

## PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING IDIOMS

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### ABSTRACT

Present paper deals with the problems of translating idioms. The act of translating involves reproduction of one literary work from one language into another language. While translating idioms from one language into another language, the figurative (hidden) meaning creates problems. Besides it, the exact reproduction of idioms from one language into another language is difficult. The idioms are product of that culture, society and language in which they originate and it creates problems in their translation.

**Key Words:** Translation, idioms, literal meaning, figurative meaning

The act of translating involves reproductions of one literary work from one language (source language) into another language (target language). As there are vast differences in the materials translated, in the purpose of the publication, and in the needs of the prospective audience, there are certain problems faced by translators. Translating idioms is one of these problems.

To begin with, the nature and characteristics of idioms are necessary to take into account for deciding the problems of their translation. Idioms are peculiar product of each and every language. They contain the wisdom of centuries in them so it is said that they are source of the knowledge of old generations. Definition of idioms by Collins dictionary is worth of quoting. It is comprehensive and nearly tries to give all characteristics of idioms. It runs as:

1. A group of words whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent words, as for example (It was raining) cats and dogs
2. Linguistic usage that is grammatical and natural to native speakers of a language
3. The characteristic vocabulary or usage of a specific human group or subject
4. The characteristic artistic style of an individual, school, period, etc (dictionary.com)

From the above definitions, it becomes clear that idioms convey different meaning and they can be understood by the native users of it. They are the combination of words that has a figurative meaning owing to its common usage. Its figurative meaning is separate from the literal meaning. The figurative meaning deals with the meaning which words convey. It is the semantic meaning of the word, while the figurative meaning deals with the hidden meaning of the word. Semantically idioms are a single word but they don't function as a single word. Based on these meaning, there are some transparent, as well as, opaque idioms. Idioms are expressions

that don't mean what they appear to mean. It can be clarified by giving the of example a common English idiom,

“Kick the bucket”

This idiom is not transparent. The literal meaning of this idiom can be the act of kicking the bucket but it tells different meaning of dying. When one says “it’s raining cats and dogs”, it doesn’t mean that cats and dogs are falling out of sky, but rather that it's raining heavily. so Idioms provide interesting insights into languages and thought processes of their speakers.

Such types of idioms are also found in Indian languages and the figurative meaning creates the problems while translating them into English. This can be expressed by giving example of the following Hindi idioms,

“अंगारे उगलना”

*Its literal meaning or translation of the above idiom can be “to excrete embers” but its actual meaning is “to get very angry”.*

“नौ दो ग्यारह होना”

If, the translator doesn’t know the native use of it in Hindi, *the above idiom will be translated into English by the literal meaning as “to be nine two eleven” which actually means “to get away.”*

This lack of transparency is responsible for accute or exact translation of them. The translator needs through knowledge of both languages but another problem arises. There are not exact or same sorts of idioms in both languages. We will get only literal translations, not the exact reproduction of original idioms.

There are some idioms which convey same meaning has same structure. They can be said the exact reproductions. The following are examples of these idioms:

“आँख का तारा”

*Star/apple of one's eye which means in both languages as “very fond of.”*

“अंत भला तो सब भला”

This idiom also has same meaning in English and it is as “All's well that ends well.”  
But the examples of above similar idioms are very rare.

To conclude, it can be said from the perspectives of a translator that the exact reproduction of idioms from one language to another language is a difficult task. The idioms are product of that culture, society and language in which they originate. And this peculiarity creates the problems for exact translation.

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