

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING SEMANTIC AND STYLISTIC IDENTITY OF IDIOMS IN TRANSLATION

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Annotation: *This article explores the significance of achieving semantic and stylistic identity in the translation of idioms, a crucial aspect of cross-linguistic communication. The study examines the challenges faced by translators, the strategies employed to retain the essence of idiomatic expressions, and the impact of cultural and contextual factors on translation accuracy. The research highlights the necessity of preserving both meaning and stylistic nuances to ensure fidelity and effectiveness in translation. Various theoretical frameworks and practical examples are discussed to underscore the importance of idiom equivalence in different languages. The study also provides an analysis of idiom translation in literary works, media, and professional discourse, demonstrating the varying levels of complexity involved.*

Keywords: *Idioms, translation, semantic identity, stylistic identity, equivalence, linguistic challenges, cross-cultural communication, translation strategies, cultural adaptation, figurative language*

Introduction: Idioms are deeply rooted in the linguistic and cultural framework of a language. They often originate from historical events, folklore, social customs, and common experiences shared by a linguistic community. As a result, their meaning is not always transparent to speakers of other languages. For example, the English idiom ‘kick the bucket’ meaning ‘to die’ has no direct equivalent in many languages, making it a challenge for translators to render it without altering its intended effect. In cases where an exact match does not exist, translators must find creative ways to preserve the idiom’s meaning and tone.

Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be derived from the literal interpretation of their individual words. They serve multiple communicative functions, including enhancing expressiveness, adding humor, reinforcing cultural identity, and facilitating succinct communication. Due to their figurative nature, idioms often defy straightforward translation, making it necessary to consider their intended function and cultural context.

For instance, the English idiom “to kick the bucket” meaning “to die” has no direct equivalent in many languages. A literal translation would not convey the intended meaning and may lead to confusion. Thus, idiom translation necessitates an approach that captures both its semantic content and stylistic tone.

Translating idioms presents multiple challenges, including linguistic differences, cultural disparities, and the absence of direct equivalents in the target language. These challenges can be categorized into three primary areas:

1. Lexical Differences: The words used in an idiom often have meanings that, when translated literally, result in confusion or misinterpretation.
2. Cultural References: Many idioms are culture-specific, tied to a particular country's traditions, history, or customs. An idiom that makes sense in one language might be completely unfamiliar in another.
3. Stylistic Considerations: Idioms are often used for rhetorical effect, humor, or emphasis. A translation must capture not only the meaning but also the expressive power of the original phrase.

To preserve the semantic and stylistic identity of idioms, translators employ various strategies, each with its advantages and challenges. Some of the most commonly used approaches include:

- Finding an equivalent idiom: When a similar idiom exists in the target language, this is the best approach. For example, the English idiom 'a blessing in disguise' can be translated into French as 'un mal pour un bien' with a similar meaning and stylistic effect.

- Literal translation with explanation: If an idiom has no direct equivalent, a literal translation can be supplemented with an explanation. For instance, translating 'to let the cat out of the bag' literally might require additional context to convey its meaning of 'revealing a secret.'

- Paraphrasing: Sometimes, the only way to retain meaning is to express the idiom in simpler terms. While this ensures comprehension, it may result in a loss of stylistic richness.

- Cultural adaptation: Translators may replace an idiom with a culturally relevant expression that conveys a similar meaning and emotional impact.

Context plays a crucial role in idiom translation, as the same idiomatic expression may require different treatment depending on its usage. For instance, idioms in literary texts often demand creative adaptations to maintain their stylistic effects, while idioms in formal or technical documents require clarity and precision. Moreover, humor and wordplay based on idioms present additional difficulties, as their impact depends on the cultural background of the audience. A translator must consider these factors to ensure an accurate and stylistically appropriate rendering.

The complexity of idiom translation varies across different fields. In literature, the preservation of idiomatic expressions is essential to maintain the author's style and tone. In media and advertising, idioms play a key role in engaging audiences, requiring dynamic and adaptive translation strategies. In legal and technical contexts, idiomatic expressions are often avoided in favor of precise language to prevent ambiguity. Each domain demands a tailored approach to idiom translation, balancing semantic accuracy with stylistic fidelity.

Examining real-world examples of idiom translation provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies discussed. One notable case is the translation of

Shakespeare's works, where translators must retain the poetic and rhetorical qualities of his idiomatic expressions. Similarly, the adaptation of idioms in film subtitles illustrates the need for concise and culturally relevant translations. By analyzing these examples, we gain a deeper understanding of the nuances involved in idiom translation and the creative solutions employed by translators.

The primary difficulty in translating idioms arises from linguistic and cultural disparities between source and target languages. These challenges can be categorized into the following aspects:

1. Lack of Direct Equivalents

Some idioms are unique to a particular language and culture, making it difficult to find an exact match in the target language. For example, the Russian idiom "как две капли воды" (literally: "like two drops of water") means "very similar" and has an equivalent in English ("like two peas in a pod"). However, not all idioms have such direct counterparts.

2. Cultural Specificity

Many idioms are rooted in cultural traditions, historical events, or shared societal experiences. An example is the English idiom "to carry coals to Newcastle" (meaning to do something unnecessary), which refers to Newcastle's historical coal industry. Without knowledge of this reference, a direct translation would be meaningless to non-English speakers.

3. Figurative vs. Literal Meaning

Idioms often have metaphorical meanings that differ from their literal interpretations. If translated word-for-word, the result may be nonsensical. A translator must determine whether to use a corresponding idiom in the target language or to reformulate the meaning in a way that retains the original intention.

4. Stylistic Considerations

Idioms contribute to the stylistic texture of a language. Some languages favor formal or poetic expressions, while others lean toward colloquial speech. An idiom's stylistic effect in the source language must be reflected in the target language, ensuring that its tone, humor, or rhetorical power is preserved.

To overcome these challenges, translators employ various strategies:

1. Finding an Equivalent Idiom

If a target language has an idiom with a similar meaning and stylistic effect, this is the best approach. For example, the English idiom "the last straw" (meaning the final burden that causes failure) has a direct French equivalent: "la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder le vase" ("the drop of water that makes the vase overflow").

2. Paraphrasing

If no equivalent idiom exists, the translator can rephrase the meaning while maintaining the original intent. For instance, the Spanish idiom "estar en las nubes" (literally: "to be in the clouds") means "to be distracted." In English, a similar meaning could be conveyed by paraphrasing: "to be lost in thought."

3. Literal Translation with Explanation

In some cases, an idiom can be translated literally with an added explanation. This approach is common in academic or technical texts where clarity is more important than stylistic flair.

4. Cultural Adaptation

Some idioms require modification to align with the cultural context of the target audience. For example, the English idiom “to bury the hatchet” (meaning to make peace) can be replaced with a culturally appropriate expression in another language, such as the Russian “закопать топор войны” (literally: “to bury the war axe”), which carries the same meaning.

5. Omission

In rare cases, if an idiom has no suitable equivalent and its translation would disrupt the text’s flow, the translator may choose to omit it. However, this strategy should be used with caution, as it can result in the loss of nuance.

The Role of Context in Idiom Translation

Context plays a crucial role in determining the most appropriate translation strategy. The same idiom may require different approaches depending on the genre, audience, and purpose of communication. For example, idioms in literary works must maintain artistic and rhetorical integrity, whereas idioms in legal or technical documents demand precise, unambiguous translations. In audiovisual translation, such as subtitles or dubbing, constraints such as time and space may limit the choice of translation strategies. Idioms must often be condensed while preserving their essence.

Conclusion: The translation of idioms is a complex and multifaceted task requiring linguistic expertise, cultural awareness, and creative problem-solving. Achieving semantic and stylistic identity is crucial to preserving the original meaning and expressive power of idiomatic expressions. Various translation strategies, including finding equivalent idioms, paraphrasing, and cultural adaptation, can help overcome the challenges posed by idiomatic translation. The importance of context cannot be overstated, as different fields demand different levels of fidelity and adaptation. Ultimately, a successful idiomatic translation captures not only the intended message but also the stylistic and cultural nuances of the original, ensuring effective cross-linguistic communication. The translation of idioms is a complex and nuanced process requiring a deep understanding of both linguistic structures and cultural contexts. Achieving semantic and stylistic identity is essential to maintaining the effectiveness of communication and preserving the expressive richness of idiomatic expressions. Translators must navigate the challenges posed by cultural specificity, figurative meaning, and stylistic differences, employing strategies such as equivalence, paraphrasing, and cultural adaptation. Context plays a decisive role in shaping translation choices, influencing whether an idiom is preserved, adapted, or reformulated. Ultimately, idiom translation is not a mechanical process but an art requiring linguistic dexterity, cultural sensitivity, and creativity. A well-translated idiom enhances

cross-cultural understanding and allows audiences to engage with texts in a meaningful and authentic way.

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