



To Translate Idioms: Posing Difficulties and Challenges for Translators

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Abstract

In all languages there are a great number of idioms – unique, language– fixed expressions whose meaning cannot be deduced from the individual words of the phrase. Idiomatic expressions are always language – and cultures– specific. They are the patrimony of a culture and tradition; they present centuries of life in a determined sociolinguistic context and geographical setting and are therefore the heart and soul of a linguistic community. It is precisely this culture–bound nature that makes them unmanageable for translators who do not belong to the same linguistic community and who cannot instinctively –as native speakers do – recognize a clear semantic, pragmatic and syntactic pattern. As we know the English language is rich in idiom so much so that it would be very difficult indeed to establish linguistic communication without using idioms, and the majority of speakers of either English or any language are often unaware of when they are using them. Since each language has its own ways of expressing certain things, an expression in one language may not exist in some other language, or the language may have a very different expression to convey the same meaning, or the corresponding expressions may not be found in another language. This language–fixity makes the translation of idioms sometimes rather tricky and problematic for translators. The fact that idioms are always language – and cultures– specific material makes the translation of idioms an important and interesting area of study. It is important that this paper on idioms should show the translators especially Russian translators how to deal with them in their translation.