



An Analysis of Difficulties and Complexities in Translating English Idioms into Urdu Language

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ABSTRACT:

Translation is the method of converting linguistic structures and aspects of a source language into another language culturally, semantically and pragmatically. The present study aims to explore and analyze the challenges encountered in the process of translating English idioms into Urdu language, and to identify the translation strategies used in Urdu translation of English idioms. The form of this research is qualitative descriptive and data has been collected mainly from the speeches of native speakers and various internet resources. The findings revealed that idiomatic expressions may not have direct equivalent in Urdu, requiring creative adaptation to convey the intended meaning effectively. Researching the challenges related to cultural difference would help you gain better understanding of how idioms reflect cultural values, attitude and experiences.

Keywords: Cultural idioms and expression, Difficulties in translation, English, Urdu, Translation strategies

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a source of communication acquired by the speakers of every community. It has denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meaning is precise or literal meaning whereas, the connotative meaning is always translated figuratively. In this case, the meaning of constituents in a collocation does not convey the meaning or sense of whole sentences. Such collocated expressions include metaphors, similes and idioms. Idioms are expressions or phrases in a language that have a figurative meaning different from the literal interpretation of the words. These expressions often convey a cultural or contextual meaning that may not be immediately apparent to non-native speakers. According to Langlotz (2006), the overall meaning of idioms is quite different from the meaning of their lexical constituents. This is the reason that a problem always arises when constituents of idioms are translated.

Regarding the interlingual translation of idioms, familiarity with source culture is required so that we can convey the exact sense for sense meanings of them in target text. For example, the sentence "A pain in the neck" will be translated into (گردن میں درد) (garden me dared - pain in the neck) instead of (پریشان کرنے والا شخص) (pareshan karny wala shakhs – irritating person). Similarly, "kick the bucket" will be translated into (بالٹی کو لات مارو) instead of (to die) .so in order to understand what above idiom stands for translator must know about its origin, interpretation and the specific cultural references. Translation is the process of reworking text from one language into another to maintain the original message and communication. It is not only about text but all the aspects regarding lingual and cultural constraints. According to Roman Jakobson "the translator records and transmit a message received from another source this transmission involves two equivalent messages into different codes"

Translating English idioms into Urdu presents a unique set of challenges due to the inherent differences between the two languages and their respective cultures. Here, we'll identify and analyze these challenges by using Vinay and Darbelnet's model of translation. Both are best known for their work in the field of translation studies that emphasizes the importance of equivalence in translation. The Vinay and Darbelnet's model outlines several translation procedures and strategies, emphasizing the translator's role in making choices to ensure equivalence between the source and target texts. Their model, often referred to as the "Translation Equivalence Theory," was introduced in their book "Stylistique Comparée du Français et de l'Anglais" (Stylistics: A Comparative Study of French and English), published

in 1958. The two general translation strategies identified by Vinay and Darbelnet are direct translation and oblique translation.

Direct translation also known as word-for-word translation is further divided into borrowing, calque and literal translation and the main focus is to maintain structure of the text rather than sense. In those cases where literal translation is not possible Vinay and Darbelnet suggest that the strategy of oblique translation must be used. It is further subdivided into transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. Here the translator chooses to express the meaning of a source language text by using a different grammatical structure or syntactic form in the target language. The goal of oblique translation is to convey the intended meaning more effectively or idiomatically in the target language, even if it means deviating from a literal or direct translation. An English idiom based on a western cultural concept might be unintelligible or lose its impact when translated literally into Urdu. The meaning of an idiom can change depending on the context in which it is used. For example, "spill the beans" (reveal a secret) can have different implications depending on the situation. Understanding the context is key to choosing the most appropriate Urdu equivalent. Grammatical structures between English and Urdu can differ significantly. Translating an idiom word-for-word might result in grammatically incorrect or awkward phrasing in Urdu. The present study is an attempt to highlight identification and analysis of challenges in translating English idioms into Urdu through the concept of oblique translation, we will elucidate how translation of idioms from SL to TL always maintains its message. As the main purpose of translation is to maintain the message conveyed in original text despite the fact whether the translation is type is "Word For word" or it is "Sense for sense".

The main purposes of the study are;

- To investigate the difficulties faced by a translator in translating English idioms into Urdu language by keeping cultural differences between the two languages in mind.
- To identify and describe the translation strategies used in the Urdu translation of English idioms according to Vinay and Darbelnet's updated model.
- To test the efficiency of Vinay and Darbelnet's strategies in solving these problems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Idioms are culturally embedded expressions that convey meanings beyond their literal interpretation, often presenting significant challenges in the process of translation. Translation

is a connection between two cultures and languages. It is a tool that can be used to transfer meaning from one language to another. Since 1960s Translational Studies have been developed as a separate discipline and after this time period it continued growing with emergence of different theories and evolvement of new procedures in translation of different texts within one language or from one language to another, etc.

Eugene Nida (1969) was a prominent American linguist and Bible translator, defined translation as “a linguistic process of substituting words from one language to another”

Dr. Basher, M. Aleem and M. Anjum (2021) conducted research on the strategies used by Pakistani translators for translating English idioms into Urdu. The researcher adopted quantitative research methodology and their findings revealed that paraphrase or non-idiomatic translation was the commonly used strategy of translating idioms with a score of 85% of sample. The researchers concluded that cultural context has a particular impact in the production, reception and consumption of idioms. S. Khizar and Dr. Akram (2023) carried out translation research on the analysis of the use of idiomatic expressions in the local and foreign English translations of “Manto’s Toba Tec” The researchers stated that idiomatic expressions are deeply rooted in linguistic and cultural distinctions, are often challenging to translate correctly. The study observed how these expressions are touched in both local and foreign English translations and their impact on the overall quality and cultural faithfulness of the translated texts. The researchers employed Mona Baker's typology as the primary framework for analysis. The findings of this research revealed the complex process of translating idiomatic expressions, shedding light on the complexities faced by translators in keeping the intended meaning, cultural references, and the emotional significance of the ST.

Adelnia and H. Dastjerdi (2011) conducted research on the translation of idiom in the book “What You Asked For” The paper classified the idioms into different categories and suggested some techniques and procedures to translate them. The researchers concluded that all the idioms do not have direct equivalents in any other language, because they are linguistic expressions which are typical for a language and specific to a single culture. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, two prominent translation scholars, proposed a translation theory that emphasizes the importance of equivalence in translation in their book "Stylistique Comparée du Français et de l'Anglais" (Stylistics: A Comparative Study of French and English1958) and proposed a model for translation that focuses on the linguistic aspects of the source and target languages. This model aims to guide translators in making decisions about how to convey

meaning from one language to another. The key concepts in Vinay and Darbelnet's model include: Direct translation also known as word-for-word translation and it is further subdivided into borrowing calque and literal translation. It involves transferring source SL text directly into TL text as in borrowing or maybe SL expression is transferred through literal translation in TL as in calque. Whereas, in literal translation the focus is on preserving the meaning of the SL expression as closely as possible. However, it allows for more flexibility in adapting the structure to maintain naturalness in the TL. Literal translation is most common between languages of same family and culture.

Oblique translation is sense-for-sense translation and is further subdivided into transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. Transposition changes part of speech of SL words. Modulation changes semantics and point of view of SL words. In adaptation, the translator modifies the SL expression to better suit the cultural and linguistic norms of the TL. Vinay and Darbelnet stress the importance of achieving equivalence, which goes beyond a word-for-word translation. Equivalence aims to capture the intended meaning, tone, and style of the source text in the translation and it is best for translating idioms and proverbs. Sarah I. Alqunaibet (June 2019) conducted research on exploring Vinay and Darbelnet's translation model in the translation of Ghassan Kanafani's novel "Men in the Sun" from Arabic to English to identify the most common strategies adapted by the translator of the novel based on Vinay and Darbelnet's model of translation. He explored the basic problems found in translation and used descriptive analytical research methodology. The findings revealed that the most frequent strategies were literal translation followed by transposition and modulation according to model. The findings also revealed two types of translation problems, linguistic problems including lexical and syntactic problems, and cultural problems including cultural expressions and cultural bound terms.

Sharei (2017) explored the use of literal and oblique procedure according to Vinay and Darbelnet's in the translation of the English novel The Man and The Sea in Persian, N. Daryabandari. He employed quantitative research methodology. The results showed that Daryabandari resorted to oblique translation by (75%) where literal translation had highest frequency of all strategies. In conclusion, the literature review has covered many various aspects regarding the translation of idioms. However, the literature shows a lack regarding investigating the accuracy of Vinay and Darbelnet model in English idioms translation into Urdu. Therefore, the present paper aims to cover this gap, contribute to the translation field and build on the present literature.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section will discuss the approaches, methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. The form of this research is qualitative descriptive. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), "quantitative research is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques." The data of the study has been collected from the speeches of native speakers and various internet resources. The researchers have employed Vinay and Darbelnet's models of translation. They discuss two types of translation; direct translation and oblique translation. The current study has adopted both direct and oblique translation for the translation of English idioms into Urdu language.

The focal point of this analysis is to identify and analyze the strategies and techniques that are employed by the translator for the translation of the English idiom by applying both direct method (borrowing, calque and literal translation) and oblique method (modulation, transposition, adaptation, equivalence). For this purpose, fifteen idioms are taken and analyzed. Idioms are socially and culturally bound expression so they have worked on the strategies of equivalences and adaptation.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A corpus of text data had been collected. The corresponding sample was extracted from different text books and internet resources. Some idioms had also been collected from "Real Life English" podcasts lessons. The English extracted sample was composed of 15 idioms and so was Urdu. Translating English idioms into Urdu involves navigating linguistic and cultural nuances to ensure accurate and effective communication. Idioms are expressions whose meanings cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of their individual words. Here are some considerations for translating English idioms into Urdu:

- English idioms often have figurative meanings that may not directly translate into Urdu. Translators need to convey the intended message rather than translating word-for-word.
- Some English idioms are deeply rooted in Western culture and may not have direct equivalents in Urdu. Translators must find culturally appropriate alternatives that convey a similar concept.
- The context in which an idiom is used may vary between languages. Translators should adapt idioms to fit the cultural and linguistic context of the target audience.

Network analysis was conducted to explore the social correction and findings were interpreted from the analysis. Two out of seven strategies have been detected and both of them are oblique translations. The strategies were identified by comparing the original text to the target text. Defined and described by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) the detected strategies were adaptation, and equivalence.

Idiom 1: Break the ice

Explanation: To initiate conversation in a social setting.

Urdu: ”بات چیت شروع کرنا“

Analysis: if we look at the literal meaning of this idiom, it is translated as ”برف کو توڑ دو“ As we know equivalence is the reflection of the same situation as whole which is in the original situation, by using different expression and stylistic. This expression is rooted in English culture and translator finds it difficult translating it into Urdu language because it doesn't have direct equivalent in Urdu language and to meet this difficulty, translators employ the strategy equivalence while different expression and lexicon have been used but it provides same sense and reader/listener understands it in a different context.

Idiom 2: Piece of cake

Explanation: Something very easy to do.

Urdu: ”بہت آسان کام“

Analysis: ”Piece of cake“ means ”کیک کا ٹکڑا“ if we go for literal or word-for-word translation. it is an idiomatic expression used to describe something that is very easy to do. Directly translating it into Urdu results in confusion or misunderstanding, as the literal meaning of the words does not convey the idiomatic sense of ease So, in order to give the sense of something very easy to do, equivalence translation strategy proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet has been employed ”بہت آسان کام“ is a translation that conveys the same idea of something being very easy or effortless, similar to the English idiom "piece of cake" While it is not a direct translation of the original English phrase, it captures the essence and meaning of the idiom in Urdu.

Idiom 3: Cry over spilled milk

Explanation: Not worrying about something that has already happened.

Urdu: ”اپ پچھتائے کیا ہوت جب چڑیاں چگ گئی کھیت“

Analysis: The English expression “cry over spilled milk” means “گرے ہوئے دودھ پر رونا” in Urdu which does not give any sense of not worrying about something that has already happened. So, for the purpose of overcoming this difficulty translators apply the strategy of adaptation proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet. In this way the expression has been adopted to a familiar Urdu cultural reference, “اب پچھائے کیا ہوت جب چڑیاں چگ گئیں کہیت ” This adaptation conveys the idea of regretting or lamenting over something that has already happened, similar to the English idiom "Cry over spilled milk."

Idiom 4: Kick the bucket

Explanation: To die

Urdu: “مر جانا”

Analysis: The expression “kick the bucket” is translated as “بالٹی کو لات مارو” if translators go for literal translation which doesn't give sense of death. The concept of "kicking the bucket" as a metaphor for dying does not have a direct equivalent in Urdu-speaking cultures. Therefore, finding a culturally sensitive expression to convey the same meaning without causing offense or misunderstanding is challenging. So, with the aim of meeting this difficulty translators go for oblique translation method that is equivalence to give the actual sense and the idiom would mean

“آخری سانس لینا” which conveys the idea of taking one's last breath, which is equivalent to the concept of dying in English.

Idiom 5: It is raining cats and dogs

Explanation: It is raining heavily

Urdu: “بہت نیز بارش ہو دبی بے”

Analysis: The expression “it is raining cats and dogs” is translated as “کتے اور بلیوں کی بارش ہو ” in Urdu language which gives no sense. Urdu doesn't have an idiom referencing raining animals so, there is a lack of direct equivalent for this expression in Urdu. Therefore, translators apply Vinay and Darbelnet's model's strategy of equivalence to maintain the actual sense of the expression in TL and by doing so, the expression would give the sense of “بہت نیز بارش ہو ” in Urdu language.

Idiom 6: Break a leg

Explanation: Wishing someone good luck

Urdu: ”کسی کو اچھی قسمت کی دعا دینا“

Analysis: The literal translation of this expression into Urdu language, "ٹانگ توڑ دو" doesn't convey the same meaning of wishing someone good luck. In Urdu, it is a prayer for success, but it's not idiomatic and Urdu does not convey the same sentiment, as breaking a leg is not traditionally associated with good luck in Urdu-speaking cultures. Therefore, finding a culturally appropriate expression to convey the same meaning is challenging. In order to overcome this difficulty, translators use the technique of equivalence suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet to give the sense of wishing someone good luck.

Idiom 7: Cost an arm and a leg

Explanation: Very expensive

Urdu: ”بہت قیمتی چیز“

Analysis: If the translator goes for literal translation of this expression, it means "ایک بازو اور" which does not convey the figurative meaning of something being very expensive also, the concept of equating high cost with body parts may not have a direct cultural equivalent in Urdu-speaking contexts. So, in order to overcome this difficulty translator can apply the strategy of equivalence proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet. Translators use the strategy of equivalence to identify concepts or expressions in Urdu that convey the idea of something being extremely expensive. While Urdu does not have a direct equivalent idiom, translators use an expression "بہت مہنگا" that communicate the same concept of high cost.

Idiom 8: Cold shoulder

Explanation: To ignore someone

Urdu: ”کسی کو نظر انداز کرنا“

Analysis: The English expression is translated as "ٹھنڈا کندا" in Urdu language if translators go for direct or word-to-word translation and is not conveying the sense of ignoring someone in TL also, it is a figurative expression that conveys a specific social behavior rather than a literal physical sensation. Translating such figurative language requires careful consideration of how to express the underlying meaning effectively in the target language. Therefore, translator uses an oblique translation method equivalence suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet to maintain the actual sense of SL in TL. "بے روح انداز" is a translation attempt that captures the sense of aloofness and indifference implied by the English idiom "cold shoulder." While "بے روح انداز" is a translation attempt that captures the sense of aloofness and indifference implied by the English idiom "cold shoulder."

literally translates to "lifeless manner," it conveys the idea of showing indifference or disregard towards someone in Urdu and maintains the figurative sense of deliberate disregard or indifference implied by the English idiom "cold shoulder."

Idiom 9: Out of frying pan into the fire

Explanation: Describe a situation where someone moves from a difficult or challenging circumstance to one that is even worse.

Urdu: "اسمان سے گرا کھجور میں اٹکا"

Analysis: In the case of the idiom "out of the frying pan into the fire," the literal translation of each word may not convey the idiomatic meaning effectively in Urdu language therefore, translators use the technique of adaptation proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet. Adaptation involves modifying the structure, wording, or cultural references of the source text to better suit the target language and culture. Therefore, an adaptation is necessary to convey the metaphorical concept of moving from a bad situation to a worse one. By applying the strategy of adaptation, the expression would mean "اسمان سے گرا کھجور میں اٹکا" which is conveying the same sense as it does in English.

Idiom 10: Walk on eggshells

Explanation: Someone is being extremely cautious, delicate, or sensitive in their actions or words

Urdu: "محاط ہو کر چلنا"

Analysis: Translating the idiom "walk on eggshells" into Urdu presents some difficulties due to the cultural and linguistic differences between English and Urdu. Since the idiom is deeply rooted in English culture, Urdu expression or metaphor doesn't capture the idea of being extremely cautious or delicate in one's actions or words to avoid upsetting someone or causing conflict. Therefore, translators go for strategy of equivalence proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, involves finding an equivalent expression or idiom in the TL that conveys the same meaning as the SL to give the exact sense of the idiom. The expression would be translated as "محاط ہو کر چلنا" This expression suggests moving cautiously and gently, akin to walking on eggshells, to avoid causing any disturbance or conflict. It conveys the idea of being careful and considerate in one's actions or words.

Idiom 11: To kill two birds with one stone

Explanation: Accomplish two different objectives with a single action or effort.

Urdu: "ایک تیر سے دو شکار"

Analysis: The English idiom "To kill two birds with one stone" is translated as "ایک پتھر سے" "دو پرندے مارنا" into Urdu language which is senseless. So, for the purpose of overcoming this difficulty translators apply the strategy of adaptation proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, involves altering the form or structure of the ST to better fit the TL and culture while preserving the intended meaning. In this way the expression has been adopted to a familiar Urdu cultural reference, "ایک تیر سے دو شکار" This metaphorical expression highlights the idea of achieving two things at once.

Idiom 12: Under the weather

Explanation: Describes someone who is feeling unwell or sick.

Urdu: "بیمار ہونا"

Analysis: The idiom "under the weather" is used to describe someone who is not feeling well and the expression is translated into Urdu as "موسم کے نیچے" which is not effectively conveying the same sense of mildness or informality that the English idiom carries. So, with the purpose of overcoming this difficulty, translators apply the strategy of equivalence proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet. While there isn't a direct equivalent in Urdu, we can look for a culturally appropriate expression that captures a similar concept so, Urdu equivalent would explain the meaning. Therefore, "under the weather" would be translated as "بیمار ہونا" into Urdu language.

Idiom 13: Bite a bullet

Explanation: Facing a difficult situation with courage

Urdu: "بھادری سے مشکلات کا سامنا کرنا"

Analysis: The expression "bite a bullet" means facing a difficult situation with courage. However, if we translate it into Urdu language it would mean "ایک گولی کاشنا" which is not making any sense. So, translating an English idiom "bite the bullet" into Urdu can be challenging due to differences in language structure, cultural nuances, and idiomatic expressions. However, the aim is to convey the essence or meaning of the idiom effectively in the target language. Therefore, in order to meet this difficulty translators, apply the strategy of equivalence proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet in their translation model and it would explain

the meaning rather than finding a direct translation. So, the idiom would be translated as "بھادری" "سے مشکلات کا سامنا کرنا"

Idiom 14: Hit the sack

Explanation: To go to sleep.

Urdu: "بیٹر پر مارنا"

Analysis: English idiom "hit the sack" is translated as "بوری مارو" in Urdu language which is not giving the sense of going to sleep. Translators find it difficult to translate because the Urdu language do not have a single phrase or expression that encompasses the exact combination of words and connotations found in the English idiom "hit the sack." Translators need to consider the semantic nuances of both languages to find the most suitable alternative that preserves the intended meaning and tone. Therefore, translators apply the strategy of equivalence proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet with the aim to give actual sense in the TL. So, the idiom would be translated as "c which effectively conveys the action of going to bed or preparing to sleep, similar to the English idiom "hit the sack."

Idiom 15: Hit the nail on the head

Explanation: To describe precisely or accurately a problem, issue, or solution.

Urdu: "کسی مسئلے کو بالکل درست طریقے سے بیان کریں۔"

Analysis: English idiom "hit the nail on the head" actually describes precisely or accurately a problem, issue, or solution. If we translate it literally into Urdu language it would mean "سر پر" "کیل مارو" which is senseless and translators find it difficult to give the exact sense of the expression in TL because Urdu language lack an idiom or phrase that captures the exact sense of precise accuracy conveyed by it. Vinay and Darbelnet's strategy of equivalence is helpful to maintain the real sense of this expression. By applying it, the translation would maintain the figurative sense of precision and accuracy implied by the English idiom. It suggests that someone has correctly identified or addressed a problem or issue.

5. CONCLUSION

Translating idioms is one of the most complex and difficult tasks for translators. Gottlieb suggests that "an idiom is difficult to decode correctly for someone who only knows the normal meanings of its constituent elements" (1997). The task of translating English idioms into Urdu presents numerous challenges arising from linguistic structure, cultural nuances and contextual

relevance. Cultural context has a significant influence on the production, reception and use of idioms. The same ideas and expressions are presented differently in different regions. From navigating the complexities of figurative language to preserving the intended meaning and effect, translators face obstacles that require a deep understanding of both languages and their respective cultural contexts. Jean Paul Vinay and Darbelnet have suggested some of the strategies in their translation model that are helpful for translators in translating idioms from SL to TL without losing the essence of original expression. This model emphasizes the importance of considering linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors in the translation process, enabling translators to produce accurate and culturally appropriate interpretations of idiomatic expressions. The strategy of equivalence and adaptation are mostly used in the translation of idioms. A careful and creative application of these strategies has been helpful for translators in overcoming the difficulties of translating idioms and it has promoted understanding and communication between English and Urdu speakers.

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