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## An Analysis of Meaning Equivalence in the Translation of English Idioms into Indonesian in the Novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

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### Abstract

*This study examines meaning equivalence in the translation of English idiomatic expressions into Indonesian in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. The research focuses on identifying idiomatic expressions, analyzing the translation strategies employed, and evaluating the extent to which meaning equivalence is achieved in the Indonesian version, Harry Potter dan Batu Bertuah. A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted using comparative textual analysis and content analysis. Data were collected through close reading of the source and target texts, followed by the identification and classification of idiomatic expressions and their translations. The findings reveal that translation by paraphrase is the most frequently employed strategy, particularly when direct idiomatic equivalents are unavailable in the target language. Cultural substitution and the use of expressions with similar meaning but dissimilar form are also utilized to maintain communicative effectiveness and cultural acceptability. The results indicate that the translator consistently prioritizes dynamic and pragmatic equivalence, enabling the translated text to preserve meaning, readability, and narrative impact while remaining natural for Indonesian readers.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Substitution, Dynamic Equivalence, Idiom Translation, Meaning Equivalence; Translation Strategies.



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## INTRODUCTION

The increasing circulation of literary texts across linguistic and cultural boundaries has intensified scholarly attention toward translation as a complex social and humanistic practice that extends beyond linguistic substitution into the negotiation of meaning, culture, and reader reception in multilingual contexts (Bassnett, 2014). Contemporary developments in translation studies have shifted analytical focus from formal linguistic correspondence toward meaning-oriented approaches that emphasize communicative effectiveness and cultural transfer across languages (Munday, 2016). Within this evolving landscape, the translation of idiomatic expressions has emerged as one of the most persistent challenges because idioms constitute fixed linguistic units whose meanings cannot be accurately interpreted through the literal meanings of their constituent words (Baker, 2018). Recent scholarship further demonstrates that idioms embody culturally embedded conceptualizations that reflect collective experiences, values, and worldviews, making their translation highly susceptible to semantic distortion when cultural contexts are inadequately transferred (Naciscione, 2017). The growing integration of machine-assisted translation technologies has also exposed continuing difficulties in preserving semantic and grammatical equivalence when translating idiomatic expressions, reaffirming the enduring relevance of human-centered translation analysis in literary discourse (Abjalova & Sharipova, 2024). Such challenges become particularly salient in fantasy literature, where imaginative narrative worlds are frequently constructed through figurative and idiomatic language that carries substantial semantic, stylistic, and cultural significance (Newmark, 2003).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that the successful translation of idioms depends on the translator's ability to balance semantic accuracy with cultural naturalness in the target language (Larson, 1984). Investigations of English–Indonesian literary translation reveal that translators often employ diverse strategies, including equivalent idioms, paraphrasing, adaptation, and omission, to

preserve comprehensibility while maintaining textual coherence (Hanim, 2022). Research on idiomatic expressions in contemporary novels indicates that paraphrase remains the most frequently employed strategy when direct idiomatic equivalents are unavailable in the target language (Melati & Muamaroh, 2023). Studies focusing on translation difficulties similarly suggest that successful idiom translation requires strategic decision-making that accounts for both linguistic and sociocultural constraints rather than lexical correspondence alone (Ngongo et al., 2024). Within the broader context of literary translation, scholars have argued that translation choices inevitably reflect ideological, aesthetic, and interpretative dimensions embedded in the translator's mediation process (Venuti, 2017). This body of scholarship collectively suggests that meaning equivalence is not a static textual property but a negotiated outcome resulting from interactions among language systems, cultural knowledge, and communicative purposes (Pym, 2014).

Despite substantial scholarly interest in idiom translation, existing literature presents several conceptual and empirical limitations that constrain a comprehensive understanding of meaning equivalence in literary texts. Studies examining the Indonesian translation of the Harry Potter series have predominantly concentrated on translation methods, category shifts, or isolated linguistic phenomena rather than systematically evaluating how idiomatic meanings are preserved across source and target texts (Budi, 2022). Research investigating idioms in Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince provides valuable insights into translation procedures but offers limited discussion regarding the degree to which semantic equivalence is maintained within broader narrative contexts (Krisandini & Sutrisno, 2022). Investigations of equivalence and non-equivalence in later installments of the Harry Potter series reveal the existence of semantic shifts but do not sufficiently explain the relationship between translation strategies and the achievement of equivalent meaning (Saswati, 2024). Studies analyzing idiomatic phrases in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows primarily emphasize methodological classifications while paying comparatively less attention to pragmatic dimensions of equivalence and reader interpretation (Stephanie & Hadi, 2024). The growing body of Indonesian translation research has also tended to privilege technical descriptions of translation procedures over theoretically grounded examinations of how meaning is reconstructed within culturally specific literary narratives (Prisnalia & Sitinjak, 2025).

These limitations are particularly significant because fantasy novels rely extensively on idiomatic and figurative language to construct characterization, interpersonal relationships, emotional intensity, and narrative atmosphere. Scholarship on children's literature translation highlights the necessity of producing translations that remain accessible and engaging while preserving the literary and cultural richness of the source text (Lathey, 2016). Research concerning metaphor preservation in literary translation further demonstrates that seemingly minor linguistic adjustments can generate substantial shifts in meaning, interpretation, and stylistic effect within translated narratives (Perkasa & Hardjanto, 2023). Studies of translation strategies indicate that the translator's choices directly influence the quality, naturalness, and acceptability of culturally bound expressions in the target language (Baker, 2018). Theoretical discussions of equivalence similarly emphasize that translation quality should be evaluated through the extent to which target readers can access meanings and communicative effects comparable to those experienced by source-language readers (Nida & Taber, 1969/2023). The unresolved question concerning how meaning equivalence is achieved in the translation of English idioms into Indonesian therefore remains both academically significant and practically relevant for translators, educators, and scholars of intercultural communication.

Positioned within this scholarly context, the present study focuses specifically on the Indonesian translation of English idioms in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, a novel that occupies a prominent position within global children's fantasy literature and has reached a broad Indonesian readership. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine translation techniques, methods, or isolated equivalence outcomes, this research investigates the interrelationship among idiom types, translation strategies, and the degree of meaning equivalence achieved in the target text. Such a focus enables a more comprehensive understanding of how semantic meaning is negotiated during the translation process and how translators balance fidelity, naturalness, and cultural accessibility within literary discourse. By integrating perspectives from equivalence theory, idiom studies, and literary translation research, the study seeks to bridge the analytical gap between translation procedures and translation outcomes while providing a more nuanced account of meaning transfer in fantasy literature.

This study aims to identify and classify the English idioms appearing in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, analyze the translation strategies employed in rendering those idioms into Indonesian, and evaluate the extent to which meaning equivalence is achieved in the translated text. The study contributes theoretically by refining the application of meaning equivalence frameworks to the analysis of idiomatic translation in fantasy literature. It also contributes methodologically by combining idiom classification, strategy analysis, and equivalence assessment within a single analytical model that enables a more systematic examination of translated literary texts. The findings are expected to enrich scholarly discussions on literary translation, provide insights into the translation of culturally embedded expressions, and offer practical guidance for translators seeking to preserve meaning and reader experience across languages.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using comparative textual analysis as a non-empirical research design. The study focused on the analysis of linguistic data derived from literary texts rather than data collected from human participants. The primary data sources consisted of the English source text, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, and its Indonesian translation, *Harry Potter dan Batu Bertuah*, translated by Listiana Srisanti. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, journal articles, and previous studies related to translation studies, idiom translation, translation strategies, and meaning equivalence. The selection of data was based on purposive criteria, namely English idiomatic expressions occurring in the source text and their corresponding translations in the target text. A comparative textual analysis framework was adopted to systematically examine the relationship between source-language idioms and their Indonesian renderings, as this approach enables researchers to investigate translation choices and their impact on meaning transfer within literary discourse (Munday, 2016).

The data were collected through close reading and note-taking procedures by examining the source text and target text simultaneously to identify idiomatic expressions and their translations. All identified idioms were documented in a data classification table and subsequently categorized according to their types, translation strategies, and levels of meaning equivalence. Data analysis was conducted in several stages: identifying and classifying idioms, analyzing the translation strategies employed by the translator based on established translation frameworks, evaluating the degree of meaning equivalence between the source and target texts, and interpreting the findings within the broader context of literary translation. To ensure analytical rigor and trustworthiness, the study applied systematic coding procedures, repeated textual verification, and theoretical triangulation through the use of established concepts in translation studies and idiom translation (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2020). Since the research relied exclusively on published literary texts and documentary sources, no ethical risks involving human participants were present; however, all sources were appropriately acknowledged and cited in accordance with academic research standards.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified seven English idiomatic expressions in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and examined their Indonesian translations. The findings indicate that the translator employed three principal strategies to achieve meaning equivalence, namely translation by paraphrase, cultural substitution, and the use of expressions with similar meaning but dissimilar form. Across the analyzed data, dynamic equivalence emerged as the dominant translation outcome, suggesting a strong preference for preserving communicative effect and reader comprehension rather than maintaining formal lexical correspondence. Table 1 presents the identified idioms, their Indonesian renderings, the translation strategies employed, and the resulting meaning equivalence.

**Table 1. Identified Idioms, Translation Strategies, and Meaning Equivalence**

No.	Source Text (Idiom)	Target Text (Translation)	Equivalence Analysis
1	<i>Get a grip</i>	Sadarlah!	Dynamic meaning, emphasizes controlling the character's emotions.

2	<i>Under the weather</i>	Kurang enak badan	Dynamic meaning, describes a decline in physical condition.
3	<i>Piece of cake</i>	Gampang Sekali	Dynamic meaning, removing the “cake” element to convey the meaning of “easy.”
4	<i>Blow off steam</i>	Melampiasikan kekesalan	Dynamic meaning, removing the “steam” metaphor to make the meaning clearer.
5	<i>Keep on eye on</i>	Mengawasi	Dynamic meaning, maintaining constant vigilance (cautionary actions) on the part of the character
6	<i>Spill the beans</i>	Buka mulut	Strategy for Substituting Idioms with Dynamic Meanings, finding local equivalents for idioms that convey a similar linguistic impression.
7	<i>In the same boat</i>	Nasibnya sama	Dynamic Meanings, explaining the similarity of the situation without using the “boat” metaphor.

### Translation by Paraphrase

The paraphrase strategy is employed when the Target Language (TL) does not possess a figurative expression that is formally or structurally equivalent to that of the Source Language (SL). Under such circumstances, the translator eliminates the original metaphor and converts it into a descriptive and literal expression that is acceptable, natural, and communicative in the target language (Baker, 2018).

#### Data 1

(ST) “*Come on, get a grip,*” said Ron is translated as (TT) “*Ayo, sadarlah!*” kata Ron

In Data 1, expression “*Come on, get a grip,*” said Ron is translated as “*Ayo, sadarlah!*” kata Ron. Conceptually, the idiom get a grip refers to controlling one’s emotions or regaining self-control in a stressful situation. A formally equivalent translation such as “*genggamlah sebuah pegangan*” would be unacceptable within the syntactic and semantic system of Indonesian. Following Baker’s framework, the translator applies a paraphrase strategy by rendering the idiomatic unit into the exclamatory expression “*sadarlah!*”. This decision reflects the achievement of dynamic equivalence because it successfully transfers the emotional tension experienced by the character in a natural manner without distorting the communicative function of the original text (Nida & Taber, 1969/2023).

The findings suggest that the translator prioritizes the pragmatic function of the text over its formal structure. Such a decision represents a strategic effort to bridge the linguistic and cultural distance between the source and target languages. This translation choice illustrates the necessity of flexibility when rendering culture-bound idiomatic expressions in literary texts. The expression “*Sadarlah!*” functions as a contextual reconstruction of the character’s emotional state rather than a direct lexical substitution. Methodologically, this finding reinforces Baker’s argument regarding the limitations of literal translation for culture-bound expressions, where acceptability and readability in the target language serve as primary indicators of translation quality.

#### Data 2

(ST): “*Harry was feeling a bit under the weather*” is translated as (TT) *Harry merasa agak kurang enak badan.*

A similar phenomenon appears in Data 2, where the source text Harry was feeling a bit under the weather is translated as Harry merasa agak kurang enak badan. The idiomatic meaning of under the

weather refers to being ill or feeling unwell rather than occupying a physical position beneath weather conditions. This expression can be classified as a pure idiom because its meaning cannot be predicted from the individual meanings of its constituent words. The analysis indicates that the translator strategically reduces the weather-related metaphor and paraphrases it into the culturally transparent expression “kurang enak badan.” According to Baker’s taxonomy, this constitutes translation by paraphrase because the idiomatic meaning is explained without preserving the original idiomatic form (Baker, 2018). A literal rendering such as *di bawah cuaca* or *di bawah pengaruh cuaca* would likely create ambiguity for Indonesian readers and obscure the intended meaning.

### Data 3

(ST) “*The exam will be a piece of cake,*” *Hermione whispered* is translated as (TT) “*Ujiannya akan gampang sekali,*” *bisik Hermione.*

The same translation strategy can be observed in Data 3, which is taken from a dialogue between Hermione and Harry at Hogwarts. In the source text, Hermione says, “The exam will be a piece of cake,” Hermione whispered. This utterance is translated into Indonesian as “Ujiannya akan gampang sekali,” bisik Hermione. The example appears in Chapter 13 of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, where Hermione attempts to encourage Harry before the final examination. This example illustrates how idiomatic expressions are adapted in children’s and young-adult literature, where readability and narrative naturalness are particularly important. Unlike Data 2, the idiom appears in direct dialogue rather than descriptive narration, thereby creating different implications for translation equivalence. Within this context, the idiom functions to express Hermione’s confidence and optimism, which are important elements of characterization and interpersonal dynamics.

The findings suggest that the translator deliberately removes the culinary metaphor associated with cake and replaces it with the culturally transparent phrase “gampang sekali.” This decision corresponds to Baker’s category of translation by paraphrase, whereby the translator conveys the idiomatic meaning without retaining its original form (Baker, 2018). The strategy is particularly appropriate because Indonesian readers, especially younger audiences, do not necessarily share the same cultural association between ease and culinary metaphors. A literal rendering such as “sepotong kue” could easily lead to confusion or literal interpretation. As argued by Kövecses and Szabó (2015), idioms are processed holistically rather than through the meanings of individual words, which explains why literal translation frequently fails to convey the intended message. This translation decision is also consistent with Lathey’s (2016) view that children’s literature translation requires cultural adaptation while preserving narrative voice and emotional resonance. In this context, the translator prioritizes readability and naturalness so that readers can engage with the narrative without semantic obstacles. The strategy also demonstrates sensitivity to the linguistic and cultural expectations of the target readership, aligning with Newmark’s argument that translators should adapt texts to ensure comprehension and reader engagement (Newmark, 2003).

### Data 4

(ST) “*...blow off steam*” is translated as (TT) “*...melampiasikan kekesalan*”.

Data 4 contains the expression *blow off steam*, which historically derives from the mechanical metaphor of releasing steam pressure from engines to prevent explosion. In behavioral contexts, the idiom refers to releasing accumulated stress or anger. A formally equivalent translation such as “*meniup uap*” would likely result in complete semantic distortion because of the sociocultural gap between source and target readers. To address this issue, the translator employs Baker’s paraphrase strategy by converting the mechanical metaphor into the functional expression “*melampiasikan kekesalan*.” This

receptor-oriented construction allows the emotional effect experienced by the character to be transferred naturally and fluently into the target language (Nida & Taber, 1969/2023). The findings indicate that the challenge in translating this metaphor does not arise from limitations within the target language itself but from the considerable sociocultural distance associated with technology-based metaphors in everyday discourse. The translator's decision to render the expression as "melampiasakan kekesalan" appears consistent with the principles of Skopos Theory, in which the primary objective of fiction translation is to preserve reader immersion within the narrative.

### Data 5

(ST) *...keep an eye on...* is translated as (TT) *...mengawasi...*

The final example within this category is Data 5, where the expression keep an eye on is translated as "mengawasi." Denotatively, the phrase refers to placing or keeping one's eye on an object, while idiomatically it functions as an instruction to monitor or protect something attentively. Formal equivalence would produce an awkward structure in Indonesian. The translator therefore reduces the visual component associated with the body organ eye and replaces it with the single verb "mengawasi," which conforms to Indonesian linguistic conventions. Despite this structural reduction, pragmatic equivalence remains intact because the sense of vigilance conveyed by the original expression is transmitted through a concise dialogue and a high level of readability (Munday, 2016).

Data 5 illustrates an efficient case of semantic and structural transposition. The reduction of the lexical component referring to a body organ into a single verb represents more than a simple reduction of lexical elements but as an important strategy of linguistic economy that preserves the rhythm of fictional narration. In Indonesian, body-related metaphors often operate within relatively restricted semantic boundaries. Retaining such metaphors without adaptation may reduce naturalness and readability for target readers. Collectively, Data 1 through Data 5 suggest a tendency toward a domestication-oriented translation approach. All examples reveal a consistent tendency to remove source-language-specific metaphors in favor of conceptual transparency. This finding supports Munday's proposition that successful translation of popular literary texts depends largely on the ability of the target text to function naturally and autonomously within the receiving culture.

### Translation of Idioms through Cultural Substitution

Unlike the previous examples, which primarily rely on paraphrase to convey idiomatic meaning, the following data demonstrate the use of cultural substitution. This strategy enables the translator to preserve figurative language by replacing a source-language idiom with a culturally familiar target-language expression that conveys a similar meaning and pragmatic effect (Baker, 2018).

### Data 6

(ST) *"Don't spill the beans, Harry!"* which is translated as (TT) *"Jangan buka mulut, Harry!"*

The application of cultural substitution is demonstrated in Data 6 through the source text expression "Don't spill the beans, Harry!", which is translated as "Jangan buka mulut, Harry!". The idiom spill the beans refers to revealing a secret, often unintentionally. This strategy involves replacing a source-language idiom with a culturally familiar target-language idiom that produces a similar emotional effect and conceptual meaning, despite possessing entirely different lexical and visual imagery (Baker, 2018). Rather than employing a descriptive paraphrase, the translator adaptively chooses the Indonesian idiom "buka mulut." Although the two expressions rely on different metaphors—spilling beans versus opening one's mouth—they perform an equivalent pragmatic

function. This choice reflects the achievement of dynamic equivalence because it preserves figurative language while remaining natural within both linguistic systems (Bassnett, 2014).

Data 6 represents an important shift in translation strategy compared with the previous examples. Whereas the previous examples relied on demetaphorization, the translator here preserves literary aesthetics through metaphor-to-metaphor translation. This cultural substitution appears to minimize stylistic loss, a common issue in fiction translation. Despite the substantial semiotic gap between English agricultural imagery (beans) and Indonesian anatomical imagery (mulut), the translation demonstrates sensitivity to sociolinguistic and cultural considerations. This finding supports Bassnett's (2014) assertion that genuine equivalence lies not in lexical similarity but in the target text's ability to generate an equivalent poetic resonance and communicative impact within the receiving literary system.

### **Preserving Conceptual Meaning through Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form**

The final strategy occurs when translators modify lexical structures in order to conform to target-language grammatical conventions while preserving the functional essence and action-oriented nuances of the original expression (Baker, 2018)

#### **Data 7**

(ST) "*keep an eye on the staircase.*" *Hagrid warned*, which is translated as (TT) "*Awasi tangga itu.*" *Hagrid memperingatkan.*

This strategy is identified in Data 7 through the source text "*Keep an eye on the staircase,*" *Hagrid warned*, which is translated as "*Awasi tangga itu.*" *Hagrid memperingatkan.* Lexically, the idiom keep an eye on relies on the metaphor of the human eye as an instrument of observation. Within Indonesian linguistic conventions, intensive observation is more naturally expressed through the verb "mengawasi." The selected lexical item effectively maintains the tension and fluency of the fantasy dialogue. Although the formal lexical marker associated with the body organ is omitted, the pragmatic effect of conveying a strong warning remains successfully reconstructed in the target language (Pratama, 2022).

Data 7 presents an interesting distinction when compared with Data 5. Although the lexical form remains identical, the translation strategy shifts from reductive paraphrase to a similar-meaning-but-dissimilar-form strategy due to the imperative syntactic structure required by the target language. The removal of the anatomical component (eye) and its transposition into the active verb "awasi" represents an appropriate methodological choice for preserving the illocutionary force of an urgent warning. Within the sociolinguistic context of fantasy fiction, this strategy successfully maintains reader immersion in the magical narrative world without creating linguistic awkwardness. The findings indicate that this modification demonstrates the translator's commitment to prioritizing equivalent reader effect over structural rigidity, an important aspect of maintaining fluency and communicative effectiveness in literary dialogue.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the translation of English idiomatic expressions in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* primarily prioritizes dynamic and pragmatic equivalence over formal equivalence. The findings indicate that the translator consistently focuses on preserving meaning, communicative intent, and emotional effect rather than maintaining the original linguistic structure of the source text. Such an approach enables Indonesian readers to understand idiomatic expressions naturally and accurately without experiencing semantic confusion or cultural barriers. The analysis also shows that the achievement of meaning equivalence is closely related to the translator's ability to adapt culture-bound expressions to the target language while preserving their communicative function. As a result, the translated text remains accessible and engaging for Indonesian readers while retaining the narrative atmosphere, characterization, and storytelling purposes established in the original novel.

The analysis further reveals that translation by paraphrase is the most frequently employed strategy in rendering English idioms into Indonesian. This strategy proves effective in transferring

idiomatic meanings when direct equivalents are unavailable or when literal translations would sound unnatural in the target language. Although the use of paraphrase often involves the omission of source-language metaphors, it successfully preserves the intended message and enhances readability for the target audience. In addition, cultural substitution and the use of expressions with similar meaning but dissimilar form are applied in several cases to maintain both communicative effectiveness and cultural acceptability. The predominance of these strategies suggests that successful idiom translation depends not only on linguistic competence but also on the translator's sensitivity to cultural context, target-reader expectations, and the communicative demands of literary texts.

This study contributes to the field of translation studies by providing empirical evidence of how meaning equivalence can be achieved in the translation of idiomatic expressions within fantasy literature. The findings reinforce the view that equivalence should be understood as the successful transfer of meaning and communicative effect rather than as a strict correspondence between lexical forms. In practical terms, the study highlights the importance of balancing semantic accuracy, naturalness, readability, and cultural appropriateness when translating literary works that contain a high number of idiomatic expressions. Future research may expand this line of inquiry by examining other culture-specific linguistic features in fantasy fiction, including neologisms, magical terminology, slang expressions, metaphorical constructions, and character-specific language styles. Such investigations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of translation strategies and equivalence in literary texts across different genres and cultural settings.

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