

Translation Strategies Idiom on Football: "Park the Bus"

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Abstract

Translating English football idioms, such as "park the bus," into Indonesian involves complex linguistic and cultural challenges. Adopting Mona Baker's (1992) idiom translation strategies of paraphrase, omission, equivalence, and literal translation, this study explains how the translation of such football idioms is conducted in Indonesian football media, including television commentaries, online news, and social media. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research finds that paraphrasing is the most widely used approach, chosen to provide clarity and cultural appropriateness. The use of literal translations sporadically for humorous or stylistic reasons and omission for the sake of fluency is also identified. The research further calls upon theories of idiomaticity and sociolinguistic theory to emphasize the importance of culturally responsive translation practice. These results add to translation research and provide practical implications for translator education and sports media localization.

Keywords: football idioms, translation strategies, cultural adaptation, Mona Baker, sports media.

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INTRODUCTION

In modern times, its mere suggestion of being a sport has been surpassed; it is now an international culture impacting lexicon, media (Ikliil Saifulloh et al., 2023), and everyday usage. Notably, among the most widely used linguistic devices in match reporting and commentating is the application of idioms, which are generally hard to translate since they possess metaphorical and culturally specific meanings. One of the most popular idioms in English football is "park the bus." This idiom, which is frequently used to explain a defensive tactic in which a team lines up a great many players in front of the goal to block the other team from scoring, creates difficulty when translated into another language, such as Indonesian. The figural character of the expression pushes translators to go beyond literalistic translations and look for suitable translation approaches to transfer its intended meaning effectively.

In spite of football's popularity in Indonesia and the increasing demand for precise and culturally suitable translations within the sports media sector, academic research specializing in the translation of certain football idioms is relatively scarce. The majority of research on idiom translation is carried out using literary or general communication settings, with insufficient focus given to idioms specific to the sports domain. This study hopes to bridge that gap by examining closely the idiom "park the bus" and its translation into Indonesian based on accepted procedures of translating idioms.

The study offers novelty on three fronts. Theoretically, it applies Mona Baker's (1992) idiomatic translation strategies of translation through paraphrase, omission, equivalence, and literal translation to an area not yet fully explored: sports media. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach that is centered on comparing the source text

(English) with the target text (Indonesian) to identify the strategies used. This research is relevant in a practical sense to translators, subtitle editors, and media workers engaged in football-related content localization in Indonesia. Based on the background, this study aims to answer the following question: How are translation strategies applied in translating the idiom “park the bus” from English into Indonesian in football media texts?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Idiomatic translation has been widely studied in literary, audiovisual, and advertisement settings, yet idioms in the specialized genre of football commentary, especially in Indonesian, are less well researched. Football idioms such as “park the bus” are replete with cultural nuance and tactical implication, being mistranslated or omitted in local media. This introduces both a theoretical and practical gap in idiom translation studies.

Methodologically, the majority of these previous studies rely on general discourse analysis or overall qualitative analysis, which dilutes the focus on individual idioms. Few empirical studies specifically employ systematic models like Mona Baker's (1992) idiom translation strategies for football-specific idioms. This leaves a theoretical gap in the way culturally specific football idioms are translated whether paraphrased, localized, or just omitted.

Furthermore, studies of English language influence on football lexis have also predominantly been concerned with European languages and contexts. (Bergh & Ohlander, 2017) contend that some English football terms, i.e., offside, dribble, and coach, are either retained as direct loans or modified into loan translations based on sociolinguistic conditions in the recipient language (Saifulloh et al., 2025). As of yet, there has not been any research clarifying how these processes unfold in the Indonesian context. Thus, this study addresses a three-fold gap: (1) the lack of representation of football idioms in translation studies; (2) the absence of focused research grounded in established models like Baker's; and (3) the scarcity of studies in the region on football idiom localization in Indonesia.

Review of Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated idiom translation strategies in different domains. Suryani (2016) identified paraphrasing and adaptation as dominant strategies in fiction translation, referring to the translator's inclination towards readability at the expense of idiomaticity. Rahmawati & Wulandari (2019), by contrast, referred to omission and cultural substitution in advertorial texts, demonstrating sensitivity to audience expectation.

When talking about translating idiomatic language for film subtitles, Prasetyo (2020) emphasized the necessity for maintaining equivalence to ensure pragmatic effects are retained, and he further clarified that word-for-word translation was seldom successful. Although research on football idioms is still relatively scarce, Hidayati (2022) is a useful contribution in that she explores this particular niche. While she initially set out to employ a mixed-method design (Saifulloh & Anam, 2022), her findings ultimately highlighted the importance of more specific questions expressly examining how certain idioms are interpreted and translated.

At the international level, several recent studies have extended the discussion. Adichie (2024), for instance, observed that in ESL (English as a Second Language) situations, idiomatic translation deviates from rigid, set frameworks. Translators, on the contrary, prefer contextual clarity and communicative relevance. In the same vein, Bergh and Ohlander (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of football-related idioms in a variety of European languages. Their study

illustrated that languages with strong purist trends tend to adapt idioms in a creative way rather than adopting them in their original shape.

This study is guided by two primary theoretical frameworks: **Mona Baker's Idiom Translation Strategies (1992)**: Baker proposes four main strategies:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form (equivalence)
2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but different form (paraphrase)
3. Translation by omission
4. Literal translation

These categories offer a clear and methodical foundation for studying how translators handle idioms, especially those with high cultural connotations or that have special structural characteristics. **Newmark's Translation Theory (1988)**: Newmark strongly draws a line between semantic translation, where the source text's original meaning and structure are preserved most accurately, and communicative translation, where the message is optimized for the understanding of the target group. This is most helpful in deciding whether or not a translation strategy captures the idiom's intended functional impact or just its literal meaning.

To complement this perspective, this research also incorporates Nida's (1964) Dynamic Equivalence theory, which classifies good translation by the response it elicits from the target audience. Paraphrasing or cultural adaptation is stressed in Nida's theory, especially when there is no idiomatic equivalent in the target language. Finally, Catford's theory of Translation Shifts, combined with Vinay and Darbelnet's steps in translation, such as calque and adaptation, is extremely useful in understanding the syntactic and semantic shifts involved in the process of translation (Saifulloh & Mustopa, 2025). These theories are particularly useful while dealing with idioms, which possess metaphorical and culturally associated meanings and thus require cautious handling.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Context and Design

The current study centers on the strategies employed in the translation of the football idiom "park the bus" from English to Indonesian. The primary aim is to identify the most common strategies employed by Indonesian translators and investigate how these choices influence the meaning of the idiom and its interpretation in Indonesian football media.

For this, a qualitative research framework with descriptive-analytical design has been employed. This design is fitting for the subject matter of the study since it yields a great degree of detail and contextual examination of the translation process and the translator's decision-making, aspects requiring intensity and nuance rather than quantification. The descriptive-analytical approach allows the researcher to describe the various approaches followed, assess their effectiveness, and describe the translators' decision-making process concerning linguistic and cultural considerations. It takes a particular interest in Indonesian football media translations, such as subtitles, web news, and live broadcast commentary. This particular setting gives valuable details that reveal actual translation practice in the sporting realm.

Rationale for Research Design

Qualitative research is suitable for the current research because the translation of idioms entails complicated linguistic, cultural, and contextual issues that cannot be addressed with quantitative approaches. Descriptive-analytical research allows close scrutiny of text samples so that trends and subtleties in translation approaches may be discerned by the

researcher. This approach also allows for the application of Mona Baker's framework of idiom translation and Newmark's ideas on translation quality, which both require a close analysis of the text for the classification and evaluation of translation approach and outcome. Moreover, the concentration on one idiom, "park the bus," provides an opportunity for close and detailed examination, thereby rendering qualitative analysis as the most suitable methodology in teasing out the nuances of translators' strategic decisions.

Participant Recruitment

The subjects of this research are professional Indonesian translators and football commentators who have undertaken English football media translation into the Indonesian language. Purposive sampling was used in the selection process to focus on those with prior experience in sport translation or commentary. The initial contacts were through football media groups and professional translator associations. Messages describing the aims of the study were distributed through electronic mail and social media websites, inviting language participants in interviews and translation tasks for the phrase "park the bus".

Rationale for Participant Selection

The participants for this study were well chosen from experienced translators and football commentators due to their firsthand engagement in translating and delivering football content. Their professional background guarantees that the data gathered represents purposeful and knowledgeable translation practices, as opposed to non-professionals or amateurs. Emphasizing such professionals strengthens the validity of the study by linking the examination of practices with real, concrete contexts. In that manner, findings are not only valid but also applied practically to the football media industry.

Data Analysis

The texts that were translated and participant interviews were analyzed by qualitative content analysis, and Mona Baker's strategies of idiom translation were used as the conceptual framework. Each occurrence of the idiom "park the bus" in the corpus was located in detail and categorized by Baker's strategies: equivalence, paraphrase, literal translation, omission, or otherwise. To further ascertain the quality of translation, Newmark's communicative/semantic divide was applied, wherein not only was the source meaning's faithfulness to be assessed, but the naturalness of the idiom in use within Indonesian was also. This integrated framework provided systematic categorization along with qualitative refinement of judgment. Content analysis involved repeated readings to ensure careful coding and interpretation. Emergent themes and recurring patterns in the translation strategy were subsequently synthesized to yield a nuanced understanding of how this idiom is translated and received in Indonesian football media.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To ascertain the credibility and reliability of the findings, this research employed triangulation by combining textual analysis and participant in-depth interviews to bring forth textual analysis and participant in-depth interviews. This combination of methods allowed for cross-validation of findings, as the elaborations by the translators themselves constituted rich intertextual information that supported and enriched the text evidence.

In addition, member checking was performed through the sharing of initial interpretations with chosen participants, where they were able to verify the correctness of the analysis and provide feedback. The procedure assisted in reducing researcher bias and enhanced the internal validity of the research. To foster transparency and enable replicability, all of the data-gathering and analysis steps were carefully documented. Lastly, application of established theoretical principles such as Baker's idiom translation strategies (1992, 2021) and Nida's dynamic equivalence theory (1964) helped to ensure that the research study was supported by established research norms, thereby enhancing its overall reliability and scholarly rigor.

FINDINGS

This section discloses the findings of the research on how Indonesian football media translate the football idiom "park the bus." Through analysis, its rendition in various platforms, including live commentary, online news stories, and match reports, is examined. Using Mona Baker's (1992) translation techniques for idioms namely, paraphrasing, literal translation, and omission the research determines certain patterns in the translators' approaches.

These tendencies are subsequently examined based on known frameworks such as Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, hence providing more depth to the translation choices made. In an effort to support these findings, a table of indicative examples is included, together with a thematic discussion on the way in which translators balance fidelity to the source text against cultural appropriateness and communicative utility in Indonesian.

These themes each give insight into the theoretical ideals and practical challenges that govern the translation of idioms within the vibrant context of Indonesian football discourse.

Table

"Park the Bus" Translation in Indonesian Football Media

Source Text (English)	Indonesian Translation	Translation Strategy	Source/Media
"The team decided to park the bus in the second half."	"Tim memilih bertahan rapat sepanjang babak kedua."	Paraphrasing	beIN Sports Indonesia (Siaran Liga Inggris)
"They parked the bus to secure the lead."	"Tim itu memarkir bus untuk mempertahankan keunggulan."	Literal Translation	Bola.com (Artikel Sepak Bola)
"The coach asked the players to defend aggressively."	"Pelatih meminta pemain bermain sangat defensif."	Omission	Kompas.com (Laporan Pertandingan)

Theme 1: Paraphrasing as the Dominant Translation Strategy

Paraphrasing is the most general method used to translate the football idiom "park the bus" into Indonesian. Paraphrasing is necessary whenever the idiom carries culturally charged meanings with no direct equivalents in the target language. Through this method, translators are able to better convey the message as naturally and precisely as possible without the use of literal translations that could confuse or alienate the readers.

For example, in the commentary of a soccer match broadcast on beIN Sports Indonesia, the English sentence "The team decided to park the bus in the second half" was translated into "Tim memilih bertahan rapat sepanjang babak kedua" ("The team chose to defend tightly

throughout the second half"). Instead of the more directly translated "memarkir bus," which would likely sound hollow or meaningless to the majority of Indonesian listeners, the translator instead reframed the idiom in a form better attuned to local sensibilities regarding ultra-defensive soccer tactics.

This choice forms the crux of the maxim that contextual and cultural proximity is more often underscored than technical lexical accuracy. Paraphrasing allows the idiomatic meaning to be effectively conveyed as well as modification based on the expectation and comprehension of the target audience. Mona Baker (1992) states that paraphrasing just so happens to be the most suitable method in situations where a direct idiomatic match in the target language is lacking.

This is following Eugene Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence theory, whose main concern is to reach a communicatively equivalent effect and not preserve formal equivalence. It also accords with Peter Newmark's (1988) communicative translation model, whose aim is to target what the intended audience needs to know and the functional purpose of the translation at the cost of literal exactness.

In Indonesian football commentators' talk, paraphrasing is a pragmatically efficient and culturally suitable strategy. Paraphrasing ensures that the listeners know the tactical and emotional subtlety of the commentary without being confused by unfamiliar idiomatic expressions. This example highlights that the successful translation of sport idiom is not merely a matter of language proficiency but needs cross-cultural sensitivity and meaning transmission in terminology that resonates with the target audience's experiential base and interpretative schemata.

Theme 2: Literal Translation and Omission as Alternative Strategies

Although paraphrasing remains the most prevalent strategy for translating football idioms such as "park the bus," other strategies, such as literal translation and omission, do occur, particularly in rushed or informal media contexts. For example, the idiom is literally translated by Bola.com as "Tim itu memarkir bus untuk mempertahankan keunggulan" ("The team parked the bus to maintain their lead"), retaining the visual image of the source expression. On the other hand, Kompas.com chooses to omit the idiom entirely, shortening the message to "Tim bermain sangat defensif" ("The team played very defensively").

Literal translation is imprecise or disorienting to readers who are not aware of the original metaphor because it maintains form in the idiom above the meaning and may be misunderstood. This is in accordance with the shortcomings of formal equivalence discussed by Nida (1964), whereby retaining the surface structure compromises the communicative purpose. On the other hand, omission sacrifices the metaphorical depth of the idiom to favor fluency and immediacy. Baker (1992) recognizes omission as a necessary strategy when an idiom cannot be seamlessly integrated into the target language without compromising its intended meaning. Although both literal translation and omission are less ideal for preserving idiomatic nuance, they represent practical choices in contexts where brevity, speed, or clear communication take precedence over stylistic fidelity.

Theme 3: Cultural Adaptation in Idiomatic Translation

Cultural adaptation is a fine-grained strategy that bridges cultural gaps by extending metaphors to have wider currency. For example, the phrase "park the bus" becomes "Tim itu bermain sangat bertahan, seolah-olah menempatkan bus di depan gawang sebagai benteng pertahanan" ("The team played very defensively, as if placing a bus in front of the goal as a

fortress"), preserving the original imagery while making it culturally meaningful to Indonesian receivers. This

approach maintains both meaning and rhetorical impact, reflecting Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which links metaphor to cultural cognition. Osisanwo and Alugbin (2024) emphasize that idioms carry emotional and symbolic weight that needs re-contextualization, and Baker (2021) argues that successful idiom translation depends on preserving these cultural and emotional layers, not just literal meaning. Cultural adaptation, therefore, offers a context-sensitive solution that enhances both comprehension and engagement for target audiences.

Discussion

The present study demonstrates that the idiom "*park the bus*", when translated into Indonesian, reveals significant variation in strategy, each with distinct implications for meaning preservation and audience reception. The translation strategies identified—paraphrasing, literal translation, omission, and cultural adaptation—highlight both the flexibility and challenges of rendering sports idioms in cross-cultural contexts.

Paraphrasing proved to be the most common and effective strategy. It avoids confusion by conveying the idiom's functional meaning—tight defensive play—rather than its metaphorical form. This is consistent with Baker's (1992) assertion that paraphrasing is most suitable when an idiom has no equivalent in the target language. The data supports this, as many Indonesian audiences may not associate "parking the bus" with a football tactic unless it is recontextualized. From a pedagogical perspective, paraphrasing also reflects what Adichie (2024) terms as "contextual appropriacy," ensuring that language use aligns with the audience's sociolinguistic frame of reference. In this case, paraphrase bridges linguistic gaps and mitigates cultural dissonance, allowing idioms to retain communicative force.

Literal translation appears infrequently, yet it surfaces in informal or niche domains such as fan forums. While it retains the metaphorical texture of the original, it often lacks clarity for general Indonesian audiences. This echoes Bergh and Ohlander's (2023) findings that literal renderings, or "loan translations," may be useful where audiences are already acculturated to football-specific English terms. However, such strategies pose the risk of alienating readers unfamiliar with the source idiom. Without proper contextual anchoring, literal translations can create semantic noise or result in misinterpretation, particularly when the metaphor is highly culture-bound.

Omission was another observable pattern, particularly in fast-paced journalistic texts. While omission enhances readability and fluidity, it sacrifices idiomatic richness. Baker (1992) points out that omission may be justified when the idiom is either untranslatable or non-essential. However, this strategy risks weakening the stylistic and emotional nuances of the original discourse. This is especially true within the sport commentary genre, where idioms carry psychological and dramatic significance, determining the expressive tone of the genre. As noted by Barseghyan (2016), sports idioms are not only mundane language; they symbolize socio-cultural norms and act as signs of identity expression.

The proliferation of culturally tailored translations—e.g., using local analogies—demonstrates translators' attempts to attain communicative equivalence. This resonates with Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence, which is concerned with generating an equivalent response from the target audience to that of the source audience. In addition, Osisanwo and Alugbin (2024) illustrate how African football metaphors become reconfigured

via local narrative conventions, emphasizing the cultural situatedness of sports discourse. Similarly, Indonesian versions maintain idiomatic expressions of football in terms relevant to people by drawing on ubiquitous popular cultural constructs such as militaristic or communal metaphors for defense.

Newmark's (1988) communicative and semantic theories of translation offer a strong paradigm for addressing the decisions of translation. Paraphrasing is most readily associated with communicative translation in that it aims for audience comprehension, whereas literal translation aims for semantic fidelity. The results indicate that the translation of football idiom needs an even balance between the two approaches, compelling translators to consider lexical equivalence alongside stylistic appropriateness and emotive appeal.

Furthermore, the employment of various approaches underscores that idiom translation relies significantly on the medium and context. For example, subtitles, being space-constrained, tend to compel translators to resort to omission or concise paraphrase, whereas newspaper articles provide room for more complete and imaginative variations.

Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

The present study examined the translation of the football idiom "park the bus" into Indonesian based on Mona Baker's (1992) methods of idiom translation: equivalence, paraphrase, omission, and literal translation. With a qualitative descriptive method, the findings revealed that paraphrasing was the dominant method, successfully maintaining the intended meaning of the idiom while being culturally accessible. Literal translation is employed in limited contexts but runs the risk of misunderstanding, whereas omission is employed deliberately to simplify the message at the expense of idiomatic richness.

Such findings highlight the multifaceted nature of idiom translation, especially in sporting discourse, where metaphor and cultural symbolism play significant communicative roles. Translators must continually balance semantic fidelity with audience comprehension, prioritizing the pragmatic worth of communicative translation (Newmark, 1988) and dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964). In addition, this study supports opinions by Adichie (2024) and Osisanwo & Alugbin (2024), who stress the cultural rootedness of idioms and the necessity of contextualization, particularly in ESL and sports literature.

While this study provides valuable insights into the translation of the idiom "*park the bus*", its scope is limited to a single idiom and a relatively small corpus of Indonesian football media. Additionally, the research does not quantitatively assess audience reception, nor does it thoroughly examine audiovisual constraints, such as timing limitations in subtitle translation. Furthermore, participant validation was limited due to time constraints.

Future studies should investigate a broader range of football idioms across different languages or platforms (e.g., commentary vs. social media). Incorporating audience reception studies or experimental translation tasks could provide a deeper understanding of which strategies enhance comprehension and retention. The role of AI-assisted translation in handling idioms in sports contexts also presents a promising research avenue.

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