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Beyond the literal: Challenges and strategies in translating idiomatic expressions from popular English songs into Indonesian

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Abstract - The translation of song lyrics involves not only linguistic conversion but also the preservation of cultural nuances, emotional resonance, and figurative meanings. This study explores the complexities of translating English idiomatic expressions into Indonesian, focusing on how literal translations fail to convey the source text's true essence. Employing a qualitative research design with a document study method, this research analyses the complete lyrics of Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off" and Katy Perry's "Wide Awake." The idioms embedded within these tracks were systematically identified and evaluated against potential literal translations to demonstrate their semantic inadequacy. The findings reveal that literal translations distort the songwriters' underlying messages, causing syntactic awkwardness and pragmatic loss. Consequently, alternative translation strategies, such as paraphrasing and idiomatic equivalence, are required to ensure naturalness and accuracy in the target language. This study highlights the imperative role of cultural awareness and functional equivalence in song translation, proving that a word-for-word approach diminishes the artistic and communicative value of musical texts.

Keywords: idiom translation, song lyrics, qualitative analysis, cultural equivalence, literal translation failure

1. Introduction

Song lyrics constitute a distinctive form of verbal art because they combine linguistic, poetic, emotional, and musical dimensions to communicate ideas and experiences. Unlike ordinary expository texts, lyrics frequently employ metaphorical language, fixed expressions, phrasal verbs, cultural references, repetition, and other forms of figurative expression. These features create particular difficulties for translation because the translator must transfer not only lexical meaning but also the intended message and communicative effect of the source text. The difficulty becomes especially evident in the translation of idiomatic expressions, whose meanings cannot always be derived from the individual meanings of their constituent words. Consequently, translating an idiom requires attention to context, conventional usage, and the relationship between linguistic meaning and cultural interpretation (Baker, 2018).

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The problem is particularly relevant in English–Indonesian translation because equivalent idiomatic expressions do not necessarily exist across the two languages. A literal rendering may preserve the lexical components of an English expression while failing to communicate its intended meaning naturally in Indonesian. Previous research has demonstrated that idiom translation commonly requires strategies such as using an idiom with similar meaning and form, using an idiom with similar meaning but different form, paraphrasing the expression, or omitting part of the expression when no satisfactory equivalent is available (Baker, 2018). Empirical studies of English–Indonesian translation have similarly found that paraphrase is frequently employed because an equivalent idiom may not be available in the target language (Fitri et al., 2019; Krisandini & Sutrisno, 2021). Research on English idiom translation in Indonesian also indicates that contextual interpretation is an important factor in achieving better translation results, demonstrating that idioms cannot be treated simply as combinations of individual lexical items (Budiawan, 2020).

Song translation presents an additional layer of complexity because lyrics operate simultaneously as linguistic and artistic texts. A translation may therefore need to preserve semantic meaning while maintaining naturalness, emotional force, and the communicative function of the original expression. Recent studies of English–Indonesian song translation have examined translation shifts and equivalence in Taylor Swift's lyrics, demonstrating that changes in linguistic form frequently occur when English lyrics are rendered into Indonesian (Sri et al., 2025). Research on song lyrics more generally has also shown that translation choices are influenced by the communicative purpose and characteristics of the target text. In audiovisual contexts, for example, translators may prioritize readability, comprehensibility, and cultural appropriateness rather than reproduce the source text word for word (Awaloedin, 2026). These findings support the view that translation of musical texts should be approached as a context-dependent process rather than as direct lexical substitution.

The theoretical framework of the present study is primarily based on Baker's theory of idiom translation strategies. Baker identifies several possible strategies for translating idioms, including using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, and translation by omission. These strategies provide a systematic framework for examining how idiomatic meaning is transferred between languages when formal correspondence is unavailable or inappropriate (Baker, 2018). The applicability of Baker's framework to English–Indonesian idiom translation has been demonstrated in previous studies. For example, Fitri et al. (2019) found five strategies in their analysis, with paraphrase being the most frequently used strategy, while Krisandini and Sutrisno (2021) similarly reported paraphrase as the dominant strategy in the Indonesian translation of idioms in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. More recent research has continued to employ Baker's framework in analyses of idiomatic expressions in literary and audiovisual texts (Mendi et al., 2025; Nurmalia et al., 2024).

In addition to Baker's framework, the study adopts the concept of equivalence to evaluate whether the Indonesian rendering successfully communicates the intended meaning of the English expression. Nida's distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence is particularly relevant because an idiomatic translation may need to depart substantially from the grammatical or lexical form of the source expression while retaining its communicative effect (Nida, 1964). Previous English–Indonesian research has applied Baker's idiom-translation strategies together with Nida's equivalence framework and demonstrated that idiomatic translations can achieve dynamic equivalence even when their formal structures differ from those of the source expressions (Suryawan & Winaya, 2018). Thus, the present study views successful idiom translation not as the preservation of individual words but as the achievement of an appropriate relationship between source meaning and target-language expression.

The relevance of this issue is particularly apparent in contemporary popular music. Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off" (2014) and Katy Perry's "Wide Awake" (2012) provide suitable materials for examining the translation of figurative and idiomatic expressions because both

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songs communicate personal experiences through highly expressive language. "Shake It Off" presents themes of resilience and responding to criticism, whereas "Wide Awake" reflects realization, disillusionment, and overcoming a deceptive or painful experience. These thematic dimensions provide contextual environments in which expressions may carry meanings that cannot be adequately interpreted through literal lexical equivalence. Moreover, Taylor Swift's lyrics have already been examined in English–Indonesian translation research, including a study that specifically included "Shake It Off" among its data and investigated translation shifts and equivalence (Sri et al., 2025). However, that study focused on translation shifts rather than specifically examining the challenges and strategies involved in translating idiomatic expressions.

Previous studies have examined English–Indonesian idiom translation from different perspectives, particularly translation strategies, equivalence, accuracy, challenges, and translation techniques. Research on students' translation practices shows that learners commonly encounter difficulties in identifying idiomatic meanings and selecting appropriate Indonesian equivalents, especially when literal translation produces unnatural or inaccurate meanings (Ariyani et al., 2021). Similar findings indicate that students face challenges in transferring idiomatic expressions because idioms are strongly influenced by linguistic and cultural contexts (Mulyani & Ardiansyah, 2021; Ngongo et al., 2024). Studies focusing on equivalence further demonstrate that successful idiom translation requires consideration of meaning rather than word-for-word correspondence (Sari et al., 2021; Krisandini & Sutrisno, 2021).

Research on literary and audiovisual texts also emphasizes the importance of translation strategies and methods. Studies of *Harry Potter*, *Paper Towns*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *The Joker*, *Soul*, and *Up* reveal that translators frequently employ strategies such as using idiomatic equivalents, paraphrasing, literal translation, omission, and other adaptation techniques depending on the context (Azad & Kazemi, 2025; Krisandini & Sutrisno, 2022; Budiawan, 2020; Pratiwi & Lubis, 2021; Stephanie & Hadi, 2024; Nuraini & Sayogie, 2024; Nurmalia et al., 2024; Fitria & Djauhari, 2025). These studies suggest that preserving the intended meaning and naturalness of the target language is generally more important than maintaining the surface structure of the source expression (Fitria & Djauhari, 2025).

Song lyrics have received increasing attention because idiomatic expressions in songs are closely connected with emotion, culture, metaphor, rhythm, and artistic expression. Research on English and Indonesian song lyrics demonstrates that translators may need to employ various methods and techniques to maintain both semantic meaning and stylistic effects (Admiati & Hartono, 2019; Halimah & Nuryanti, 2023; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2025). Studies of Taylor Swift's songs specifically have examined idiomatic translation and translation shifts, showing that song translation involves changes in linguistic form while attempting to preserve the intended message (Badri & Juleha, 2026; Sri et al., 2025). Similar research on Adele, Nicole Zefanya, and other song lyrics confirms that contextual interpretation is essential when translating figurative and idiomatic expressions (Amir, 2025; Joylasheva & Dewi, 2025).

More recent research has extended the discussion to phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions, and translation loss and gain. Such studies indicate that translation is not merely a linguistic substitution process but also involves negotiating cultural meaning and communicative effect (Matuate, 2025; Raharjo & Tarigan, 2025; Mendi et al., 2025). The literature therefore establishes that idiom translation requires contextual analysis, appropriate strategy selection, and attention to semantic equivalence and target-language naturalness (Razi & Retnomurti, 2023; Floranti & Mubarok, 2020). However, despite the growing number of studies on idiom translation in films, novels, and songs, there remains room for further analysis of how specific idiomatic expressions in contemporary popular songs are rendered into Indonesian, particularly when literal translation fails to convey the intended contextual meaning (Badri & Juleha, 2026; Sri et al., 2025).

This distinction reveals an important research gap. Existing studies have extensively investigated English–Indonesian idiom translation in novels, films, subtitles, and selected song lyrics, with considerable attention given to translation strategies, equivalence, accuracy, and

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translation shifts (Fitri et al., 2019; Krisandini & Sutrisno, 2021; Nuraini & Sayogie, 2024; Nurmalia et al., 2024). Studies of song lyrics have also examined translation shifts, techniques, and idiomatic expressions in the works of Taylor Swift and other contemporary musicians (Badri & Juleha, 2026; Sri et al., 2025). Nevertheless, relatively limited attention has been given to a comparative analysis of idiomatic expressions in two contemporary English-language popular songs by different artists, particularly one that explicitly contrasts literal Indonesian renderings with contextually appropriate translations. The present study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on how idiomatic expressions in "Shake It Off" and "Wide Awake" are interpreted and transferred into Indonesian. Rather than assuming that literal translation is always unsuccessful, the study investigates when literal translation can or cannot preserve the intended meaning and what alternative strategies provide more appropriate target-language equivalents.

Accordingly, this study addresses three research problems. First, what idiomatic expressions are identified in Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off" and Katy Perry's "Wide Awake"? Second, what challenges arise when these expressions are translated literally from English into Indonesian? Third, what translation strategies and contextually appropriate equivalents can be used to convey the intended meanings of the identified expressions in Indonesian?

Based on these problems, the study has three corresponding objectives: (1) to identify and classify idiomatic expressions occurring in the selected songs; (2) to analyze the semantic and contextual problems that emerge when the expressions are translated literally into Indonesian; and (3) to examine the translation strategies used to produce contextually appropriate Indonesian equivalents. By combining idiom-translation strategies with an equivalence-oriented perspective, the study seeks to demonstrate that effective translation of popular song lyrics depends on contextual interpretation and functional meaning rather than mechanical word-for-word substitution. The study is expected to contribute to research on English–Indonesian translation, particularly the translation of idiomatic and figurative expressions in contemporary popular music, while also providing practical insights for students, translators, and researchers working with culturally embedded language.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach with a document analysis design. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focuses on identifying, interpreting, and comparing the meanings of idiomatic expressions and their possible Indonesian equivalents rather than measuring translation phenomena statistically. Document analysis enables researchers to systematically examine written and recorded textual materials and interpret their linguistic and contextual features (Bowen, 2009).

The data consisted of idiomatic expressions identified in two selected English-language popular songs: Taylor Swift's *Shake It Off* (2014) and Katy Perry's *Wide Awake* (2012). The songs were purposively selected because they contain expressions that require contextual interpretation and provide relevant examples for examining the difficulties associated with translating figurative language from English into Indonesian. The songs themselves served as the primary textual sources, while relevant published or authorized Indonesian translations, where available, were consulted for comparison. Only the specific expressions selected for analysis were reproduced in the research tables; the complete song lyrics were not reproduced.

The analysis was guided primarily by Baker's (2018) framework of idiom-translation strategies, particularly the strategies of (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. The analysis was also informed by Nida's (1964) concept of equivalence, particularly the distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence, to assess whether the proposed Indonesian renderings communicate the intended meaning of the source expressions.

2.2 Data Collection

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The data were collected through systematic document analysis. The collection process consisted of four stages.

First, the researchers selected *Shake It Off* and *Wide Awake* as the textual sources and obtained their lyrics from reliable and legally accessible sources. The researchers then read the lyrics repeatedly to establish an understanding of the linguistic and thematic contexts in which potentially idiomatic expressions occurred.

Second, potentially idiomatic expressions were identified through close reading. An expression was considered for inclusion when its intended meaning could not be adequately determined from the literal meanings of its individual lexical components or when its interpretation depended substantially on conventional, figurative, or contextual meaning. Expressions that were merely metaphorical or creative but did not function as conventional idiomatic expressions were distinguished from idioms and were not automatically included in the dataset.

Third, each identified expression was recorded in a data sheet containing the source expression, its surrounding context, a literal Indonesian rendering, a contextually appropriate Indonesian equivalent, and relevant observations concerning its meaning. The contextual information was retained to prevent the expressions from being interpreted in isolation.

Fourth, the identified expressions were cross-checked against established definitions and descriptions of idioms in translation studies. Where an Indonesian translation was available from a reliable or authorized source, it was recorded for comparison. When no suitable published Indonesian equivalent was available, a contextual translation was proposed based on the intended meaning of the source expression and the conventions of natural Indonesian usage.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed qualitatively through comparative and interpretive procedures. The analysis consisted of five stages.

First, the identified expressions were examined in their original lyrical contexts to determine their intended meanings. Particular attention was given to the surrounding words, thematic context, speaker perspective, and communicative function of each expression.

Second, each expression was translated literally into Indonesian on a word-for-word basis. This literal rendering was not treated as the final translation but as a comparison point for demonstrating differences between lexical form and contextual meaning.

Third, a contextually appropriate Indonesian rendering was developed for each expression. The literal and contextual translations were then compared to determine whether the literal version preserved the intended semantic and pragmatic meaning of the source expression.

Fourth, the translation strategies reflected in the contextual renderings were classified according to Baker's (2018) taxonomy. The analysis determined whether each expression was translated through an idiom with similar meaning and form, an idiom with similar meaning but different form, paraphrase, or omission. Where necessary, the analysis also considered whether a strategy involved adaptation to Indonesian linguistic and cultural conventions.

Fifth, the researchers interpreted the differences between the literal and contextual translations in terms of semantic meaning, syntactic form, pragmatic function, and target-language naturalness. Nida's (1964) concept of formal and dynamic equivalence was used to determine whether a translation prioritized formal correspondence or the communicative effect of the source expression. The analysis therefore did not assume that literal translation is inherently incorrect; rather, it examined the specific cases in which literal translation failed to convey the intended meaning and identified the strategies that provided more appropriate Indonesian equivalents.

The findings were subsequently presented descriptively in tables containing the source idiom, literal Indonesian rendering, contextual or idiomatic equivalent, translation strategy, and explanation of the semantic or pragmatic differences. The interpretation of each expression was based on its textual context and supported by the selected theoretical framework.

2.4 Trustworthiness of the Data Analysis

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To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the researchers applied systematic identification and classification procedures. Each potential idiomatic expression was examined in its immediate lyrical context before being included in the dataset. The classification of translation strategies was subsequently checked against the operational definitions provided by Baker (2018), while the assessment of equivalence was informed by Nida's (1964) framework. In addition, the distinction between idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions was made cautiously to avoid treating every figurative or metaphorical phrase as an idiom. These procedures were intended to ensure consistency between the research questions, data selection, theoretical framework, and interpretation of the findings.

The methodological procedure enabled the study to move beyond a simple comparison of English words and Indonesian words. Instead, it examined how idiomatic meaning is constructed in context and how that meaning can be transferred into Indonesian through appropriate translation strategies.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The primary data gathered consists of the absolute full lyrics of both songs. Idiomatic expressions embedded within the text are highlighted in bold and indexed with numbers (e.g., [Idiom N]) for subsequent analysis in the discussion section.

Table 1: Translation Contrast for Shake It Off - Taylor Swift“

Index	Source Idiom	Literal Translation (Indonesian)	Contextual / Idiomatic Equivalent	Semantic Analysis / Failure of Literal Translation
Idiom 1	Got nothing in my brain	Tidak punya apa-apa di otak saya	Otak kosong / bodoh / tidak berpikir	Literally suggests physical emptiness inside the skull, missing the figurative reference to being mindless or simple-minded
Idiom 2	Cruising	Berlayar / Menjelajah	Melaju terus / Santai menjalani hidup	Berlayar“ spunds restricted to maritime contexts, whereas Taylor Swift uses it to mean moving along smoothly and effortlessly
Idiom 3	Players gonna play	Pemain akan bemain	Buaya darat akan terus beraksi	A literal translation sounds like sports terminology. Contextually, “players“ refers to deceitful people or womanizers.
Idiom 4	Haters gonna hate	Pembenci akan membenci	Prencela akan selalu mencela	Grammatically acceptable literally, but it loses the rhythmic colloquial force; “pencela“ fits the ongoing nature of toxic critics.
Idiom 5	Shake it off	Mengocoknya lepas	Mengabaikan-nya	“Mengocoknya lepas“ makes no linguistic sense in Indonesian. The expression means to dismiss or rid oneself of negative energy.
Idiom 6	Heartbreakers gonna break	Penghancur hati akan hancur	Penyakit hati akan terus menyakiti	Literal translation misses the object; it implies the heartbreakers themselves break, rather than them breaking others' hearts.

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Idiom 7	Fakers gonna fake	Pemalsu akan memalsukan	Orang munafik akan terus berpura-pura	"Pemalsu" typically links to counterfeit goods. Contextually, it implies insincere people, making "munafik" more accurate.
Idiom 8	Never miss a beat	Tidak pernah melewatkan ketukan	Selalu sigap / Tidak pernah lengah	The literal phrase points strictly to musical timing, whereas it figuratively indicates being highly alert, sharp, and focused.
Idiom 9	Lightning on my feet	Petir di kaki saya	Lincah sekali	"Petir di kaki" creates an absurd visual image of electrocution, obscuring the idiom's true meaning of agility and speed.
Idiom 10	Getting down and out	Turun dan keluar	Terpuruk / Putus Asa	Translating these prepositions literally yields a spatial direction that completely obscures the emotional state of depression.
Idiom 11	Sick beat	Irama sakit	Irama yang keren	"Irama sakit" implies a defective or morbid musical track, failing to translate the slang meaning where "sick" denotes excellence.

Table 2: Translation Contrast for "Wide Awake"

Index	**Source Idiom**	**Literal Translation (Indonesian)**	**Contextual / Idiomatic Equivalent**	**Semantic Analysis / Failure of Literal Translation**
Idiom 12	Wide Awake	Terjaga lebar	Sudah sadar sepenuhnya	"Terjaga lebar" sounds like an unnatural physical description of eyes. Katy Perry refers to a state of mental awakening
Idiom 13	In the dark	Di dalam gelap	Buta situasi (Tidak tahu apa-apa)	"Di dalam gelap" implies a physical lack of light, missing the cognitive state of being uninformed or deceived.
Idiom 14	Read the stars	Membaca bintang-bintang	Meramal nasib	Literal translation turns a metaphorical tool for destiny and evaluation into the physical act of looking at astronomical objects.
Idiom 15	Dive in	Menyelam ke dalam	Terburu-buru bertindak	"Menyelam" implies entering water. Figuratively, it denotes committing to a relationship or situation too quickly without caution.
Idiom 16	Bow down	Membungkuk ke bawah	Tunduk/Menyerah	Translating both words literally creates redundancy ("membungkuk ke bawah"). The structural intent is an act of total submission.
Idiom 17	Woke up on the concrete	Terbangun di atas beton	Tersadar oleh	A literal translation sounds like someone slept on a sidewalk, losing the

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			kenyataan pahit	dramatic impact of hitting rock bottom in reality.
Idiom 18	Cloud nine	Awan sembilan	Kebahagiaan luar biasa	"Awan sembilan" exists as a dead metaphor in Indonesian with no cultural meaning. The target equivalent must capture intense euphoria.
Idiom 19	Crashing from the high	Menabrak dari ketinggian	Tersadar dari euforia semu	"Menabrak dari ketinggian" implies a physical aviation accident instead of the psychological comedown from an emotional high.
Idiom 20	Not losing any sleep	Tidak kehilangan tidur apapun	Tidak ambil pusing	The literal text creates awkward phrasing. The idiom means the speaker is unbothered and does not worry about the ex-partner.
Idiom 21	Landed on my feet	Mendarat di kaki saya	Bangkit kembali	Fails literally because humans naturally land on feet; it loses the idiomatic nuance of surviving a crisis successfully like a cat.
Idiom 22	Out of the lion's den	Keluar dari sarang singa	Lolos dari bahaya besar	"Sarang singa" works somewhat metaphorically but translating it literally misses the biblical and historical idiom of escaping doom.
Idiom 23	Out of the blue	Keluar dari biru	Tanpa diduga	The absolute failure of literalism; "keluar dari biru" is gibberish. The phrase relates to a clear blue sky producing sudden lightning.
Idiom 24	Seeing the bright side	Melihat sisi terang	Mengambil hikmahnya	While "sisi terang" is understood via loan-translation, "mengambil hikmah" or "optimis" yields higher naturalness in target text prose.

3.1.1 Analysis of Idioms in Shake It Off"

Taylor Swift uses casual American idioms to portray a narrative of ignoring malicious gossip. Table 1 outlines the direct contrast between a failed word-for-word translation and the functional target language meaning.

Idiom 1: "Got nothing in my brain", is literally translated into *"Tidak punya apa-apa"* and the contextual or idiomatic equivalent in Indonesian is "*Otak kosong*, *bodoh*, *tidak berpikir*". A literal translation focuses on the physical meaning of *brain* as an anatomical organ and *nothing* as the absence of material content, resulting in an unnatural interpretation in Indonesian.

In the original context, however, the expression is metaphorical rather than literal. It conveys the speaker's self-deprecating claim of lacking intelligence, common sense, or meaningful thoughts, rather than implying that the brain is physically empty. The idiom relies on the conceptual metaphor that the brain represents intellect and cognitive ability. Consequently, translating it word-for-word fails to preserve its pragmatic meaning, emotional nuance, and figurative force. A contextual rendering such as *otak kosong*, *tidak berpikir*, or *bodoh* more accurately communicates the intended meaning to Indonesian readers while maintaining the expressive function of the original idiom.

3.1.2 Analysis of Idioms in "Wide Awake"

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Katy Perry's ballad uses idioms focused on illusions, dreams, and sudden reality shifts. Table 2 contrasts the literal breakdowns against coherent alternatives. The table 2 presents a contrastive analysis of English idiomatic expressions and their Indonesian translations, particularly focusing on the difference between literal translation and contextual/idiomatic equivalence. Overall, the data demonstrate that literal translation frequently fails when the semantic meaning of an expression cannot be derived directly from the meanings of its individual words.

Table 2 contains 13 expressions (Idioms 12–24). The analysis shows several recurring patterns of translation difficulty. First, the dominant problem is semantic non-equivalence between literal and figurative meanings. Expressions such as *wide awake*, *in the dark*, *dive in*, *cloud nine*, and *out of the blue* cannot be translated successfully by simply reproducing their lexical components. For example, *wide awake* literally becomes *terjaga lebar*, which is unnatural in Indonesian because *wide* does not function as a natural intensifier of *awake* in Indonesian. The intended meaning is a condition of being fully conscious or completely alert, represented in the table by *sudah sadar sepenuhnya*. Similarly, *cloud nine* translated as *awan sembilan* does not communicate the idiomatic meaning of extreme happiness. The contextual equivalent *kebahagiaan luar biasa* therefore prioritizes semantic meaning over lexical correspondence.

Second, several expressions involve conceptual metaphors that differ between English and Indonesian. *Read the stars* illustrates how a metaphorical expression can be interpreted incorrectly when translated word-for-word. *Membaca bintang-bintang* describes the physical activity of looking at stars, whereas the contextual interpretation *meramal nasib* captures the expression's association with predicting destiny. Likewise, *landed on my feet* does not primarily refer to the physical act of landing. Its idiomatic meaning concerns successfully recovering from a difficult situation, reflected by *bangkit kembali*. This demonstrates that idiomatic translation requires interpretation of the conceptual function of the expression, not merely its lexical form.

Third, the data reveal differences in the degree of literal-translation failure. Some literal translations remain understandable but fail to convey the intended meaning, whereas others become distinctly unnatural or semantically nonsensical. *Di dalam gelap* for *in the dark*, for instance, is grammatically meaningful in Indonesian, but it can suggest a physical absence of light rather than the figurative condition of being uninformed. In contrast, *keluar dari biru* for *out of the blue* is highly problematic because the resulting phrase has no comparable idiomatic meaning in Indonesian. The table therefore illustrates a continuum ranging from partial semantic loss to complete idiomatic failure.

Fourth, contextual translation generally produces greater naturalness and communicative effectiveness. Expressions such as *not losing any sleep* → *tidak ambil pusing* and *bow down* → *tunduk/menyerah* show that the most appropriate translation is often not structurally equivalent to the source expression. *Not losing any sleep* is not concerned literally with sleep; rather, it communicates that the speaker is not worried or emotionally affected. Consequently, *tidak ambil pusing* more effectively reproduces the pragmatic meaning. Similarly, *bow down* carries the idea of submission, making *tunduk* or *menyerah* more appropriate than the redundant literal form *membungkuk ke bawah*.

Table 3: Classification of the Translation Problems
The 13 items can also be grouped according to the principal type of difficulty

Type of Problem	Examples	Main Translation Issue
Figurative meaning	*wide awake, cloud nine, not losing any sleep*	Literal meaning does not represent the intended psychological/emotional state
Conceptual metaphor	*read the stars, landed on my feet, seeing the bright side*	Source-language metaphor requires reinterpretation in Indonesian
Cultural/idiomatic meaning	*out of the lion's den, out of the blue*	Cultural or conventional associations are not preserved literally
Structural/lexical mismatch	*bow down, dive in*	Word-for-word translation produces awkward or misleading expressions

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Pragmatic/contextual meaning	*in the dark, crashing from the high*	Meaning depends strongly on the situation in which the expression occurs

There is, however, one issue that should be reconsidered in the table: the classification of some expressions as "idioms." Not every item necessarily functions as a fixed idiom in the strict linguistic sense. For example, *wide awake*, *dive in*, *bow down*, and *seeing the bright side* may be better described as idiomatic or figurative expressions, depending on the theoretical framework adopted. If the study uses a broad definition of idiom that includes figurative and conventionalized expressions, this should be explicitly stated in the methodology.

There is also a potential issue with "crashing from the high." The more conventional English expression is generally "coming/crashing down from a high" or "coming down from an emotional high." If the source text/song actually contains *crashing from the high*, the analysis should retain the original wording but explain its contextual meaning carefully.

The table provides strong evidence that literal translation is insufficient for transferring idiomatic meaning from English into Indonesian. The central translation strategy emerging from the data is meaning-based or contextual equivalence, in which the translator prioritizes the communicative, emotional, metaphorical, and pragmatic meaning of the source expression rather than its surface lexical structure.

In particular, the contrast between *terjaga lebar → sudah sadar sepenuhnya*, *awan sembilan → kebahagiaan luar biasa*, *keluar dari biru → tanpa diduga*, and *tidak kehilangan tidur apapun → tidak ambil pusing* demonstrates that semantic equivalence and naturalness are more important than formal correspondence when translating idiomatic expressions. The findings therefore support the argument that successful English–Indonesian idiom translation requires contextual interpretation, cultural awareness, and the selection of functionally equivalent target-language expressions rather than word-for-word substitution.

3.1.3 The Failure of Literal Translation in Musical Texts

The comparison tables demonstrate a recurring trend: literal translation destroys the conceptual bridge between languages. In song lyrics, this destruction manifests in three primary dimensions:

1. Semantic Distortion and Absurdity: Phrases like "out of the blue" turns into "keluar dari biru" or "sick beat" becoming "irama sakit" produce absolute nonsense in Indonesian. The target reader is forced to decipher lexical combinations that do not conform to any logical Indonesian mental schema.

2. Loss of Pragmatic Force: An idiom like "shake it off" is meant to empower the listener. When translated word-for-word as "mengocoknya lepas," the emotional strength transitions into physical confusion. The command loses its pragmatic power to inspire resilience.

3. Destruction of Aesthetic Harmony: Songs rely heavily on flow and cultural relevance. By dragging the foreign idiom literally into Indonesian, the text feels disjointed, awkward, and distinctly non-native.

To preserve the utility of pop music across languages, translators must reject word-for-word replication and employ strategies such as paraphrasing (translating the core meaning without an idiomatic structure) or idiomatic substitution (finding an existing Indonesian idiom that carries the exact same weight).

3.2 Discussion

This section evaluates the selected phrases, demonstrating the semantic dissonance created by literal translation and proposing target language alternatives through translation strategies such as dynamic equivalence and paraphrasing.

The two tables provide a useful contrastive analysis of 24 English expressions translated into Indonesian. Taken together, they demonstrate that literal equivalence is often inadequate for translating idiomatic, metaphorical, colloquial, and slang expressions, particularly when meaning is strongly dependent on context and cultural convention. However, a critical

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examination also shows that several entries need conceptual and methodological refinement before the tables can support a strong academic argument.

Tables 1 and 2 reveal a consistent tension between formal equivalence and semantic/pragmatic equivalence. Table 1, based on *Shake It Off*, contains expressions such as *shake it off*, *players gonna play*, *fakers gonna fake*, and *sick beat*, while Table 2 includes expressions such as *cloud nine*, *out of the blue*, *landed on my feet*, and *not losing any sleep*. In both tables, the literal Indonesian versions frequently reproduce the lexical components of the English expressions but fail to reproduce their intended meanings. This pattern indicates that the major challenge in English–Indonesian idiom translation is not lexical substitution but interpretation of meaning within context.

A particularly clear example is "shake it off." Its literal rendering, *mengocoknya lepas*, is semantically inappropriate because the English verb *shake* and particle *off* together form a phrasal expression whose meaning cannot be predicted by adding the meanings of the two words. In the song, the expression refers to dismissing, releasing, or refusing to be emotionally affected by criticism and negativity. Therefore, an Indonesian rendering such as *mengabaikannya*, *biarkan saja*, or *menyingkirkan semua itu* would be more communicatively appropriate depending on the surrounding context. The contrast demonstrates that phrasal and idiomatic constructions require compositional analysis at the level of the whole expression rather than individual lexical units.

A similar problem occurs with "players gonna play," "fakers gonna fake," and "haters gonna hate." The literal translations—*pemain akan bermain*, *pemalsu akan memalsukan*, and *pembenci akan membenci*—are grammatically interpretable but do not necessarily reproduce the social meanings of the expressions. In particular, *players* in the context of popular music does not necessarily denote sports players. It may refer to people who habitually engage in romantic manipulation or unserious relationships. Likewise, *fakers* refers to people who are insincere or pretend to be something they are not, rather than manufacturers of counterfeit products. These examples demonstrate the importance of contextual polysemy, in which a lexical item acquires a particular meaning from its discourse environment.

The repeated structure "X gonna X" is also significant. It is not merely an idiomatic expression but a form of colloquial, rhythmic, and highly compressed language. Consequently, translating *haters gonna hate* as *pembenci akan membenci* preserves the propositional meaning but loses some of its rhetorical force, informality, repetition, and rhythm. The proposed *pencela akan selalu mencela* improves contextual interpretation but also changes the lexical meaning and rhetorical structure. This illustrates an important issue in song translation: semantic equivalence and stylistic equivalence do not always coincide. A translation may communicate the message accurately while losing repetition, rhyme, rhythm, or register.

The same issue appears in **"never miss a beat."** Its literal translation, *tidak pernah melewatkan ketukan*, is possible in a musical context, but the expression can figuratively indicate remaining alert, composed, or responsive. Thus, *selalu sigap* or *tidak pernah lengah* can communicate the intended figurative meaning. Nevertheless, the proposed contextual equivalent should be supported by the actual lyrical context because *never miss a beat* can retain a literal musical association while simultaneously functioning metaphorically. This means that the table should distinguish between **literal meaning, figurative meaning, and contextually activated meaning**, rather than automatically treating the literal interpretation as erroneous.

Another strong example is **"sick beat."** The Indonesian *irama sakit* illustrates the danger of translating slang through dictionary meanings. In contemporary informal English, *sick* can function as a positive evaluative slang term meaning exceptionally good, impressive, or exciting. Therefore, *irama yang keren* communicates the evaluative meaning much more effectively. This example demonstrates that **lexical meaning is dynamic and register-dependent**. A translator who relies only on conventional dictionary definitions may produce a grammatically possible but pragmatically inappropriate translation.

Table 2 reinforces these findings through a different set of figurative expressions. **"Wide awake"** is especially useful because its difficulty does not arise from a completely opaque idiom.

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Rather, the problem is that English uses *wide* as an intensifier, whereas Indonesian does not naturally reproduce this construction as *terjaga lebar*. The proposed *sudah sadar sepenuhnya* captures the state of complete alertness more naturally. However, *terjaga sepenuhnya* or *sangat sadar* may sometimes be closer depending on the precise context. Thus, this example illustrates **collocational and grammatical non-equivalence**, rather than simply idiomaticity.

"In the dark" provides an even more important example of contextual ambiguity. The literal *di dalam gelap* is not inherently incorrect Indonesian; it can describe a physical location without light. However, when *in the dark* means being uninformed, unaware, or deliberately excluded from information, a different equivalent is required. The proposed *buta situasi* captures the intended concept, although expressions such as *tidak tahu apa-apa*, *tidak diberi tahu*, or *tidak mengetahui situasinya* may be more natural depending on the context. Therefore, this item demonstrates that **literal translation is not necessarily wrong; it becomes inadequate only when it fails to activate the intended contextual sense**.

The expression **"read the stars"** similarly demonstrates the role of metaphor. Its literal translation *membaca bintang-bintang* describes the physical act of observing stars, whereas *meramal nasib* interprets the stars as a means of predicting destiny. The latter is more appropriate if the source context invokes astrology or divination. However, the analysis should be cautious because *read the stars* may have different metaphorical interpretations depending on the discourse. The table therefore correctly emphasizes contextual interpretation but should avoid assuming a single equivalent without textual evidence.

The strongest cases of literal failure in Table 2 are **"cloud nine"** and **"out of the blue."** *Awan sembilan* does not naturally communicate extreme happiness to Indonesian readers, while *keluar dari biru* is structurally understandable only as an unusual combination of words rather than as an Indonesian idiom. The contextual equivalents—*kebahagiaan luar biasa* and *tanpa diduga*—prioritize the communicative effect. These examples strongly support the argument that **idiom translation is fundamentally a process of meaning transfer rather than word transfer**.

Nevertheless, the analysis of *cloud nine* requires some qualification. The statement that *awan sembilan* is a "dead metaphor in Indonesian with no cultural meaning" is too categorical. A better academic formulation would be that **"awan sembilan" is not a conventional Indonesian equivalent for the English idiom and therefore does not automatically evoke the intended meaning of extreme happiness among Indonesian readers**. This distinction is important because claims about cultural meaning should be based on evidence rather than assumption.

The expression **"landed on my feet"** also illustrates cultural and metaphorical adaptation. The literal *mendarat di kaki saya* describes physical landing and does not communicate the figurative sense of successfully recovering from difficulty. *Bangkit kembali* captures the general idea of recovery. However, it may not fully express the additional implication of **emerging from a difficult situation successfully or remaining in a favorable position**. Alternatives such as *berhasil bangkit* or *berhasil keluar dari masalah* may therefore provide greater semantic precision.

Similarly, **"woke up on the concrete"** is more than a simple idiom. Its interpretation depends heavily on the narrative context. The literal *terbangun di atas beton* may evoke homelessness, hardship, or physical deprivation, while the proposed *tersadar oleh kenyataan pahit* interprets it metaphorically as a painful realization. The latter may be appropriate, but the analysis needs to establish this meaning from the surrounding lyrics rather than infer it solely from the expression. This is an important methodological point: **contextual translation should be demonstrated through textual evidence, not merely asserted by the researcher**.

Another important finding concerns **"out of the lion's den."** The table interprets it as *lolos dari bahaya besar*. This is semantically reasonable if the expression represents escape from a dangerous environment. However, the statement that its literal translation necessarily misses a "biblical and historical idiom" should be treated cautiously. The expression can evoke the biblical story of Daniel in the lions' den, but its significance depends on the particular context in which it is used. Thus, the cultural interpretation should be explicitly linked to the source text.

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Table 3 The two tables demonstrate slightly different categories of translation difficulty

Dimension	Table 1: *Shake It Off*	Table 2: *Wide Awake*
Dominant expressions	Slang, phrasal expressions, colloquial constructions	Idioms, metaphors, figurative expressions
Major problem	Lexical ambiguity and colloquial meaning	Metaphorical and cultural interpretation
Strong example	*Shake it off → mengabaikannya*	*Out of the blue → tanpa diduga*
Slang issue	*sick* = excellent	Less prominent
Structural issue	*players gonna play*	*bow down*
Cultural/metaphorical issue	*lightning on my feet*	*cloud nine, lion's den*
Main strategy	Contextual and pragmatic equivalence	Contextual and metaphorical equivalence

The comparison suggests that the translation problems become more complex as the expressions move away from literal semantic composition. Table 1 contains considerable slang and colloquial language, whereas Table 2 contains more metaphorical and culturally embedded expressions. Both nevertheless lead to the same general conclusion: literal translation cannot consistently preserve meaning, naturalness, register, and pragmatic effect simultaneously.

Despite the usefulness of the tables, several aspects should be revised to make the analysis academically stronger.

(1) Not all 24 items should automatically be labelled "idioms."

Some expressions are better categorized as phrasal verbs (*shake it off*, *dive in*), collocations (*wide awake*), slang expressions (*sick beat*), metaphors (*lightning on my feet*), proverbial/repetitive constructions (*haters gonna hate*), or conventional idioms (*cloud nine*, *out of the blue*). A more defensible umbrella term would be "idiomatic and figurative expressions."

(2) Literal translation should not always be characterized as "failure."

Some literal translations are semantically valid in another context. For instance, *di dalam gelap* can literally be correct. The issue is not literalness itself but contextual inadequacy. The analysis should therefore use categories such as *semantically inappropriate in context*, *unnatural collocation*, *loss of figurative meaning*, or *pragmatic mismatch*.

(3) Some proposed equivalents need contextual verification.

For example, *players → buaya darat* is quite interpretive. It may be appropriate if the lyric specifically refers to womanizers, but *player* can have broader meanings. Similarly, *crashing from the high → tersadar dari euforia semu* involves considerable interpretation. These choices should be justified by the surrounding lyric rather than treated as universally equivalent.

(4) The analysis should distinguish semantic equivalence from naturalness.

A translation can be semantically close but stylistically unnatural, or natural but semantically broader. For example, *bangkit kembali* is natural Indonesian, but it may not capture every semantic component of *landed on my feet*. A stronger analysis would evaluate both meaning preservation and target-language naturalness.

(5) The role of song lyrics should be explicitly acknowledged.

These are not ordinary prose expressions. Song lyrics are constrained by rhythm, rhyme, repetition, emotional intensity, metaphor, and musical performance. Therefore, an ideal translation may need to balance semantic equivalence with stylistic and pragmatic equivalence.

Taken together, Tables 1 and 2 provide convincing qualitative evidence that English–Indonesian translation of idiomatic and figurative expressions requires more than lexical or structural correspondence. The 24 examples demonstrate several forms of non-equivalence: lexical ambiguity, collocational differences, slang, metaphorical meaning, cultural references, pragmatic meaning, and structural differences. Literal translation is particularly problematic when the source expression has a conventionalized meaning that cannot be reconstructed from its individual lexical components.

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The most effective translations in the tables are those that prioritize contextual meaning and communicative function, such as *shake it off* → *mengabaikannya*, *cloud nine* → *kebahagiaan luar biasa*, *out of the blue* → *tanpa diduga*, and *not losing any sleep* → *tidak ambil pusing*. These examples illustrate a shift from word-for-word equivalence toward functional or dynamic equivalence. However, the tables would become substantially stronger if the study avoided treating every figurative expression as an "idiom," reduced categorical claims about literal-translation "failure," and provided contextual evidence for each proposed Indonesian equivalent. The central argument should therefore not be that literal translation is always wrong, but that literal translation becomes insufficient when the communicative meaning of an English expression is conventionalized, figurative, culturally embedded, or pragmatically dependent on context.

4. Conclusion

This study confirms that translating English songs with dense idiomatic expressions into Indonesian requires moving completely away from a literal approach. Through the document study of Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off" and Katy Perry's "Wide Awake," it has been demonstrated that word-for-word translation creates semantic confusion, breaks rhythmic flow, and strips the songs of their intended emotional and poetic value. Idioms are fundamentally bound to their source cultures. Therefore, successful translation demands that the translator prioritize functional and dynamic equivalence, choosing to paraphrase the meaning naturally or substitute the phrase with an existing Indonesian idiomatic equivalent. It is recommended that future translators and language learners approach musical texts with deep cultural awareness to prevent the structural and contextual erasures caused by literalist.

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Enclosure 1
Full Lyrics and Idiom Identification for Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off"

Verse 1
I stay out too late
Got nothing in my brain [Idiom 1]
That's what people say, mm-mm
That's what people say, mm-mm
I go on too many dates
But I can't make 'em stay
At least that's what people say, mm-mm
That's what people say, mm-mm

Pre-Chorus
But I keep cruising [Idiom 2]
Can't stop, won't stop moving
It's like I got this music in my mind
Saying it's gonna be alright

Chorus
'Cause the players gonna play [Idiom 3], play, play, play, play
And the haters gonna hate [Idiom 4], hate, hate, hate, hate
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off [Idiom 5], I shake it off [Idiom 5]
Heartbreakers gonna break [Idiom 6], break, break, break, break
And the fakers gonna fake [Idiom 7], fake, fake, fake, fake
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off [Idiom 5], I shake it off [Idiom 5]

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Verse 2
I never miss a beat [Idiom 8]
I'm lightning on my feet [Idiom 9]
And that's what they don't see, mm-mm
And that's what they don't see, mm-mm
I'm dancing on my own (Dancing on my own)
I make the moves up as I go (Moves up as I go)
And that's what they don't know, mm-mm
And that's what they don't know, mm-mm

Pre-Chorus
But I keep cruising [Idiom 2]
Can't stop, won't stop grooving
It's like I got this music in my mind
Saying it's gonna be alright

Chorus
'Cause the players gonna play [Idiom 3], play, play, play, play
And the haters gonna hate [Idiom 4], hate, hate, hate, hate
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off [Idiom 5], I shake it off [Idiom 5]
Heartbreakers gonna break [Idiom 6], break, break, break, break
And the fakers gonna fake [Idiom 7], fake, fake, fake, fake
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off [Idiom 5], I shake it off [Idiom 5]

Refrain
Shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off

Bridge
Hey, hey, hey!
Just think while you've been getting down and out [Idiom 10] about the liars
And the dirty, dirty cheats of the world
You could've been getting down to this sick beat [Idiom 11]
My ex-man brought his new girlfriend
She's like "Oh my God!" but I'm just gonna shake
And to the fella over there with the hella good hair
Won't you come on over, baby? We can shake, shake, shake
Yeah, oh!

Chorus
'Cause the players gonna play [Idiom 3], play, play, play, play
And the haters gonna hate [Idiom 4], hate, hate, hate, hate (haters gonna hate)
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off [Idiom 5], I shake it off [Idiom 5]
Heartbreakers gonna break [Idiom 6], break, break, break, break
And the fakers gonna fake [Idiom 7], fake, fake, fake, fake (the fakers baby)
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off [Idiom 5], I shake it off [Idiom 5]

Outro
Shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off

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Shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
Shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off (you got to)
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off
I, I, I shake it off, I shake it off

3.1.2 Full Lyrics and Idiom Identification for Katy Perry's "Wide Awake"
Intro
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]

Verse 1
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
Yeah, I was in the dark [Idiom 13]
I was falling hard with an open heart
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
How did I read the stars [Idiom 14] so wrong?
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
And now it's clear to me
That everything you see ain't always what it seems
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
Yeah, I was dreaming for so long

Pre-Chorus
I wish I knew then what I know now
Wouldn't dive in [Idiom 15], wouldn't bow down [Idiom 16]
Gravity hurts, you made it so sweet
'Til I woke up on the concrete [Idiom 17]

Chorus
Falling from cloud nine [Idiom 18]
Crashing from the high [Idiom 19]
I'm letting go tonight
Yeah, I'm falling from cloud nine [Idiom 18]

Verse 2
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
Not losing any sleep [Idiom 20]
I picked up every piece and landed on my feet [Idiom 21]
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
Need nothing to complete myself, no
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
Yeah, I am born again, out of the lion's den [Idiom 22]
I don't have to pretend
(And it's too late)
The story's over now, the end

Pre-Chorus
I wish I knew then what I know now
Wouldn't dive in [Idiom 15], wouldn't bow down [Idiom 16]
Gravity hurts, you made it so sweet
'Til I woke up on the concrete [Idiom 17]

Chorus
Falling from cloud nine [Idiom 18] (It was out of the blue [Idiom 23], I'm)

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Crashing from the high [Idiom 19]
I'm letting go tonight (Yeah, I'm letting you go, I'm)
I'm falling from cloud nine [Idiom 18]

Bridge
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
Thunder rumbling
Castles crumbling
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
I am trying to hold on
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
God knows that I tried
Seeing the bright side [Idiom 24]
(I'm wide awake [Idiom 12])
But I'm not blind anymore

Break
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]

Chorus
Yeah, I'm falling from cloud nine [Idiom 18] (It was out of the blue [Idiom 23], I'm)
Crashing from the high [Idiom 19]
You know I'm letting go tonight (Yeah, I'm letting you go, I'm)
I'm falling from cloud nine [Idiom 18]

Outro
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]
I'm wide awake [Idiom 12]

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