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### DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATION IDIOMS AND FIXED EXPRESSIONS

*The article highlights the main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation. All the available data permit to say that the way in which an idiom or a fixed expression can be translated into the other language depends on many factors. Various strategies in translation idioms and fixed expressions are briefly considered.*

**Key words:** *idioms, fixed expressions, culture-specific, literal interpretation, the target language, an idiom of similar meaning and form, the right level of idiomaticity.*

A person's competence in actively using the idioms and fixed expressions of a foreign language hardly ever matches that of a native speaker. The majority of translators working into a foreign language cannot hope to achieve the same sensitivity that native speakers seem to have for judging when and how an idiom can be manipulated. This lends support to the argument that translators should only work into their language of habitual use or mother tongue.

Assuming that a professional translator would, under normal circumstances, work only into his/her language of habitual use, the difficulties associated with being able to use idioms and fixed expressions correctly in a foreign language need not be addressed here. The main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language. These difficulties are much more pronounced in the case of idioms than they are in the case of fixed expressions.

As far as idioms are concerned, the first difficulty that a translator comes across is being able to recognize that s/he is dealing with an idiomatic expression. This is not always so obvious. There are various types of idioms, some more easily recognizable than others. Those which are easily recognizable include expressions which violate truth conditions, such as *It's raining cats and dogs, throw caution to the winds, storm in a tea cup, jump down someone's throat, and food for thought*. They also include expressions which seem ill-formed because they do not follow the grammatical rules of the language, for example *trip the light fantastic, blow someone to kingdom come, put paid to, the powers that be, by and large, and the world and his friend*.

Provided a translator has access to good reference works and monolingual dictionaries of idioms, or, better still, is able to consult native speakers of the language, opaque idioms which

do not make sense for one reason or another can actually be a blessing in disguise. The very fact that s/he cannot make sense of an expression in a particular context will alert the translator to the presence of an idiom of some sort.

There are two cases in which an idiom can be easily misinterpreted if one is not already familiar with it.

Some idioms are “misleading”; they seem transparent because they offer a reasonable literal interpretation and their idiomatic meanings are not necessarily signalled in the surrounding text. A large number of idioms in English, and probably all languages, have both a literal and an idiomatic meaning, for example *go out with* (*have a romantic or sexual relationship with someone*) and *lake someone for a ride* (*deceive or cheat someone in some way*). Such idioms lend themselves easily to manipulation by speakers and writers who will sometimes play on both their literal and idiomatic meanings. In this case, a translator who is not familiar with the idiom in question may easily accept the literal interpretation and miss the play on idiom.

An idiom in the source language may have a very close counterpart in the target language which looks similar on the surface but has a totally or partially different meaning. Instances of superficially identical or similar idioms which have different meanings in the source and target languages lay easy traps for the unwary translator who is not familiar with the source-language idiom and who may be tempted simply to impose a target-language interpretation on it.

Apart from being alert to the way speakers and writers manipulate certain features of idioms and to the possible confusion which could arise from similarities in form between source and target expressions, a translator must also consider the collocational environment which surrounds any expression whose meaning is not readily accessible. Idiomatic and fixed expressions have individual collocational patterns. They form collocations with other items in the text as single units and enter into lexical sets which are different from those of their individual words. Take, for instance, the idiom *to have cold feet*. Cold as a separate item may collocate with words like weather, winter, feel, or country. Feet on its own will perhaps collocate with socks, chilblain, smelly, etc. However, having cold feet, in its idiomatic use, has nothing necessarily to do with winter, feet, or chilblains and will therefore generally be used with a different set of collocates.

The ability to distinguish senses by collocation is an invaluable asset to a translator working from a foreign language. Using our knowledge of collocational patterns may not always tell us what an idiom means but it could easily help us in many cases to recognize an idiom, particularly one which has a literal as well as a non-literal meaning.

Once an idiom or fixed expression has been recognized and interpreted correctly, the next step is to decide how to translate it into the target language. The difficulties involved in translating an idiom are totally different from those involved in interpreting it. Here, the question is not whether a given idiom is transparent, opaque, or misleading. An opaque expression may be easier to translate than a transparent one. The main difficulties involved in translating idioms and fixed expressions may be summarized as follows:

a) An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language. The way a language chooses to express, or not express, various meanings cannot be predicted and only occasionally matches the way another language chooses to express the same meanings. One language may express a given meaning by means of a single word, another may express it by means of a transparent fixed expression, a third may express it by means of an idiom, and so

on. It is therefore unrealistic to expect to find equivalent idioms and expressions in the target language as a matter of course.

b) Like single words, idioms and fixed expressions may be culture-specific. Idioms and fixed expressions which contain culture-specific items are not necessarily untranslatable. It is not the specific items an expression contains but rather the meaning it conveys and its association with culture-specific contexts which can make it untranslatable or difficult to translate.

c) An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different; the two expressions may have different connotations, for instance, or they may not be pragmatically transferable. An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time. Unless the target-language idiom corresponds to the source-language idiom both in form and in meaning, the play on idiom cannot be successfully reproduced in the target text.

d) The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the contexts in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages. English uses idioms in many types of text, though not in all. Their use in quality-press news reports is limited, but it is quite common to see idioms in English advertisements, promotional material, and in the tabloid press.

Using idioms in English is very much a matter of style. Fernando and Flaveli discuss the difference in rhetorical effect of using idioms in general and of using specific types of idiom in the source and target languages and quite rightly conclude that “Translation is an exacting art. Idiom more than any other feature of language demands that the translator be not only accurate but highly sensitive to the rhetorical nuances of the language” [1: 85].

The way in which an idiom or a fixed expression can be translated into another language depends on many factors. It is not only a question of whether an idiom with a similar meaning is available in the target language. Other factors include, for example, the significance of the specific lexical items which constitute the idiom, i.e. whether they are manipulated elsewhere in the source text, as well as the appropriateness or inappropriateness of using idiomatic language in a given register in the target language. The acceptability or non-acceptability of using any of the strategies described below will therefore depend on the context in which a given idiom is translated. The first strategy described, that of finding an idiom of similar meaning and similar form in the target language, may seem to offer the ideal solution, but that is not necessarily always the case. Questions of style, register, and rhetorical effect must also be taken into consideration.

**Using an idiom of similar meaning and form.** This strategy involves using an idiom in the target language which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items. This kind of match can only occasionally be achieved.

**Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form.** It is often possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a meaning similar to that of the source idiom or expression, but which consists of different lexical items.

**Translation by paraphrase.** This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages. You may or may not find the paraphrases accurate.

**Translation by omission.** As with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons.

One strategy which cannot be adequately illustrated, simply because it would take up a considerable amount of space, is **the strategy of compensation**. Briefly, this means that one may either omit or play down a feature such as idiomaticity at the point where it occurs in the source text and introduce it elsewhere in the target text. This strategy is not restricted to idiomaticity or fixed expressions and may be used to make up for any loss of meaning, emotional force, or stylistic effect which may not be possible to reproduce directly at a given point in the target text. Mason (1982:29) explains that, because they were unable to translate specific puns at the points at which they occurred in the text, the translators of *Astérix* “have sometimes resorted to inserting English puns (of equivalent impact rather than equivalent meaning) in different frames of the cartoon” [2:29].

Using the typical phraseology of the target language – its natural collocations, its own fixed and semi-fixed expressions, the right level of idiomaticity, and so on – will greatly enhance the readability of your translations. Getting this level right means that your target text will feel less “foreign” and, other factors being equal, may even pass for an original. But naturalness and readability are also affected by other linguistic features.

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## ТРУДНОЩІ І СТРАТЕГІЇ У ПЕРЕКЛАДІ ІДИОМ ТА СТАЛИХ ВИРАЗІВ

*У статті розглядаються основні проблеми, що виникають при перекладі ідіом та сталих виразів. Всі наявні дані дозволяють стверджувати, що переклад ідіом та сталих виразів на цільову мову залежить від різноманітних факторів. У статті стисло розглядаються різні стратегії перекладу ідіоматичних та сталих виразів.*

**Ключові слова:** ідіоми, сталі вирази, буквальна інтерпретація, мова перекладу, ідіома ідентична за значенням та формою, відповідний рівень ідіоматичності.

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### ТРУДНОСТИ И СТРАТЕГИИ В ПЕРЕВОДЕ ИДИОМ И УСТОЯВШИХСЯ ВЫРАЖЕНИЙ

*В статье рассматриваются основные проблемы, возникающие при переводе идиом и устоявшихся выражений. Все имеющиеся данные позволяют говорить, что перевод идиом и устоявшихся выражений на целевой язык зависит от множества факторов. В статье вкратце рассматриваются различные стратегии перевода идиоматических и устоявшихся выражений.*

**Ключевые слова:** идиомы, устоявшиеся выражения, буквальная интерпретация, язык перевода, идиома идентичная по значению и форме, соответствующий уровень идиоматичности.

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### СПОСОБИ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ АНГЛОМОВНИХ ЮРИДИЧНИХ ТЕРМІНОСПОЛУЧЕНЬ МОВИ ПРАВА ЄС УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ (на матеріалі Звіту громадського моніторингу виконання порядку денного Асоціації Україна-ЄС)

*У статті висвітлені загальні питання перекладу мови ЄС, розглянуті складнощі та шляхи перекладу терміносполучень юридичної мови ЄС на прикладі Звіту громадського моніторингу виконання порядку денного Асоціації Україна-ЄС.*

**Ключові слова:** термінологічне словосполучення, мова ЄС, юридична термінологія.

**Постановка проблеми.** Сучасні інтеграційні та глобалізаційні процеси на європейському просторі стали новим викликом як для урядовців, так і для правознавців та перекладачів. Підвищення інтересу до юридичної мови ЄС, вивчення її термінологічної бази та створення власних глосаріїв на її основі є результатом систематичних спроб адаптувати національне законодавство до європейських правових стандартів.

**Аналіз останніх наукових досліджень і публікацій** свідчить про те, що юридичний переклад був об'єктом науково-теоретичного аналізу таких вчених, як: І. Ворошилової, О. Київець, О. Шаблій, В. Шабуніної та ін. Велику увагу розгляду особливостей мови ЄС, її термінологічного апарату та перекладу на різні мови присвятили Д. Касяненко, Д. Коробейнікова, В.Стрельцов, В.Муравйов, О. Чередниченко, Г. Друзенко, Т. Качка, Ю. Мовчан та інші.

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