

PHRASEOLOGY IN TRANSLATION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

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Annotation

Phraseology plays a crucial role in translation, as idiomatic expressions, collocations, and proverbs often carry meanings that extend beyond their literal interpretations. Translators face significant challenges when dealing with phraseological units, including cultural differences, context dependency, and language-specific structures. This study explores the major difficulties in translating phraseological expressions and provides strategies for overcoming these challenges. By analyzing different translation approaches—such as literal translation, equivalence-based methods, and adaptation—this paper offers insights into best practices for handling phraseology in translation.

Keywords Phraseology, translation challenges, idiomatic expressions, collocations, proverbs, equivalence, cultural adaptation

Introduction

Translation is not merely the process of converting words from one language to another; it involves conveying meaning, tone, and cultural context. Phraseology, which includes idiomatic expressions, collocations, and proverbs, presents one of the most significant challenges in translation. These linguistic units often have meanings that cannot be derived from their individual words, making direct translation ineffective.

For example, the English idiom "kick the bucket" cannot be translated literally into another language without losing its meaning (to die). Instead, an equivalent phraseological expression must be used. Similarly, cultural differences play a key role in determining how phraseological expressions are interpreted and translated.

This paper explores the challenges that translators face when working with phraseology and presents strategies for ensuring accurate and culturally appropriate translations.

Relevance of the Topic

Phraseological expressions are deeply embedded in a language's culture, history, and societal norms. They add richness and expressiveness to communication, making them essential elements of both spoken and written language. However, they also pose one of the biggest obstacles in translation due to their figurative meanings, cultural specificity, and structural differences across languages.

In professional translation fields such as literary translation, legal translation, and audiovisual translation (e.g., subtitling and dubbing), the accurate rendering of phraseological expressions is essential for maintaining meaning and coherence. Failure to properly translate idiomatic expressions can result in confusion, loss of intended meaning, or even miscommunication.

Additionally, with the rise of machine translation and AI-driven translation tools, the challenge of phraseology becomes even more relevant. While AI can handle word-for-word translation, it often struggles with idiomatic expressions and cultural nuances. This highlights the need for human translators to apply specialized strategies when dealing with phraseology.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are:

- To identify the primary challenges in translating phraseological expressions.
- To analyze different translation strategies for phraseological units.
- To examine how cultural differences impact phraseological translation.
- To assess the role of modern translation technologies in handling phraseology.
- To provide recommendations for best practices in translating idiomatic expressions.

Research Materials and Methods

This study is based on a qualitative analysis of translation challenges related to phraseology. The research materials include:

- Linguistic studies on phraseology and translation theory.
- Case studies of phraseological translation in literature, legal documents, and media.
- Comparative analysis of phraseological expressions in different languages.
- Data from machine translation tools (Google Translate, DeepL, etc.) to evaluate their effectiveness in handling phraseology.

The research methodology includes:

- Descriptive analysis of phraseological expressions and their meanings.
- Contrastive analysis between source and target language phraseological units.
- Evaluation of different translation strategies applied to phraseological expressions.

Research Findings

1. Challenges in Translating Phraseology

Several key challenges arise when translating phraseological expressions:

- Lack of direct equivalents:** Many phraseological units have no exact counterparts in other languages, requiring adaptation.
- Cultural specificity:** Some expressions are deeply rooted in a culture, making them difficult to translate without losing their intended meaning.
- Ambiguity and polysemy:** Certain idiomatic expressions have multiple meanings, requiring careful interpretation.
- Structural differences:** The grammatical structure of phraseological units varies across languages, complicating direct translation.
- Context dependency:** The meaning of phraseological expressions often depends on context, requiring a nuanced approach.

2. Translation Strategies for Phraseology

Different strategies can be employed to effectively translate phraseological expressions:

- Literal translation:** Used when a phrase retains its meaning in the target language (e.g., "a blessing in disguise" → "bir maskarad ichidagi ne'mat" in Uzbek).

Equivalence-based translation: Finding an idiomatic expression with a similar meaning in the target language (e.g., "when pigs fly" → "tovuq tishi chiqanda" in Uzbek).

Paraphrasing: Explaining the meaning of the phrase when no equivalent exists (e.g., "spill the beans" → "sirni oshkor qilish").

Borrowing: Retaining the original expression when it is widely understood (e.g., "déjà vu" used in English).

Adaptation: Modifying the expression to fit the cultural and linguistic norms of the target language.

3. The Role of Machine Translation in Phraseology

Machine translation tools often struggle with phraseology due to their reliance on word-for-word translation. For example:

Google Translate renders "piece of cake" (meaning very easy) as "bir bo'lak tort", which is incorrect.

AI-based translators like DeepL perform better but still require human intervention for accuracy.

This highlights the need for human expertise in phraseological translation, particularly in fields where precision and cultural sensitivity are critical.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that phraseology is one of the most complex aspects of translation due to its cultural, linguistic, and contextual variations. While some phraseological units can be translated using direct equivalents, many require adaptation, paraphrasing, or even complete restructuring.

Machine translation tools, despite their advancements, are still largely ineffective in handling phraseological expressions accurately. This emphasizes the ongoing need for skilled human translators who can navigate cultural nuances and linguistic subtleties.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of context in phraseology. The same expression can have different meanings depending on the situation, making literal translation unreliable.

Conclusion

Phraseology in translation presents significant challenges due to its figurative nature, cultural specificity, and structural differences between languages. Translators must employ various strategies—such as equivalence, adaptation, and paraphrasing—to ensure accurate and meaningful translations.

While machine translation tools continue to improve, they remain inadequate in handling phraseological units effectively. This highlights the indispensable role of human translators in preserving the meaning and cultural depth of phraseological expressions.

To improve phraseological translation, it is essential to:

Invest in training programs for translators focused on phraseology.

Develop AI-powered translation tools that better recognize idiomatic expressions.

Encourage research on cross-linguistic phraseology and its translation.

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