

Quality Assessment of English Idiom Translation into Indonesian Among Primary School Students: A Pre-Test and Post-Test Study at SDN 101901 Lubuk Pakam

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This study aims to assess the quality of English idiom translation into Indonesian among fifth-grade primary school students and to examine whether contextualized idiom instruction improves students' translation performance. The study employed a quantitative one-group pre-test and post-test design involving 20 fifth-grade students at SDN 101901 Lubuk Pakam. The instrument consisted of parallel translation tests containing English idiomatic expressions, and students' translations were assessed using a translation quality assessment framework covering accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, quality-category distribution, normality testing, and a paired-samples t-test. The findings revealed that students' mean score increased from 63.75 in the pre-test to 89.00 in the post-test, with an average gain of 25.25 points. The distribution of translation quality also improved substantially: before the intervention, most students were categorized as sufficient, poor, or good, whereas after the intervention all students reached either the good or very good category. The paired-samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, $t(19) = 17.695$, $p < 0.001$, with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d_z = 3.96$). These results indicate that contextualized idiom instruction can significantly enhance primary school students' ability to translate English idioms into Indonesian accurately, naturally, and readably. The study suggests that idiom-based translation activities should be integrated into English learning at the primary school level to strengthen vocabulary mastery, figurative language awareness, and cross-cultural translation competence.

Keywords: English idioms, translation quality assessment, primary school students, contextualized instruction, paired-samples t-test.

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1. Introduction

Translation is a complex cognitive and linguistic activity that requires the transfer of meaning from a source language into a target language while maintaining the intended message, tone, and cultural nuance of the original expression. In English language learning, translation does not merely involve replacing words from one language with words in another language; it also requires learners to understand context, pragmatic meaning, and cultural references. This becomes more challenging when the translated item is an idiom, because idioms are fixed or semi-fixed expressions whose meanings cannot always be interpreted literally from the meanings of their individual words.

English idioms present a particular challenge for Indonesian primary school students. Expressions such as break a leg, under the weather, or let the cat out of the bag cannot be translated word by word without distorting the intended meaning. Young learners who are still developing their English vocabulary and

cultural knowledge often rely on literal translation strategies, resulting in translations that may be inaccurate, unnatural, or difficult to understand. Therefore, idiom translation requires explicit instructional support that helps students connect idiomatic expressions with their actual meanings and appropriate Indonesian equivalents.

In the Indonesian primary school context, English exposure increasingly occurs through textbooks, storybooks, classroom materials, and digital media. Although primary school students may be familiar with basic English vocabulary and sentence patterns, they often have limited experience in interpreting figurative expressions. This gap between literal vocabulary knowledge and figurative language comprehension can affect their ability to translate idioms accurately and naturally. As a result, assessing students' idiom translation quality is important for understanding the extent to which they can process meaning beyond the word level.

Translation quality is commonly evaluated through three major dimensions: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy refers to the extent to which the meaning of the source text is conveyed correctly in the target language. Acceptability concerns whether the translation is natural and culturally appropriate in the target language. Readability refers to how easily the translated text can be understood by its intended readers. These three dimensions are particularly relevant in idiom translation because idioms require not only semantic transfer but also cultural and communicative adjustment.

This study investigates the quality of English idiom translation into Indonesian among fifth-grade students at SDN 101901 Lubuk Pakam. Specifically, it examines students' translation performance before and after a contextualized instructional module on English idioms. The study is guided by the following research question: To what extent does contextualized idiom instruction improve the quality of English idiom translation into Indonesian among fifth-grade students at SDN 101901 Lubuk Pakam? The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching practice by showing how idiom instruction can support vocabulary mastery, figurative language awareness, and translation competence among young learners.

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

The Nature of English Idioms

Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot always be understood from the literal meanings of the individual words that compose them. According to Baker (1992), idioms are expressions that carry figurative meanings and often reflect the cultural background of a language community. Because of their non-literal nature, idioms require learners to interpret meaning based on context rather than individual lexical items.

For English language learners, especially primary school students, idioms present considerable learning challenges. Young learners tend to translate unfamiliar expressions word by word, resulting in misunderstandings of the intended meaning. Therefore, effective idiom instruction should incorporate contextual learning, visual support, examples, and meaningful communication activities so that learners can understand both the figurative meaning and the appropriate situations in which idioms are used.

Translation Quality Assessment

Translation quality assessment refers to the systematic evaluation of how successfully a translation transfers meaning from the source language into the target language. Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) propose three main criteria for evaluating translation quality: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy concerns whether the original meaning is correctly transferred, acceptability refers to the naturalness of the translation within the target language, and readability measures how easily the target

readers can understand the translated text. These three dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating translation products because they consider semantic equivalence, linguistic appropriateness, and reader comprehension simultaneously. Consequently, this framework is widely adopted in translation studies conducted in Indonesia.

Strategies for Translating Idioms

Baker (1992) identifies several strategies for translating idioms, including using an idiom with similar meaning and form, using an idiom with similar meaning but different lexical form, paraphrasing, and omission. The choice of strategy depends on the availability of equivalent expressions in the target language and the purpose of the translation. In the context of primary education, paraphrasing is often considered the most practical strategy because young learners generally have limited knowledge of idiomatic expressions in both the source and target languages. Nevertheless, the selected strategy should preserve the intended meaning of the idiom while producing a natural and understandable translation. Teaching students to identify contextual clues before translating idioms can improve both translation accuracy and comprehension.

English Idiom Learning in Primary Education

English learning in primary schools aims not only to develop students' vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but also to enhance their communicative competence. Introducing idiomatic expressions at an appropriate level helps learners recognize figurative language, enrich their vocabulary, and understand cultural aspects of English communication. Translation activities can serve as effective learning tools because they encourage students to interpret meaning rather than simply translate words literally. Through idiom translation tasks, teachers can evaluate students' understanding of figurative expressions and identify common translation difficulties. Moreover, contextualized idiom instruction contributes to students' semantic awareness and promotes more meaningful language learning experiences.

Problem Statement

Although numerous studies have discussed idiom translation strategies and translation quality assessment, limited research has specifically investigated the quality of English idiom translations produced by Indonesian primary school students. Most previous studies have focused on professional translators, university students, literary texts, or audiovisual translation, leaving young learners relatively underexplored. Primary school students frequently experience difficulties in interpreting idiomatic expressions because they tend to rely on literal translation and possess limited cultural and contextual knowledge. Consequently, their translations may fail to accurately convey the intended meaning or may produce unnatural expressions in Indonesian.

Based on these issues, the present study investigates the quality of English idiom translations produced by primary school students using Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality framework, which evaluates translations based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing empirical evidence that can support the development of more effective strategies for teaching idioms and translation skills in primary education.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach to examine students' improvement in translating English idioms into Indonesian. The design was selected because it allows the researcher to measure changes in students' translation quality before and after an instructional intervention. A pre-test was administered to identify students' initial translation ability,

followed by a post-test after the instructional treatment to evaluate learning outcomes. Although the design did not include a control group, it is considered appropriate for classroom-based exploratory research that aims to compare students' performance before and after instruction through statistical analysis.

The study was conducted at SDN 101901 Lubuk Pakam and involved 20 fifth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. The participants were approximately 10–11 years old and had previously learned basic English vocabulary and simple sentence structures but had not received formal instruction on English idioms. Indonesian was their first language and the primary language used in daily communication. To ensure ethical standards, students' identities were kept confidential throughout the research process, and all findings were reported using aggregated and anonymized data.

Data were collected through parallel pre-test and post-test translation tasks in which students translated English idiomatic expressions into Indonesian. The instrument was designed to measure students' understanding of figurative meaning as well as their ability to produce natural and appropriate translations in the target language. Students' work was evaluated using a translation quality assessment rubric adapted from Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012), which assesses translations based on three dimensions: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The resulting scores were converted to a 100-point scale and classified into five performance categories: Very Good (86–100), Good (71–85), Sufficient (56–70), Poor (41–55), and Very Poor (40 or below).

The instructional intervention consisted of a contextualized idiom learning module designed to help students understand idiomatic expressions through meaningful language use. The lessons incorporated visual aids, short contextual passages, guided practice, and independent translation activities. Students participated in a variety of learning tasks, including matching idioms with their meanings, discussing idioms in context, identifying appropriate Indonesian equivalents, and translating idiomatic expressions into natural Indonesian. Rather than encouraging word-for-word translation, the instruction emphasized contextual interpretation and communicative meaning to improve students' comprehension and translation skills.

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included the calculation of the mean, standard deviation, standard error, minimum and maximum scores, mean gain, percentage increase, and the distribution of students across translation quality categories. Before hypothesis testing, the normality of the gain scores was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. A paired-samples t-test was then conducted to determine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. In addition, Cohen's d was calculated to determine the magnitude of the instructional intervention's effect on students' English idiom translation quality.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

The descriptive statistics indicate that students' English idiom translation performance improved after the instructional intervention. The mean score increased from 63.75 in the pre-test to 89.00 in the post-test, showing an average gain of 25.25 points. This improvement indicates that the students' translation quality moved from the sufficient category to the very good category.

The standard deviation decreased from 12.55 in the pre-test to 7.36 in the post-test. This decrease suggests that students' scores became more consistent after the intervention. In the pre-test, the scores ranged from 40 to 85, while in the post-test they ranged from 80 to 100. The increase in the minimum

score is particularly important because it shows that lower-performing students also benefited substantially from the instruction.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Aspect	Pre-Test	Post-Test
N	20	20
Mean	63.75	89.00
Standard Deviation	12.55	7.36
Standard Error Mean	2.81	1.65
Minimum Score	40	80
Maximum Score	85	100
Mean Gain	25.25 points	-
Percentage Increase	39.61%	-

Distribution of Translation Quality Categories

The distribution of students' translation quality categories changed substantially after the intervention. In the pre-test, no student reached the very good category. Most students were in the sufficient category, while some were still in the poor and very poor categories. After the intervention, all students reached either the good or very good category.

Table 2. Distribution of Translation Quality Categories

Category	Score Range	Pre Freq.	Pre %	Post Freq.	Post %
Very Good	86-100	0	0%	11	55%
Good	71-85	5	25%	9	45%
Sufficient	56-70	9	45%	0	0%
Poor	41-55	5	25%	0	0%
Very Poor	<= 40	1	5%	0	0%
Total	-	20	100%	20	100%

Before the intervention, 45% of the students were categorized as sufficient, 25% as good, 25% as poor, and 5% as very poor. This distribution indicates that many students initially had difficulty translating English idioms accurately and naturally. The absence of students in the very good category suggests that idiom translation was still a challenging skill for the class before instruction.

After the intervention, 55% of the students were categorized as very good and 45% as good. No student remained in the sufficient, poor, or very poor category. This shift demonstrates that contextualized idiom instruction improved students' translation quality not only individually but also collectively as a class.

Normality Test and Paired-Samples T-Test

The normality of the gain scores was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The result showed $W = 0.938$ and $p = 0.223$. Since the significance value was greater than 0.05, the gain scores were considered normally distributed. Therefore, the paired-samples t-test was appropriate for testing the significance of the difference between pre-test and post-test score. The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, $t(19) = 17.695$, $p < 0.001$. The mean difference was 25.25 points, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 22.26 to 28.24. These results indicate that the improvement in students' translation scores after the intervention was statistically significant.

Table 3. Paired-Samples T-Test Result

Statistic	Value
Pair	Post-Test - Pre-Test
Mean Difference	25.25
Standard Deviation of Difference	6.38
Standard Error of Difference	1.43
95% Confidence Interval	22.26-28.24
t	17.695
df	19
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

The effect size, measured using Cohen's d_z , was 3.96, which indicates a very large effect. This means that the instructional intervention had a strong practical impact on students' idiom translation quality. The result suggests that the improvement was not merely statistically significant, but also educationally meaningful. If the paired-samples t-test is reported in the reverse direction as Pre-Test - Post-Test, the mean difference becomes -25.25 and the t-value becomes -17.695. However, the interpretation remains the same: there is a statistically significant improvement from pre-test to post-test.

Interpretation of Translation Quality Improvement

The improvement in students' scores reflects a better ability to transfer idiomatic meaning from English into Indonesian. In the pre-test, students were likely influenced by literal translation because they had limited familiarity with idiomatic expressions. Literal translation often results in inaccurate or unnatural Indonesian expressions because the meaning of an idiom is not always equivalent to the meanings of its individual words. After the intervention, students showed stronger performance in translating idioms. The post-test scores indicate that students became more capable of recognizing the intended meaning of idiomatic expressions, choosing appropriate Indonesian equivalents, and producing translations that were easier to understand. This improvement suggests that contextualized instruction helped students move beyond word-for-word translation and focus more on meaning, context, and naturalness.

The improvement also demonstrates the pedagogical value of translation activities in primary school English learning. Translation tasks encourage students to compare meanings across languages, recognize figurative expressions, and develop sensitivity to cultural differences. In this study, idiom translation functioned not only as an assessment tool but also as a learning activity that strengthened students' vocabulary mastery and semantic awareness.

The findings of this study support the view that idioms require explicit and contextualized instruction. Since idioms are figurative and culturally embedded, students cannot rely solely on literal vocabulary knowledge. They need examples, contextual clues, teacher guidance, and repeated practice to understand how idioms function in communication. The instructional module used in this study provided such support and helped students develop more accurate and natural translation skills.

The increase from a pre-test mean score of 63.75 to a post-test mean score of 89.00 shows that primary school students are capable of learning idiomatic expressions when the material is presented in an accessible and meaningful way. The use of visual support, contextual sentences, guided discussion, and translation practice appears to have helped students understand idioms as complete units of meaning rather than separate words.

The findings are consistent with the translation quality assessment perspective, which emphasizes accuracy, acceptability, and readability as important dimensions of translation. A good idiom translation

must convey the intended meaning correctly, sound natural in Indonesian, and be easy for readers to understand. The students' post-test performance suggests improvement across these dimensions, although the available data were analyzed as total scores rather than separate parameter scores.

The large effect size further indicates that contextualized idiom instruction produced a strong learning effect. Importantly, the improvement occurred across the whole class, not only among students who already had high initial scores. This suggests that idiom instruction can be beneficial for students with different levels of English proficiency, provided that the instruction is designed according to young learners' cognitive and linguistic development.

Despite these positive results, the study has limitations. The research used a one-group pre-test and post-test design without a control group. Therefore, although the findings show a significant improvement after the intervention, they should not be interpreted as definitive causal evidence. Future research may include a control group, involve a larger number of participants, and analyze accuracy, acceptability, and readability separately to obtain a more detailed understanding of students' idiom translation development.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the quality of English idiom translation into Indonesian among fifth-grade students at SDN 101901 Lubuk Pakam and measured the improvement of students' translation performance after contextualized idiom instruction. The findings show that students' mean score increased from 63.75 in the pre-test to 89.00 in the post-test, with an average gain of 25.25 points. The students' performance shifted from mostly sufficient, poor, and good categories in the pre-test to entirely good and very good categories in the post-test.

The paired-samples t-test confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant, $t(19) = 17.695$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was very large, indicating that the intervention had a strong practical impact on students' translation quality. These findings demonstrate that contextualized instruction can effectively improve primary school students' ability to translate English idioms into Indonesian accurately, acceptably, and readably. The study concludes that English idiom instruction should be integrated systematically into primary school English learning. Teaching idioms through context, visual support, guided examples, and translation practice can help students understand figurative meaning more accurately and produce more natural translations. English teachers are encouraged to use idiom-based translation activities to strengthen students' vocabulary mastery, translation competence, and cross-cultural language awareness.

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