idioms into Indonesian subtitles. Translation is the process of converting text or speech from one language to another, with a primary emphasis on accurately conveying meaning and cultural context. The purpose of this study is to determine the strategies used in translating idioms in the film Wednesday (2022) and to determine the dominant strategies used in translating idioms in the film Wednesday (2022). This study applies a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to analyze the translation strategies used in translating idioms in the film Wednesday (2022). Using Mona Baker's (1992) framework, the study identified 42 idioms and categorized them into five strategy types: Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression, by a More General Word, by Cultural Substitution, by a More Neutral or Less Expressive Word, and Using Loan Words or Loan Plus Explanation. This qualitative descriptive research found that Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression was the most dominant strategy (55%), followed by More General Word (19%), Cultural Substitution (14.2%), More Neutral or Less Expressive Word (9.5%), and Loan Words (2.3%). The frequent use of descriptive translation reflects the need for clarity and cultural adaptation in audiovisual media. The findings support Baker's theory and show that translating idioms involves not only linguistic conversion but also attention to context, tone, and cultural nuances, especially in a series like *Wednesday* known for its dark humor and sarcasm.

Keywords: *idiom, translation strategies, Mona Baker, subtitles, Wednesday (2022)*

Introduction

Translation is the process of converting text or speech from one language to another, with a primary emphasis on accurately conveying meaning and cultural context. Sipayung (2021) said that expressing ideas and re-expressing conversation in another language is difficult and quite challenging because it requires transferring meaning from one language to another. The uniqueness of translating idioms in the film "Wednesday" lies in its rich cultural context, where many idioms reflect the characteristics of the society depicted. This requires translators to not only translate words but also understand the cultural context behind the idioms. Furthermore, the style of language used in the film, including humor and sarcasm, presents a unique challenge, as translators must be able to capture these nuances so that audiences in the target language can experience the same effect. The characters and dialogue in the film also have unique ways of speaking, so translators must take these characterizations into account to ensure the dialogue remains authentic to the characters' personalities. According to (Sutrisno et al., 2023), the study investigates the strategies employed in translating idiomatic expressions found in the subtitles of the movie *Beauty and the*

Beast. The research highlights the importance of effective translation techniques to convey the intended meaning and cultural nuances of idioms. Effective translation strategies ensure that the translated text conveys the same message, tone, and intent as the original while being appropriate for the target audience. They help maintain the integrity of the original text while making it accessible and understandable in the target language.

However, there are several challenges in translating idioms. One major issue is the mismatch between the source and target languages, where many idioms lack direct equivalents. Translators must choose between translating literally, finding an equivalent, or transforming the idiom into a more common expression. Furthermore, ambiguity of meaning is a challenge, as some idioms can have more than one meaning depending on the context.

One of the most challenging aspects of translation is idioms or idiomatic expressions. An idiom is a phrase or expression that has a figurative meaning distinct from the literal meanings of its individual words. This concept is widely recognized in linguistic studies, where idioms are seen as fixed expressions that convey cultural nuances and shared experiences within a language community. Translation serves as a vital instrument

in the realm of cross-cultural communication, aimed at enhancing the comprehensibility and effectiveness of intergroup interactions involving individuals with disparate languages and cultural backgrounds (Robinson, 1997; Sahu, 2020). Several previous studies have also examined the translation of idioms in audiovisual works. For example, the study by (Aji & Basari, 2023), the translation of idiomatic expressions from English to Indonesian, particularly in the context of the "Enola Holmes" movie, presents unique challenges due to the cultural nuances and contextual meanings inherent in these expressions.

According to (Sinambela et al., 2024) translation plays a vital role in transferring of information from one linguistic code into another. Translation is a very complex and multidimensional process that not only involves transferring words from the source language to the target language, but also includes transferring meaning, cultural context, language style, and communicative function so that the original message can be received and understood correctly by the audience in the target language. The researcher chose this topic because idioms are a linguistic element that is difficult to translate directly and requires specific strategies to convey their meaning accurately. The film *Wednesday* (2022) uses many idioms typical of Anglo-American culture, making it interesting to explain how the translator conveys their meaning into Indonesian. This research is expected to provide an understanding of the application of idiom translation strategies in audiovisual contexts.

Method

The researcher applied a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to analyze the translation strategies used in translating idioms in the film *Wednesday* (2022). As stated by Creswell (2014) Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by exploring the meanings and interpretations of participants' experiences. In this study, the researcher will focus on identifying idiomatic expressions in the film and the corresponding translations in the Indonesian version.

According to Baker (2018), idioms often pose significant challenges in translation due to their cultural specificity and figurative meanings. Therefore, the researcher will examine how these idioms are translated, focusing on the strategies employed by the translators to convey the original meaning and context. The analysis will be guided by the theoretical framework proposed by (Albir & Hurtado, 2002), which categorizes translation strategies into various types, such as adaptation,

modulation, and literal translation.

The subject of this research encompasses all the characters in the film *Wednesday* (2022) who express idiomatic sentences or phrases. These characters serve as the source of idiomatic expressions within the film's dialogue, providing a rich dataset to analyze how idioms are used in context. By focusing on these characters, the research aims to understand the variety and frequency of idiomatic language and how it functions in storytelling.

The object of this research is specifically the translation strategies utilized in translating idioms. The data collection instrument used in this research is the documentation method. The researcher collects data by watching the film *Wednesday* (2022) with the main instrument being a list of idioms contained in the original script of the film *Wednesday* (2022) along with its translation into Indonesian. Researchers used an observation sheet designed based on Baker's (1992) theory of idiom translation, which includes categories of translation strategies such as literal translation, modulation, substitution, and so on.

To answer the first research problem, the researcher did several activities, identifying and listing all the idioms present in the original script of the film. Categorizing the translation strategies used for each idiom. Examining the context in which each idiom is used in the film to understand how it influences the translation choices. Comparing the original idioms with their translations to evaluate the effectiveness and fidelity of the translation strategies. Analyzing the themes that emerge from the translated idioms and how they contribute to the film's overall message and cultural context. Documenting the findings and report on the strategies used based on Mona Baker's theories from 1992.

To answer the second research problem, the researcher did the several activities as follow, Identifying and compiling a list of idioms found in the original script of the film. Calculating the percentage of each type of idiom found in the film of *Wednesday* (2022). Determining which translation strategies are the most dominant. Summarizing the findings on the dominant translation strategies used. Presenting the final percentage of each type of idiom and the corresponding or most dominant translation strategy based on the theory of Baker's 1992.

Findings and Discussion

The study indicates that in the process of translating idioms appearing in the film *Wednesday* (2022), there are five main strategies used by translators: 1. Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression, 2. Translation by a More

General Word (Superordinate), 3. Translation by Cultural Substitution, 4. Translation by a more Neutral or Less Expressive Word and, 5. Translation Using Loan Words or Loan Word Plus Explanation. The choice of strategy is based on the context of the conversation, the level of idiomaticity of the expression, and the meaning's compatibility in the target language. The most frequently used strategy is Translation by a phrase or descriptive expression, a strategy in which idioms are translated using explanatory phrases or expressions that clearly convey the idiomatic meaning.

For example:

ST : Pull yourself together

TT : Tenangkan dirimu

Literal Meaning: Tarik dirimu menjadi satu

Idiomatic Meaning: *Tenangkan dirimu/ kendalikan emosi*

Translation strategy: Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression

The idiomatic expression *pull yourself together* carries the meaning of asking someone to regain emotional control and calm down after experiencing emotional distress. In English, this idiom uses a physical metaphor implying the mental and emotional act of gathering oneself into a stable whole. However, a literal translation, such as *Tarik dirimu menjadi satu* into Indonesian, results in confusion and illogicality because there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in the target language that uses this metaphor. Based on the analysis of forty-two idioms from the film of *Wednesday* (2022), the most dominant translation strategy identified was translation by a phrase or descriptive expression, applied in 23 instances, representing 55% of the total data. This strategy was predominantly chosen because many English idioms lack direct, natural equivalents in Indonesian, making literal or idiomatic translation impractical or unnatural.

Therefore, the translator chose to use a descriptive phrase strategy, opting for *tenangkan dirimu*, which is a more natural and culturally appropriate expression in Indonesian. This strategy was selected to preserve the communicative function of the idiom—requesting emotional control without adhering to the unfamiliar metaphorical form. By using a straightforward and easily understood phrase, the translator effectively conveys the emotional and pragmatic message of the original idiom while maintaining fluency and readability in the target text.

The impact of this strategy is the loss of the metaphorical nuance inherent in the original idiom. However, this does not reduce the effectiveness of the intended meaning. On the contrary, the use of a

descriptive phrase makes the idiomatic meaning more accessible and relevant to Indonesian readers, ensuring the translation remains communicatively effective even though it is not literal. The findings of this study reveal not only the linguistic strategies employed by translators but also highlight the significant role of pragmatics, especially considering the dark humor and distinctive sarcasm that characterize the film *Wednesday* (2022). Pragmatics, which studies meaning in context, is crucial for understanding how idiomatic expressions function beyond their literal meanings and how they convey tone, attitude, or social cues embedded in dialogue.

Similarly, idioms like *Pull yourself together*, used to urge emotional control, also function pragmatically as subtle rebukes or encouragement within tense scenes. The choice of *tenangkan dirimu* captures the intended emotional appeal without sounding awkward or losing the interpersonal dynamic present in the source dialogue. Pragmatic challenges also emerge with idioms carrying strong emotional or expressive force, such as *went ballistic*. The translation to *langsung marah-marah* reduces emotional intensity but maintains the intended meaning within Indonesian cultural norms, reflecting an adaptation to the target audience's pragmatic expectations about how anger is expressed naturally in dialogue. This strategic neutralization respects both the original's communicative intent and the subtitled text's pragmatic acceptability.

Meanwhile, the Translation by a More General Word (Superordinate) strategy is used when an idiom can be simplified into a more common word or phrase in the target language. For example, when a character says, "*Did your mother tell you we were roommates back in the day?*", the phrase "*back in the day*" is translated as "*dulu*" in "*Ibumu pernah cerita kalau dulu kami teman sekamar?*" The original idiom, which implies a sense of nostalgia or reference to the past, is simplified into a more general time reference. This reflects the use of a more general word to ensure clarity, as the idiomatic form "*back in the day*" is not commonly used in Indonesian and may sound unnatural if translated literally.

The Translation by Cultural Substitution strategy is used when an idiom has strong cultural elements and is difficult to understand if translated directly. For example, when Wednesday says, *Never bring a knife to a sword fight*, which is a play on the idiom *Never bring a knife to a gunfight*, the context of this sentence emphasizes that the opponent is not ready for the challenge. The translator adapts it to *Don't bring a knife to a sword duel*, which is more culturally acceptable to

Indonesian audiences. A similar approach is applied to the idiom *Taking a catnap*, which appears in casual conversation and is translated as *Sleep for a while*, because the idiom “catnap” is not widely known in Indonesian culture.

The Translation by a More Neutral or Less Expressive Word strategy is used when an idiom carries strong emotional intensity that may sound too dramatic or unnatural in the target language. For instance, in the sentence “*Then I confronted him about it, and he kind of went ballistic on me,*” the idiom “*went ballistic*” implies an intense and explosive reaction, similar to losing control in anger. However, the translator renders it as “*langsung marah-marah*” (immediately got angry), which is a more neutral and commonly used phrase in Indonesian. This approach reduces the expressive force of the original idiom but keeps the general meaning intact. It ensures the dialogue remains natural and culturally appropriate for the target audience without sounding exaggerated.

The Translation Using Loan Words or Loan Plus Explanation strategy is applied when an idiomatic expression or cultural term in the source language has no direct or culturally equivalent counterpart in the target language. This approach helps maintain the meaning and uniqueness of the original expression by borrowing the term directly from the source language—sometimes with an added explanation for clarity. For instance, in the dialogue “*It was on my bucket list,*” the phrase “*bucket list*” is an English idiom referring to a list

of goals or experiences a person wants to accomplish before they die. Literally translating it as “*daftar ember*” would be nonsensical in Indonesian. In the film, however, this idiom is translated as “*Saya mau lihat itu,*” which simplifies the meaning but omits the idiomatic nuance and emotional weight of the original expression. A more effective strategy would have been to retain the original term as a loan word—“*Itu ada di bucket list saya*”—and optionally add a short explanation such as “*(daftar hal yang ingin saya lakukan sebelum meninggal)*” if needed. This preserves both the cultural tone and the communicative intent of the idiom. Since “*bucket list*” has increasingly gained recognition in Indonesian media and informal contexts, borrowing the term would not confuse the audience and would actually help introduce or reinforce its meaning in the local language. This strategy reflects the translator’s role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps without sacrificing clarity or naturalness.

Based on the distribution of strategies, Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression is the most dominant strategy with a percentage of 55%, applied to 23 of the 42 idioms analyzed. The other idioms (19%) use Translation by a More General Word, Translation by Cultural Substitution (14,2%), Translation by a more Neutral or Less Expressive Word (9,5%) and Translation Using Loan Words or Loan Plus Explanation (2,3%).

Table 1 Idiom of Wednesday

No		Source Text Film of Wednesday (2022)	
1	Pull yourself together	22	Change of heart
2	Keep my eye on you	23	Give me a run for my money
3	To go for quality over quantity	24	First chair
4	Taking a catnap	25	Be well-rounded
5	Five-finger discount	26	Keep tabs on me
6	Back in the day	27	Strong suit
7	On thin ice	28	Tickle your fancy
8	Bury the hatchet	29	The icing on the cake
9	Never bring a knife to a sword fight.	30	Went ballistic
10	I will literally scratch my own eyes out!	31	Go down memory lane
11	Shed light on this	32	Face the music
12	You are out of luck	33	Steer clear of
13	Giving us the cold shoulder	34	Bucket list
14	Following in your footsteps	35	Get your act together
15	Sweeten the pot	36	A doormat
16	Turn some heads	37	Put them in their place
17	Play the long game	38	Not my bag
18	Laid back	39	Do me a favor
19	Settling in	40	Shoe fits
20	This kitty’s got claws	41	I snapped at you
21	Kooky	42	High time

Considering the linguistic and cultural challenges inherent in translating idioms, as well as the complexity of audiovisual media, this study aims to systematically analyze the strategies used in translating idioms in the film *Wednesday* (2022).

This study is expected to contribute to the development of translation studies, especially in the audiovisual context, and enrich practical knowledge for translators involved in the fields of subtitling and dubbing.

Although many previous studies have reviewed the translation strategies of idioms in various audiovisual works, there is significant scope for research when we lead with the television series “Wednesday.” In general, previous studies tend to focus on films of conventional genres or those released in the previous period. For example,

research on idiom translation often analyzes classic dramas or romantic comedies, which may not fully capture the linguistic and cultural dynamics of the dark humor, contemporary pop culture references, and sarcastic language style that characterize the series “Wednesday.”

Table 2 Translation Strategies

No	Translation Strategies	Frequency (Idiom)
1.	Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression	23
2.	Translation by a More General Word (Superordinate)	8
3.	Translation by Cultural Substitution	6
4.	Translation by a More Neutral or Less Expressive Word a	4
5.	Translation Using Loan Words or Loan Word Plus Explanation	1

The most dominant translation strategy used in translating idioms in the film Wednesday (2022) is Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression. The data below presents a table of the percentage

results of the translation strategies applied, which have been calculated using a formula to obtain the following findings:

Table 3 The Result of the Study

No	Translation Strategy	Frequency (Idioms)	Percentage (%)
1	Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression	23	55%
2	Translation by a More General Word (Superordinate)	8	19%
3	Translation by Cultural Substitution	6	14,2%
4	Translation by a More Neutral or Less Expressive Word	4	9,5%
5	Translation Using Loan Words or Loan Plus Explanation	1	2,3%
TOTAL		42	100%

Conclusion

The main result of this study shows that translators employed five primary strategies: Translation by a Phrase or Descriptive Expression, Translation by a More General Word (Superordinate), Translation by Cultural Substitution, Translation by a More Neutral or Less Expressive Word, and Translation Using Loan Words or Loan Plus Explanation. In addition, translation by a phrase or descriptive expression was the most frequently used strategy, indicating that the translator prioritized meaning clarity and audience comprehension over literal equivalence. The limitation of this study lies in its focus on a single film, *Wednesday* (2022), and its analysis of idioms only within the context of English–Indonesian subtitles. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent translation strategies used in other films, genres, or language pairs. The contribution of this study is to provide deeper insight into the practice of idiom translation in audiovisual media and to serve as a reference for translators, students, and researchers interested in idiomatic and cultural translation strategies. As a suggestion for future research, it is recommended that further studies examine idiom translation in different film genres or series to compare strategy use across various contexts. Future research could also explore audience perception to understand how different translation

strategies influence comprehension and cultural adaptation.

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