

Challenges in Translating Paremiological Units: Preserving Meaning and National and Cultural Nuance

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Abstract:

The translation of paremiological units, which encompass proverbs, idioms, phraseological units, and riddles, presents unique challenges that stem from their inherent cultural and contextual nuances. This article explores the complexities involved in translating these linguistic constructs, emphasizing the necessity of preserving their meanings while navigating the intricacies of cultural specificity. By examining various strategies and methodologies employed in translation process, this study aims at highlighting the importance of cultural context in achieving the effective translations.

Keywords: translation, paremiological units, proverbs, idioms, cultural nuance, phraseology.

INTRODUCTION

The translation of paremiological units, which include proverbs, idioms, phraseological units, and riddles, represents a vital and intricate area of research within both translation studies and linguistics. These units are not simply linguistic expressions but are carriers of cultural heritage, societal values, and historical narratives that have evolved over time within a given linguistic community. They serve as a repository of collective human experience, reflecting the worldview, traditions, and emotions of the people who use them. For this reason, their translation demands a nuanced approach that goes beyond the word-for-word equivalence to encompass national-cultural adaptation and contextual interpretation.

The complexity of translating paremiological units lies in their dual nature: they convey both a literal meaning and a figurative or cultural significance. While some expressions may have direct equivalents in the target language, many do not, as they are often deeply tied to specific cultural practices, historical events or geographical contexts that may be unfamiliar to the target audience. The challenge for translators, therefore, is to navigate these cultural barriers while maintaining the integrity and impact of the original expressions. This task is further complicated by the fact that paremiological units are frequently metaphorical, relying on imagery or concepts that may not resonate universally.

As highlighted by Eshkuvvatovna, the national cultural specificity of phraseological units often leads to significant challenges in translation, with the potential for misinterpretation or ambiguity, if not handled carefully (Eshkuvvatovna, 2021). Translators must grapple with the question of whether to prioritize cultural fidelity, preserving the unique features of the source language or to adapt the expression for greater comprehensibility and relatability in the target language. This delicate balancing act underscores the importance of cultural competence and creativity in the translation process.

Furthermore, the study of paremiological units is not just an academic exercise but has practical implications in fostering intercultural communication and understanding. By effectively translating these expressions, translators contribute to bridging cultural divides, enabling the transmission of wisdom and values across linguistic boundaries. Thus, the exploration of strategies for translating paremiological units is not only a linguistic endeavor but also a cultural one, emphasizing the interconnectedness of language, thought, and identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Paremiological units are characterized by their figurative language and cultural specificity. Proverbs, for instance are brief statements that reflect general truths or moral lessons often derived from collective experiences. Idioms, on the other hand are phrases whose meanings cannot be inferred from the individual words, making them particularly challenging to translate. As highlighted by Gololobova, the translation of phraseological units requires the understanding of both semantic and structural peculiarities of the expressions involved in this matter (Gololobova, 2020). Furthermore, the cultural context plays crucial role in determining the appropriateness of translation, as noted by Bashmakova, who emphasizes the significance of cultural interpretation in translation process (Bashmakova, 2018).

The nature of paremiological units in Turkic languages, including Uzbek and Karakalpak, is diverse and reflect their rich cultural, historical and linguistic traditions. Paremiological units encompass various types beyond proverbs, such as sayings, idioms, aphorisms, riddles and even blessings and curses. Below there are the examples:

1. Proverbs. Proverbs are the most well-known paremiological units, offering concise wisdom, moral lessons or observations about life. They often include metaphorical language and parallelism.

Examples:

Uzbek: Qush uyasida ko'rganini qiladi — A bird does what it sees in the nest. Here it reflects the influence of upbringing. In *Karakalpak: Birlesken ozar, birlespegen tozar.* — United we stand, divided we fall. Here it emphasizes the importance of the unity.

2. Sayings or Aphorisms. These are shorter and less figurative than proverbs, often used to convey general truths or practical advice.

In Uzbek: *Beshikdan to qabrgacha ilm izla.* — Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave. A call for lifelong learning. If we compare in Karakalpak language it sounds as *Az sóyle, kóp tíńla.* — See much, speak little. Advocating for observation and discretion.

3. Idioms. Idioms are fixed expressions with the meanings that cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of their words. They are widely used in everyday communication.

Examples:

Uzbek: *Qo'lg'a tushmoq.* — To fall into someone's hands. To be captured.

Karakalpak: *Ishi jilimaydi.* — His/her soul does not smile. To feel deeply sad.

4. Puzzles and Riddles. Riddles often serve as a form of entertainment and intellectual exercise, particularly for children, while also embedding cultural knowledge.

Examples:

Uzbek: *Ikki eshik o'rtasida bir malla it. (Javob: til)* — Between two doors, a golden dog. (Answer: Tongue)

In Karakalpak: *Aq sandigim ashildi, ishinen jipek shashildi. (Juwap: quyash)* — A white box is opened, the silk is scattered. (Answer: The sun)

This exploration reveals that paremiological units in Turkic languages serve not just as linguistic artifacts but as vibrant expressions of collective memory, worldview and social norms.

METHODS

One of the primary challenges in translating paremiological units (PUs) is the risk of losing their original meaning and cultural significance. These expressions, deeply embedded in the cultural and linguistic frameworks of their source languages, often resist straightforward translation. As pointed out by Stoika, various strategies can be employed to ensure adequate translation, including equivalence and borrowing (Stoika, 2023). However, these strategies may not always suffice, particularly when dealing with non-equivalent units that lack direct counterparts in the target language.

For instance, phraseological units with zoonymic components, as discussed by Savelyeva, often carry cultural connotations that are difficult to replicate in translation (Savelyeva, 2019). These units frequently rely on imagery or symbolism unique to the source culture, which may not evoke the same associations in the target audience. For example, the metaphorical use of animals such as a “donkey” in Uzbek proverbs symbolizes stubbornness or ignorance: Uzbek: *Eshakka oltin yugan taqsang ham, eshak eshakligicha qoladi.* — Even if you put a golden bridle on a donkey, it remains a donkey.

Directly translating this from Uzbek or Karakalpak into English might confuse audiences unfamiliar with the cultural connotation of a donkey, requiring the use of adaptive techniques to preserve the underlying meaning.

Similarly, many paremiological units carry multiple layers of meaning, making their translation prone to misinterpretation. Namestiuk highlights that the evaluative information contained within these units can shift depending on the context, further complicating the translation process (Namestiuk, 2022). For example:

Uzbek: *Qarg'a qarg'aning ko'zini cho'qimaydi.* — A crow doesn't peck another crow's eye.

This proverb signifies solidarity among wrongdoers but may lose its subtlety when translated into other language or culture that lacks the same metaphorical associations with crows.

Additionally, PUs in Turkic languages, including Uzbek, present unique challenges due to their reliance on linguistic features such as rhyme, alliteration, or pun, which are often untranslatable. For instance, Uzbek proverbs frequently employ rhythmic structures or phonetic repetitions that enhance their memorability and impact but are difficult to replicate in the target language. Furthermore, the contextual dependency of many paremiological units amplifies the difficulty. The meaning of a proverb can vary significantly depending on the situation or cultural backdrop in which it is used, requiring translators to have a nuanced understanding of both source and target cultures.

In some cases, paremiological units are tied to religious or mythological beliefs that may not exist in the target culture, adding another layer of complexity. For example, idioms referencing specific cultural practices or beliefs might necessitate recontextualization or even creative invention to ensure the translated unit resonates with the target audience.

Overall, translating paremiological units requires a flexible, adaptive approach where translators must balance linguistic accuracy with cultural sensitivity. By employing a combination of equivalence, contextual adaptation and creative rephrasing, translators can better navigate the intricate layers of meaning and cultural significance embedded within these rich linguistic constructs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To navigate the complexities of translating paremiological units, several strategies have been proposed. For instance, Suiyerkul suggest that teaching methods that incorporate historical and literary contexts can enhance the understanding of idioms and proverbs, thereby improving translation accuracy (Suiyerkul, 2021). Additionally, the use of descriptive translation methods discussed by Arsentyeva, it can provide necessary context that may not be immediately apparent in the original expression (Arsentyeva, 2022). This approach allows translators to convey the underlying meaning while accommodating the cultural differences between languages. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of phraseological units across languages can reveal commonalities and differences that inform translation practices. For example, the study by Vasylenko and Khyzhun on phraseological combinations with numerical components highlights how cultural interpretations of numbers can vary significantly, impacting their translation (Vasylenko & Khyzhun, 2022). By understanding these cultural nuances, translators can make more informed choices that preserve the integrity of the original expression.

By summing up the ideas we can come up with the strategies for overcoming these challenges:

Literal Translation + Footnotes: Providing direct translations with explanatory notes.

For example: *Ko 'rmagan, tog 'ni ulug' debdi.* — They call the unseen mountain great – a metaphor for exaggeration. *Paraphrasing:* Adapting the meaning into a culturally relevant expression.

Example: *Qarg 'a qarg 'aning ko 'zini cho 'qimaydi* — Birds of a feather flock together.

Cultural Substitution: Use similar proverbs or idioms from the target culture.

Creative Translation: Retain the essence while reformulating in the target language.

Translating paremiological units in Turkic languages requires not only linguistic skill but also cultural sensitivity and creativity. The challenge lies in balancing fidelity to the source and relevance to the target audience. Addressing these challenges enriches cross-cultural understanding and showcases the poetic depth of Turkic languages.

Cultural context is paramount in the translation of paremiological units. As noted by Albert, idiomatic expressions often reflect the beliefs, values, and identities of a culture, making it essential

for translators to possess a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures (Albert, 2022). This cultural awareness enables translators to select appropriate equivalents that resonate with the target audience while maintaining the original message. Moreover, the interlinguistic nature of terms and phraseological units, as discussed by Zaripova underscores the importance of context in determining the most suitable translation strategies (Zaripova, 2018). Translators must be equipped to recognize when a literal translation is insufficient and when a more nuanced approach is required.

Empirical studies have shown that the translation of paremiological units often results in varying degrees of success, depending on the strategies employed. For instance, Marco's analysis of the COVALT corpus reveals that translators frequently encounter difficulties when translating zeugma and pun and idiomatic expressions, leading to a reliance on less effective translation techniques (Marco, 2010). This highlights the need for ongoing research and development of best practices in the field of translation studies. Additionally, the challenges faced by EFL university students in Kosovo that discussed by Krasniqi and Krasniqi, illustrate the practical implications of these theoretical considerations (Krasniqi & Krasniqi, 2023). The study indicates that students often struggle with the complexities of phraseology translation, underscoring the necessity for targeted educational interventions that address these challenges.

CONCLUSION

The translation of paremiological units is a multifaceted endeavor that demands a profound understanding of both linguistic structures and the cultural contexts from which these expressions emerge. These units are deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of a society, carrying with them layers of meaning that transcend their surface-level interpretations. Successfully translating them involves not only a mastery of the source and target languages but also an appreciation for the cultural nuances and symbolic significance that these expressions hold.

The challenges inherent in this process highlight the importance of employing effective translation strategies that go beyond literal word-for-word interpretations. Translators must strike a delicate balance between preserving the original meaning and ensuring that the translation resonates with the target audience. This often involves employing adaptive and creative techniques, such as domestication, foreignization, or the use of equivalent idiomatic expressions, to capture both the semantic and cultural essence of the original text. The translator's role is not merely linguistic but also interpretative, acting as a bridge between cultures.

As the field of translation studies continues to evolve, it remains imperative for researchers and practitioners to explore innovative methodologies for addressing the complexities of translating paremiological units. Ongoing scholarly inquiry and practical applications will play a crucial role in refining these approaches, contributing to the development of more nuanced and effective translation frameworks. By fostering a greater awareness of cultural specificity and the diverse functions of paremiological expressions, translators can enhance their ability to convey the essence of these units in a way that is both authentic and accessible.

Ultimately, the successful translation of paremiological units serves a larger purpose: it facilitates cross-cultural understanding and promotes the exchange of wisdom, values, and traditions across linguistic boundaries. In doing so, translators contribute to the preservation of cultural diversity while fostering meaningful connections between different communities. This underscores the significance of continued research and innovation in this vital area of translation studies.

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