

## THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATING IDIOMS AND PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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*Abstract:*

This thesis examines the factors that can be highlighted especially and illustrates the difficult process of translation of idioms and phraseological units. It is worth emphasizing that these are freezing expressions whose figurative meaning does not correspond to the sum of the meanings of the single constituents. Such linguistic units function as a cry for translators. First, an idiom may not have an equivalent in the target culture, then there is the problem of translation equivalence, and finally idioms vary depending on which context they are used. The thesis focuses on the problems of translating idioms and particularly pays attention to peculiarities of their cultural conditioning, problems of lack of particular equivalents in other languages, and context usage. To cope with these issues, helpful solutions are proposed, including the use of equivalent target idioms, free translation, and so forth.

*Key words:* idioms, phraseological units, cultural differences, contextual variability, equivalents, paraphrasing, linguistic structures, cultural specificity.

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Translating idioms and phraseological units involves distinct challenges that stem largely from cultural, contextual, and linguistic differences. These challenges complicate the translation process, as idioms often encapsulate meanings deeply rooted in specific cultures. To effectively navigate these difficulties, several translation strategies can be employed which enable a translator to maintain the essence of the original expression while ensuring it resonates within the target linguistic framework.

V. N. Komissarov highlights another significant challenge in creating phraseological calques: finding a suitable form for a well-known phrase. To achieve this, it can sometimes be helpful to align the calque with an existing expression. For instance, when translating the English proverb "Rome was not built in a day," the Russian equivalent "Moscow was not built right away," which carries similar imagery, cannot be used due to its cultural specificity. Instead, a literal calque like "Rome was not built in one day" can be applied, though it may be even more effective to adapt it to the Russian saying "Rome was not built immediately." [1].

#### Understanding Idioms and Their Cultural Contexts

Idioms are expressions whose meanings cannot be deduced from the literal definitions of the individual words. For example, the English idiom "kick the bucket" means to die, which is not apparent from the words themselves. Such expressions are deeply rooted in the culture and history of a language, reflecting societal values, beliefs, and experiences. This cultural embedding makes idioms particularly challenging to translate because they often lack direct counterparts in other languages.

Translators must navigate these complexities by understanding both the source and target cultures. For instance, an idiom that resonates with English speakers may be completely foreign to speakers of Arabic or Chinese. As noted in various studies, the lack of

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familiarity with idiomatic expressions can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations during the translation process [2].

#### Difficulties in Translating Idioms

Several key difficulties arise when translating idioms:

**Cultural Differences:** One of the primary challenges in translating idioms and phraseological units is their cultural specificity. Idiomatic expressions are often steeped in the culture from which they originate, making direct translations difficult or nonsensical in the target language. For instance, an idiom like "kick the bucket," meaning to die, may confuse speakers unfamiliar with the cultural background, necessitating a translation approach that contextualizes the meaning rather than translating verbatim. Many idioms are culture-specific and may not convey the same meaning in another language. For example, the English idiom "to spill the beans" (to reveal a secret) might not have a corresponding expression in another culture that conveys the same nuance.

**Lack of Equivalents:** Some idioms do not have direct equivalents in other languages. This absence forces translators to either find a similar expression or create a paraphrase that captures the essence of the original idiom without losing its impact [3].

**Figurative versus Literal Meaning:** Translators often struggle with the figurative meanings of idiomatic expressions. A literal translation can lead to confusion or absurdity. For example, translating "it's raining cats and dogs" literally into another language would likely confuse non-native speakers who are unfamiliar with this expression. Idioms typically exhibit unique linguistic structures that do not translate easily to other languages. These stable expressions often utilize figurative language, where the literal meaning diverges from the intended significance. This disconnect can result in translations that fail to convey the original message. A thorough understanding of both the source and target languages is crucial for translators to effectively reconstruct the idiomatic meaning [4].

**Contextual Variability:** The meaning of an idiom can change based on context. A translator must have a deep understanding of both languages and their respective contexts to convey the appropriate meaning effectively. Furthermore, contextual variations pose additional challenges during translation. Idioms can undergo modifications based on situational usage, leading to unique or occasional phraseological units that may not be easily recognizable. This results in the necessity for translators to critically analyze context in order to derive appropriate translations that maintain the intended meaning of the idiom.

#### Strategies for Overcoming Translation Challenges

To overcome the translation difficulties associated with idioms, various strategies can be implemented. One effective approach is to use functional equivalents that capture the essence of the idiom within the cultural context of the target language. For example, instead of a direct translation, opting for a culturally relevant phrase that conveys a similar sentiment can ensure effective communication. Additionally, careful contextual analysis and collaboration with native speakers can provide insight into subtleties and improve translation accuracy.

To address these challenges, translators employ several strategies:

**Using Equivalent Idioms:** When possible, translators seek out idioms in the target language that convey a similar meaning and structure to those in the source language [5].

**Finding Similar Meaning Expressions:** If an equivalent idiom is unavailable, translators may use an expression that conveys a similar meaning but differs structurally.

**Paraphrasing:** In cases where neither an equivalent nor a similar expression exists, paraphrasing allows translators to express the intended meaning without relying on fixed phrases.

**Omitting Idioms:** If an idiom does not translate well or could confuse readers, it may be omitted altogether. This decision should be made carefully to maintain the integrity of the text [6].

Enhancing Cultural Knowledge: Continuous learning about both source and target cultures can help translators become more adept at recognizing and interpreting idiomatic expressions accurately.

#### The Importance of Phraseological Analysis

Studying phraseology, which encompasses idiomatic expressions among other elements, significantly aids in understanding the broader implications of culture within language. Recognizing how idiomatic expressions function within their respective cultures allows translators to derive equivalents that maintain both meaning and cultural relevance. This approach emphasizes the importance of linguocultural analysis to identify both commonalities and unique aspects of phraseology across languages.

#### Conclusion

The translation of idioms and phraseological units remains a significant hurdle in linguistic translation due to their cultural specificity and figurative nature. By employing various strategies such as finding equivalents, paraphrasing, or omitting problematic expressions, translators can navigate these challenges effectively. Ultimately, success in translating idiomatic expressions hinges on a translator's cultural awareness and linguistic expertise, enabling them to bridge gaps between languages while preserving meaning and intent.

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