

# A Translation Analysis of Negative Polarity Idioms in The Hate U Give Novel

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## ABSTRACT

This research focuses in analysing negative polarity idioms found in the novel entitled *The Hate U Give*, the strategies used by the translator in translating the idioms, and the impacts of the strategies on the quality of the translation of negative polarity idioms in the novel *The Hate U Give* in terms of accuracy and acceptability. There are 74 data of negative polarity idioms studied. The negative polarity idioms found are classified based on the negation expressed. This study revealed four strategies of translating idiom used by the translator of *The Hate U Give* novel. The strategies are: 1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form, 2) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, 3) translation by paraphrase, and 4) translation by omission of a play on idiom. Based on the analysis of the translation quality, that the translation of idioms in the novel is accurate and acceptable. The findings also uncovered the impact of translation strategies on the quality of translation. Translation by using an idiom of similar meaning and form produces more accurate translation but results in less acceptable translation than other strategies. Meanwhile, translation by paraphrase contributes to more acceptable translation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Idiom is a type of figurative language. It refers to a combination of words whose meaning cannot be understood easily only from the superficial meanings of the single words constituting it (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2010, p. 6). Baker (2018, p. 69) also asserted that "Idioms are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components,". Therefore, the meaning of an idiom cannot be derived from the literal meaning of each word constituting it.

Translating idiom can be challenging for a translator as idiom is closely related to context, culture, and language style. A translator should have a solid knowledge of both source language and target language to be able to recognise and transfer the meaning of idioms accurately. According to Baker (2018, p. 71), the main problems arising from translating idiom are: "the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom conveys into the target language".

Baker also stated that the main difficulties in translating idiom are: 1) an idiom may have no equivalent in the target language, 2) an idiom may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different, 3) an idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time, and 4) in written discourse, the contexts in which idioms can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target language.

To help translators deal with difficulties while translating idioms, Baker (2018) proposed six translation strategies as follows: 1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form, 2) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, 3) borrowing the source language idiom, 4) translation by paraphrase, 5) translation by omission of a play on idiom, and 6) translation by omission of entire idiom.

The use of strategies to translate idioms may affect the quality of the translation. According to Nababan et al. (2012, p. 44), quality of translation can be determined by three matters which are accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Each of the three is assessed with score ranging from one to three.

Previous studies related to idiom translation analysis have been done before, some are those conducted by Fitri et al. (2019), Hashemian and Arezi, (2017), Putra & Novalinda (2019), and Saputro (2012). The studies done by Hashemian and Arezi (2017), and by Putra and Novalinda (2019) only focused on the translation

strategies of idioms. The studies do not include classification of idioms based on specific types. The same theory is used in both studies in the analysis of the strategies used to translate idioms, a theory by Mona Baker (1992).

Meanwhile, the other studies (Fitri et al, 2019 and Saputro, 2012) focused on the classification of idioms and the translation strategies applied in the translation of the studied idioms. The classification of idioms in the two studies is based on Fernando’s theory (1981;1996) and the idiom translation strategy analysis is based on Baker’s theory (2001;2006).

Therefore, based on the previous studies above, this research was designed to focus on the analysis of the translation of negative polarity idioms (NPIDs) as this type of idiom has not been analysed in the previous studies. According to Martinez, NPIDs are “idiomatic constructions which, because of their nature, always occur in the negative form and express a negative meaning” (1999, p. 65). NPIDs can be classified based on the negation expressed. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) stated the basic negation in English include affix-negation, no-negation, not-negation.

The source of data in this study is the novel “The Hate U Give” by Angie Thomas and its Indonesian translation “Benci Yang Kautanam” which is translated by Barokah Ruziati. The novel is taken as the data source because it is one of best-selling young adult novels, winning several awards, and it already has audiobook and movie adaptation.

The aims of this study are: 1) to find out the types of NPIDs found in The Hate U Give, 2) to identify the strategies used by the translator in the translation of NPIDs in The Hate U Give, and 3) to analyse the impacts of the strategies on the quality of the translation of NPIDs in The Hate U Give in terms of accuracy and acceptability.

**2. METHOD**

The study belongs to descriptive qualitative research. This study is a qualitative research since the data are in the form of words, phrases and clauses. The data are collected through content analysis and focus group discussion. Content analysis method was applied to collect the NPIDs from The Hate U Give novel and its Indonesian translation Benci Yang Kautanam. Meanwhile, focus group discussion was conducted to obtain data in the form of information regarding the types of NPIDs, the translation strategies, and translation quality. Raters were involved to assess the translation quality in terms of accuracy and acceptability of the translation. The data analysis was performed by analysing the data collected through several stages to discover the findings according to the research objectives. On the last stage, the researcher drew the conclusion of this study.

**3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Result**

This result of this study consists of three parts. The first part is the types of Negative Polarity Idioms (NPIDs) found in the novel The Hate U Give. The second part is the translation strategies used by the translator in translating the NPIDs from English into Indonesian. The last part of the research findings discusses the impact of the translation strategies on the quality of the translation of NPIDs in The Hate U Give novel in terms of accuracy and acceptability.

**3.2. Discussion**

*3.2.1 The types of negative polarity idiom*

Through content analysis, 74 data of NPIDs were found in the novel The Hate U Give. The NPIDs are classified into three types according to the negation expressed. The classification is based on the theory proposed by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) dividing the basic negation in English into affix-negation, no-negation, not-negation.

Table 1. Types of negative polarity idiom

Types of Negative Polarity Idioms	Total	Percentage (%)
Affix-Negation	5	6.75
No-Negation	6	8.1
Not-Negation	63	85.13
Total	74	100

From Table 1, it can be seen that from 74 data found in the novel, most of the data belong to the type of not-negation NPIDs with a total of 63 data. Meanwhile, five data are identified to be affix-negation and the other six data are no-negation NPIDs.

- *Affix-negation*

Affix-negation refers to the affix which conveys negativity. Affix-negation can be found in the form of prefix (such as un-, in-, im-, non-, dis-, etc) and suffix (such as -less and -free). There are five out of 74 data are classified into this type. The example is as follows:

I look at the jurors, **unable to read their faces** and tell if they really want to hear my words.  
(page 218)

The example shows that the idiom in the sentence takes form of affix-negation which uses the prefix un- in unable. To read someone’s face means to tell the emotions of someone through the facial expression. The idiom unable to read their faces shows that the person is unable to recognize the emotions of the others through their facial expressions.

- **No-negation**

No-negation refers to no and its variations which functions as a negative determiner in a noun phrase. No-negation can include no, nothing, nobody, no one, nowhere, etc. One of the variations in no-negation is the form no + gerund, such as no fooling and no kidding. There are six out of 74 data classified into this type. Here is the example of no negation NPIDs:

Tonight, Denasia’s dancing with some guy halfway across the room and **paying no attention to** Kenya.  
(page 09)

The example datum consists of no-negation as the negative determiner which emphasises negative idea. The idiom **paying no attention to** means not watching, listening, or being aware of something or someone.

- **Not-negation**

Not-negation comes into various kinds such as never (not + ever), neither (not + either), and nor (and + not). Not can also come in contracted version -n’t. There are 63 out of 74 data are classified into this type, for example:

Momma turns around to the skillet. “**Don’t make any sense.** That baby—” she says thickly. “He was just a baby.”  
(page 25)

The idiom above consists of not-negation in form of contracted version -n’t in don’t. The idiom **don’t make any sense** means that something is hard to understand or not reasonable.

### 3.2.2. Strategies used in translating negative polarity idioms

The analysis of the translation strategies is based on the theory proposed by Baker (2018) about translation strategies to translate idioms. From six strategies proposed by Baker (2018), this study indicates four strategies employed by the translator to translate NPIDs in the novel *The Hate U Give*. The strategies are: 1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form, 2) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, 3) translation by paraphrase, and 4) translation by omission of a play on idiom.

Table 2. Strategies in translating idiom

Strategies in Translating Idiom	Total	Percentage (%)
Using an idiom of similar meaning and form	16	21.62
Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form	12	16.22
Translation by Paraphrase	45	60.81
Translation by Omission of a Play on Idiom	1	1.35
Total	74	100

From the data presented in Table 2, translation by paraphrase is the most frequently used strategy with 45 idioms (60.81%) translated using this strategy. This shows similarity with the result of previous studies conducted by Putra and Novalinda (2019), Saputro (2012), and Fitri et al. (2019), which revealed that translation by paraphrase dominate the data by more than 50%. In addition, the present study identified the strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning and form, which is used in 16 data (21.62%). The strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form is found to be used in the translation of 12 NPIDs (16.22%). Lastly, the least used strategy is translation by omission of a play on idiom with only one datum (1.35%) translated using this strategy.

- **Using an idiom of similar meaning and form**

This strategy is applied when the translator found an idiom in the target language which conveys similar meaning and has similar form. As stated by Baker, “this strategy involves using an idiom in the target language which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items” (2018, p. 77). An example of the use of this strategy is:

ST: “A’ight then. You just **make sure your ass don’t get outta line**. Ain’t no telling what I’ll do.” (p.36)

TT: “*Oke kalau begitu. **Pastikan saja kau tidak pernah melewati batas**. Entah apa yang akan kulakukan nanti.*”

The utterance is spoken by King, the gang leader in Garden Heights, to Starr’s Daddy. Daddy and King are not on good terms. One day, they got into an argument. Daddy refuses to get involved into King’s shady business and tells King not to put his hands on Seven again. King then gets angry and warns Daddy not to get out of the line.

The idiom **make sure your ass don’t get outta line** is used to warn the other person not to behave in a way that is unacceptable or inappropriate. The sentence containing the idiom is translated into *pastikan saja kau **tidak pernah melewati batas***, in which the idiom conveys similar meaning and consists of similar lexical items.

- **Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form**

This strategy is used when the translator encounters an idiom in the target language which has similar meaning with the idiom in source language but is formed out of different lexical items. Baker states that “it is often possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a meaning similar to that of the source idiom or expression but consists of different lexical items” (2018, p. 79). Here is the example:

ST: Tell the cops the truth, and **don’t let them put words in your mouth**. (p. 42)

TT: *Katakan saja yang sebenarnya ke polisi, dan **jangan biarkan mereka mendikte pernyataanmu**.*

The context of situation is Starr is going to see the cops on Monday to tell what she witnessed on the day Khalil was shot by a police officer. Daddy tells her not to be scared about it and just tell the cops the truth. He also warns her not to let the police put words in her mouth and make her think she did something wrong.

**Putting words in someone’s mouth** means to suggest someone to say something he or she is not meant to. The idiom is translated into “***jangan biarkan mereka mendikte pernyataanmu***” which has similar meaning but formed out of different lexical items. The translator uses different lexical items to translate **put words in your mouth** into ***mendikte pernyataanmu*** (to dictate your statement). ***mendikte*** here has figurative meaning which is to tell someone to do and obey what someone else is saying (not allowed to argue) (KBBI Daring, n.d.)

- **Translation by paraphrase**

This strategy is used when the translator cannot find equivalent idiom in the target language. Baker (2018) also adds that this strategy can be used when it is likely “inappropriate” to use idiom in target text as there are different stylistic preferences of both languages (p.81). In paraphrasing an idiom, the translator transfers the meaning of the source language idiom into the target language in such a non-idiomatic form, for example:

ST: “It’s not my fault she **can’t get over** a joke from freaking freshman year! . . .” (p.223)

TT: “*Bukan salahku dia **tidak bisa melupakan** satu lelucon dari masa lalu! . . .*”

The context encompassing the lines is as follows. Starr, Maya, and Hailey are arguing about Hailey who has said and done racist things. Starr and Maya have pointed out the reasons why they think Hailey is racist. However, Hailey refuses to acknowledge and apologize for it. Starr mentions one racist joke Hailey was once said to Maya, which Hailey refuses to apologize for and see why it hurts Maya. She insists that it was just a joke. Hailey also defends herself by saying it is not her fault if Maya cannot get over that joke.

The idiom **can’t get over (something)** means unable to accept something and move on from it. Based on the context, Hailey thinks it is not her fault if Maya cannot accept her joke and move on from it. The idiom is translated into ***tidak bisa melupakan*** which conveys the same meaning as the meaning of the source language idiom.

- **Translation by omission of a play on idiom**

This strategy involves “rendering only the literal meaning of an idiom in a context that allows for a concrete reading of an otherwise playful use of language” (Baker 2018:85). Play on idiom may be very difficult to reproduce in other language. Therefore, by using this strategy, translator chooses to sacrifice the idiomatic meaning by rendering only the literal meaning in the target language. Below is the example:

ST: Daddy hums to Marvin, but he **couldn’t carry a tune** if it came in a box. (p.28)

TT: Daddy bersenandung mengikuti Marvin, **tapi dia benar-benar buta nada**.

In one scene described in the source of data, Starr and Daddy are riding Daddy’s truck with Marvin Gaye’s songs playing on the radio. Daddy hums along with the songs. However, he couldn’t carry the tune.

The idiom **couldn’t carry a tune if it came in a box** contains two meanings as it consists of a play on the idiom in the verb “carry”. The first meaning comes from the phrase **couldn’t carry a tune** which means unable to sing the musical notes correctly. The second meaning comes from the verb **carry** which is taken literally as an act of holding while moving something. Therefore, it is as though **couldn’t carry a tune if it came in a box** literally means couldn’t carry a tune if it is placed in a box.

The idiom **couldn’t carry a tune if it came in a box** is translated by using omission of a play on idiom into **benar-benar buta nada**. According to KBBI Daring (n.d.), **buta** has two meanings which are blind and unknowledgeable about something. In this case, **buta** in **buta nada** takes the latter meaning. Hence, the meaning of **buta nada** in the translation above is having no knowledge about musical notes.

### 3.2.3. The impact of the strategies on the quality of the translation of negative polarity idioms in the hate u give

The application of translation strategies in translating idioms affects the quality of the translation. Hence, this study also aims to know the impact of the application of translation strategies on the quality of the translation of negative polarity idioms (NPIDs), in terms of accuracy and acceptability. This study applied the model proposed by Nababan et al. (2012) to assess the translation quality. Accuracy refers to the precision in transferring the message from source language to the target language. A text can be considered as a translation if it has the same meaning or message with the source text (Nababan et al., 2012, p. 44). Meanwhile, acceptability refers to the naturalness of the target text for the target readers. An acceptable translation sounds natural and appropriate with the target language rules, norms, and cultures (Nababan et al., 2012, p. 45). The data regarding the translation quality were gained through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Three raters were involved in assessing the translation quality of NPIDs in the novel The Hate U Give.

Table 3. Translation quality of negative polarity idioms

Translation Quality	Score	Value	Total
Accuracy	2.70	3x	8.1
Acceptability	2.78	2x	5.56
Score			13.66:5= 2.73

This study revealed that the translation of NPIDs in the novel The Hate U Give is considered as accurate and acceptable. The score for accuracy of the translation is 2.70 which suggests that the translator mostly able to deliver the meaning of NPIDs to the target language accurately. Meanwhile, the score of acceptability is 2.78 which means the translation mostly sounds natural for the target readers. However, there are still some translations which are considered as less accurate and less acceptable.

Table 4. The impact of translation strategies on the quality of the translation

Translation Strategies	Accuracy			Acceptability		
	A	LA	IA	AC	LAC	UA
Using an idiom of similar meaning and form	12	4	-	10	6	-
Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form	8	4	-	10	2	-
Translation by Paraphrase	32	13	-	38	6	1
Translation by Omission of a play on idiom	-	1	-	1	-	-

Total	52	22	-	59	14	1
Percentage	70.27%	29.72%		79.72%	18.91%	1.35%

Table 4 shows that most of the strategies result in accurate translation. From 74 NPIDs found in the novel *The Hate U Give*, 52 idioms (70,27%) are translated accurately into the target language. Meanwhile, 22 data (29,72%) are considered as less accurate translation.

The strategy which produces more accurate translation than other strategies is translation by using an idiom of similar meaning as 12 out of 16 data (75%) translated by using this strategy result in accurate translations. Meanwhile, translation by paraphrase also contributes in the production of accurate translation as 32 out of 45 data (71.11%) belong to accurate translation.

The strategy using an idiom of similar meaning and form may result in accurate translation because it keeps the meaning and form of the source language idiom in the target language. Meanwhile, translation by paraphrase can help the translator to convey the meaning of the idiom in the target language in a literal way.

The level of acceptability of the translation of NPIDs in the novel *The Hate U Give* is also considerably high since from 74 data, 59 data (79,72%) are acceptable, 14 data (18,91%) are considered less acceptable, and only one datum (1,35%) belongs to the category of unacceptable translation. The majority of acceptable translation in this study results from translation by paraphrase strategy. From the total of 45 idioms translated by using this strategy, 38 data (84.44%) are categorized into acceptable translation.

Translation by paraphrase may result in acceptable translation because the translation does not have to be tied up with the form as idiom. If the translator cannot find or there is no equivalent idiom in the target language, the translator can use paraphrase strategy to transfer the meaning of the idiom more clearly and naturally in non-idiomatic form.

Meanwhile, based on the result of the analysis, translation by using an idiom of similar meaning and form results in less acceptable translation (6 out of 16 data or 37.5%). This is because maintaining both meaning and similar lexical items of idiom in source language to the target language may result in less natural translation, a problem with technical term, or grammatical error. There is also one datum out of 45 idioms translated by applying paraphrase (2.22%) is classified into the category of unacceptable translation. The lowest score 1 for the acceptability was given to datum 59 because strong arguments underlined that the translation does not sound natural and familiar to the target readers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that not-negation NPIDs appeared more frequently than the other types of NPIDs in the novel *The Hate U Give*. From the total 74 data, 63 data (85.13%) are not-negation NPIDs, six data (8.1%) are no-negation, and five data (6.75%) take form of affix-negation.

In terms of strategies used in the translation of NPIDs, this study identified four out of six idiom translation strategies proposed by Baker (2018) are applied by the translator of *The Hate U Give* novel. Translation by paraphrase is the most frequently used strategy by the translator. Out of 74 idioms, 45 idioms (60.81%) are translated by applying paraphrase. The next most frequently applied strategies are using an idiom of similar meaning and form, which can be observed in 16 idioms (21.62%), using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form used in the translation of 12 data (16.22%), and translation by omission of a play on idiom only used in the translation of one idiom (1.35%).

This study also found that the quality of NPIDs translation in the novel *The Hate U Give* is considered accurate and acceptable. The accuracy level of the translation of the NPIDs is 2.70 while the acceptability level is 2.78. The strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning and form produces more accurate translation than other strategies. However, it also results to less acceptable translation more than the others. Meanwhile, translation by paraphrase contributes the most in producing acceptable translation.

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