

THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSLATING IDIOMS

Chirchik state pedagogical university

Gulyamova Maftunabonu Axror qizi

Scientific Supervisor: Khazratklova Ezoza Ismat kizi

Annotation: Idioms are a natural component of language, adding rich cultural context and vivid imagery to communication. These are statements whose meanings are not always connected to the words' literal meanings. To say someone "kicked the bucket" in English does not imply that they actually kicked a bucket; rather, it indicates that they passed away. These vibrant expressions frequently have profound cultural meaning, yet they pose particular difficulties when translating idioms between languages. Idioms' meanings are frequently strongly ingrained in the society from which they come, making translation one of the most difficult tasks. Translation can be challenging, if not impossible, when an idiom in one language lacks a corresponding equivalent in another. For example, many languages lack a literal translation for the English phrase "to let the cat out of the bag," which means to inadvertently divulge a secret.

Key words: idiom, challenge, translation, phrase, honor, distraction, equivalency, advancement, express, translatable, conveys.

Idioms often derive from cultural, historical, or social allusions that would not make sense in a different setting. The Spanish expression "estar en las nubes" (literally "to be in the clouds"), for instance, implies "to daydream," a culturally distinctive manner of expressing a state of distraction. Translating this into English Idioms typically resist literal translation, while some may permit a straight translation while maintaining the intended meaning. "Appeler un chat un chat" (meaning "to call a cat a cat") is a French expression that implies "to speak frankly" or "to call things as they are." Although the meaning of this phrase can be precisely translated, the literal translation loses some of its metaphorical impact in

English.

However, certain phrases are just not at all translatable. "Ich verstehe nur Bahnhof" (roughly, "I only understand train station") is a German expression that conveys the meanings of "I don't understand anything" or "I'm completely confused." For English speakers, a literal translation lacks context; hence, a more dynamic, paraphrased translation Preserving the tone and meaning of the expression is another factor that makes idiomatic translation challenging. Idioms frequently convey comedy, sarcasm, or emotional weight, all of which can be difficult to translate. For example, the English phrase "break a leg" to wish someone success can be confusing to speakers of other languages since they may take it literally and fear for the person's safety. Likewise, it might be challenging to convey the hilarious quality of certain idioms. For instance, "You snooze, you lose" is the meaning of the Italian proverb "Chi dorme non piglia pesci," which translates to "He who sleeps doesn't catch fish." This saying's hilarious and practical components would need to be conveyed by a translator, which could be difficult depending on. In many instances, a translator may decide to substitute a phrase in the target language that is culturally equivalent for an idiom. This approach is frequently called "equivalency" or "substitution." For instance, the French phrase "un tiens vaut mieux que deux tu l'auras" (literally, "a bird in the hand is worth more than two you'll catch") could be used in place of the English saying "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Both phrases have the same meaning and are understandable in their respective cultural contexts. Finding an equivalent, however, is not always simple, particularly when working with idioms that are less widely used or lack a translation in the target language. Idioms can vary significantly even within a single language depending on the speaker's age group, dialect, and geographic location. For instance, someone who speaks American or Australian English might not be familiar with an idiom that is prevalent in British English. Languages like Spanish, which has many regional variations throughout Spain and Latin America, are comparable. The difficulty in translating idioms between dialects is to maintain the intended meaning while also honoring the expression's regional flavor. To ensure that the idiom appeals to the intended audience, a translator may

need to modify it to fit the local dialect. Idioms continue to be one of the most challenging areas for machine translation technologies, despite the fact that advancements like Google Translate and AI-driven language models have made translation quicker and easier. Even though AI has gotten better at understanding common language, idiomatic expressions frequently call for more complex comprehension, context, and cultural awareness—all of which AI systems still find difficult to provide. When it comes to idiomatic expressions, machine translation tools often rely too much on literal translations, which can lead to problems. Because they can understand the context and account for cultural quirks, human translators are still crucial for accurately translating idioms. Idiom translation is difficult because it requires striking a careful balance between maintaining tone, meaning, and cultural context. Idioms often carry humor, sarcasm, or irony, all of which are difficult to translate. The challenge of translating idiomatic humor is particularly tricky because humor relies heavily on shared cultural references, wordplay, and timing. A joke or witty remark in one language may not land the same way in another. For instance, the English idiom "a piece of cake," meaning something is easy to do, might lose its charm in another language because the cultural context or wordplay behind it doesn't translate well. Even non-humorous idioms can lose their emotional tone in translation. Consider the English idiom "to be over the moon," which expresses extreme happiness. While some languages might have their own idiomatic expressions for joy, finding an equivalent that carries the same sense of elation and informality can be a challenge.

Conclusion: Idiom translation is an art form that goes beyond simple word-for-word substitution because idioms frequently provide windows into a language's history, values, and humor. The translator must negotiate the complexities of language and culture to guarantee that the essence of the idiom is accurately conveyed, whether by employing descriptive language, embracing creative adaptations, or locating equivalent expressions. Idiom translation ultimately involves more than just language; it involves comprehending how speakers' worldviews are reflected in their language and figuring out how to bridge cultural divides while honoring their distinctive expressions.

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