

LITERARY TRANSLATION STUDIES OF THE ENGLISH PHRASES

Azadova Asaloy Jaxongir kizi

*Linguistics (English) major, Urgench State
University named after Abu Rayhon Beruni*

*Scientific supervisor: **Abidova Rohatoy Khudaybergenovna**
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philology, Associate Professor,
Department of English Language and Literature,
Urgench State University named after Abu Rayhon Beruni*

Abstract

Current paper examines translation studies of English phraseological units idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions within global scholarship, emphasizing challenges like semantic opacity, cultural asymmetry, and structural rigidity during cross-linguistic transfer. Key strategies identified include functional equivalence, paraphrasing, domestication, and hybrid adaptations to preserve motivational and emotive macro-components. Ultimately, English phrases demand balanced foreignization and accessibility to retain stylistic richness, informing both theory and practice in multilingual settings.

Keywords

phraseology, phraseological units, idioms, collocations, semantic macro-components, translation strategies, cultural asymmetry, functional equivalence, literary translation

Introduction

Literary translation studies of English phrases represent a pivotal intersection of linguistics, cultural hermeneutics, and textual adaptation, where phraseological units idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions challenge translators to negotiate semantic opacity and cultural embeddedness. These non-literal constructs, rooted in historical, social, and idiomatic specificity, often resist direct equivalence, as evidenced in foundational lexicological frameworks distinguishing them from free word-groups.

English phrases embody motivational macro-components and stylistic registers that demand functional rather than literal transfer, influencing Descriptive Translation Studies' target-oriented norms. In literary contexts, such as Shakespearean idioms or Dickensian collocations, translators confront pragmatic mismatches, particularly in poly-systems like Uzbek-English, where cultural asymmetry risks stylistic dilution. While empirical works highlight strategies like domestication and paraphrasing, gaps persist in corpus-driven analyses of emotive preservation across genres. This article reviews global scholarship to elucidate adaptive methodologies, informing pedagogical and professional practices in literary phrase translation.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach within descriptive translation studies (DTS) and corpus-based phraseology analysis, synthesizing qualitative interpretation with quantitative validation to investigate English phraseological units' translatability. Triangulation via expert revisers ensures reliability; limitations include corpus size and polysystem biases. Ethical norms follow target-oriented DTS, prioritizing receptor resonance without source-culture imposition.

Literature review

Translation studies on English phrases, particularly idioms and phraseological units, form a vital area of inquiry, grappling with their cultural specificity, semantic opacity, and structural rigidity during cross-linguistic transfer.

Historical Foundations. Early scholarship, rooted in Vinogradov's (1947) classification of fusions, unities, and collocations, established phraseology as non-equivalent to free word-groups,

influencing later works like Amosova (1963) on phrasemes and Koonin (1977) on semantic macro-components. Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), pioneered by Toury (1995), shifted focus to target-oriented norms, analyzing how English idioms adapt within polysystems rather than prescriptive fidelity.

Key Challenges Identified. Literature consistently notes semantic loss from literal translation, cultural asymmetry (e.g., "kick the bucket" lacking direct Uzbek proxies), and pragmatic mismatches, as in Zarei and Rahimi (2020) where students mis rendered metaphors 14% less effectively via literals. Uzbek-English studies highlight ellipsis and frequency gaps, with Abdulla Qodiriy's *Bygone Days* exemplifying lost stylistic richness in Reese's (translator) functional shifts.

Prevailing Strategies. Empirical reviews advocate a hierarchy: functional equivalence (Komissarov's pragmatic level, preserving emotive force as in "His spirits soared" for Uzbek heart metaphors), paraphrasing (86% success rate per Zarei), and domestication/substitution for accessibility. Systematic analyses favor hybrids, balancing foreignization for cultural retention with omission for untranslatables, evident in Vietnamese-English and Central Asian corpora.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications. Baker (2018) extends motivational analysis to translation, urging corpus-based validation, while cross-linguistic theses stress training in cultural mediation. Recent Uzbek scholarship synthesizes these for literary works, reinforcing idioms as cultural interpreters over mere linguistics.

Discussion: Definition and Features

Phraseology, as a branch of lexicology, focuses on stable word-groups exhibiting structural stability and transferred meanings, including set-expressions, set-phrases, fixed word-groups, collocations, phraseological units, and idioms.

Free word-groups, while not entirely unrestricted, are governed by logic, common sense, and grammatical rules, distinguishing them from phraseological units. A phraseological unit constitutes a reproduced, idiomatic (non-motivated) or partially motivated unit modeled on free word-groups or sentences (e.g., proverbs), semantically and syntactically equivalent to words. Key characteristics encompass fixedness of components, unchangeability of word order, and metaphoric meaning. Syntactically, these units classify as substantive, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, or interjectional.

Semantic Structure. The semantic structure comprises seven macro-components: denotational (objective reality), evaluative (value judgment), motivational (inner form), emotive (subjective feelings), stylistic (communicative register), grammatical (morphosyntactic variations), and gender (object class specification, e.g., men, women). These elements ensure comprehensive semantic encoding beyond literal interpretation. The semantic structure of phraseological units, as delineated in lexicological theory, constitutes a multifaceted framework comprising seven distinct macro-components that collectively encode meaning beyond surface-level literalism.

Denotational macro-component is foundational element that encapsulates the objective referential content, delineating the extralinguistic reality denoted by the unit, such as the denotatum of "kick the bucket" as death rather than literal action on a container. It anchors the phrase in empirical or conceptual domains, ensuring semantic stability across contexts.

Evaluative macro-component or the connotative appraisal emerges, embedding value judgments positive, negative, or neutral that reflect societal or cultural assessments, exemplified in "a black sheep" conveying moral disapprobation within familial norms.

Motivational macro-component corresponding to the inner form, this component elucidates the etymological or associative imagery motivating the unit's opacity, as in "the green-eyed monster" deriving from Shakespearean jealousy imagery, thus revealing metaphoric genesis.

Emotive macro-component layer conveys subjective modality, indexing the speaker's affective stance irony, sympathy, or disdain infusing phrases like "tit for tat" with retributive emotional resonance.

Stylistic macro-component specifies the communicative register, stratifying usage across neutral, elevated, colloquial, or vulgar spheres, such as "by bell, book, and candle" aligning with archaic ritualistic formality.

Grammatical macro-component encompassing morphological and syntactic valency, this governs permissible transformations, like adjectival flexibility in "red tape" versus verbal fixity in "to bear a grudge."

Gender macro-component explicitly signaling ontological categories (e.g., masculine "a heavy hitter," feminine "the fair sex"), it delimits referent classes, enhancing precision in anthropocentric units. Collectively, these macro-components orchestrate holistic semantic encoding, transcending literal decomposition to sustain idiomatic integrity in phraseological analysis and translation.

Origin. Phraseological units exhibit diverse etymological origins, reflecting the interplay of specialized discourse, cultural heritage, and intercultural borrowing, which underpin their semantic opacity and contextual stability.

Terminological-Professional Sources: Units like "center of gravity" emerge from physics and technical lexicon, where domain-specific stability transfers into general usage, retaining denotational precision while acquiring idiomatic extension. Similarly, "to put the finishing touch" derives from artisanal or professional completion rituals, illustrating lexicalization of procedural metaphors.

Literary Origins: British literature furnishes vivid examples, such as Shakespeare's "the green-eyed monster" denoting jealousy, where metaphoric imagery fuses with evaluative connotations, and Dickens' "never say die" encoding perseverance, embedding narrative-specific emotive resonance.

Cultural Traditions and Superstitions: Traditional customs yield "baker's dozen" (thirteen items, from medieval baking excesses), while superstitions inform "a black sheep" (familial deviant, rooted in demonic markings), both layering evaluative and motivational macro-components onto historical praxis.

Historical Events and Everyday Phenomena: Political history contributes "to do a Thatcher" (prolonged tenure, from Margaret Thatcher's premiership), and mundane realities produce "carry coals to Newcastle" (superfluous action, referencing England's coal hub), highlighting diachronic adaptation of factual referents.

Borrowed Phraseological Units: Borrowings encompass biblical sources ("the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing" for organizational disconnect), Greek myths ("a Procrustean bed" for coercive conformity), Roman history ("to cross the Rubicon" for irreversible commitment), American variants ("a heavy hitter" for influential figure), and Latin/French loans ("second to none"; "the fair sex"), each importing foreign motivational forms into English polysemy. This etymological heterogeneity underscores phraseological units' role as cultural repositories, necessitating source-oriented analysis in translation studies to preserve inner form integrity.

Classification. Phraseological classification systems provide systematic taxonomies for analyzing the structural, semantic, and functional properties of units, with Vinogradov's tripartite model and subsequent alternatives offering complementary lenses for lexicological inquiry.

Vinogradov delineates three core categories based on motivation and stability. Phraseological fusions represent fully non-motivated units, where component meanings bear no synchronic relation to the holistic sense (e.g., "kick the bucket" for dying, defying literal

decomposition). Phraseological unities exhibit metaphoric motivation, deriving from imagery in individual components (e.g., "to wash one's dirty linen in public" for public scandal disclosure). Phraseological collocations permit limited variability while maintaining collocational constancy (e.g., "to bear a grudge/malice," but not "fancy").

Amosova (1963) distinguishes phrasemes two-member groups with one specialized dependent meaning (e.g., "small beer/hours") from idioms, which achieve holistic idiomaticity (e.g., "red tape" for bureaucracy). Arxangelskiy (1964), Babkin (1964), and Sanskiy (1963) emphasize nominative types, including substantive coordination ("wear and tear") and predicative structures ("ships that pass in the night"). Smirnitskiy (1956) and Koonin (1963, 1977) extend to nominative-communicative units (e.g., "to break the ice"- "the ice is broken"), interjectional expressions ("Good heavens!"; "Like hell!"), and communicative proverbs ("Life is not a bed of roses"; "Speech is silver, but silence is golden"). These frameworks collectively illuminate gradient idiomaticity, informing translation strategies by mapping semantic integrity to target-language equivalents").

Research outcome

A translation studies approach to English phraseological units, encompassing idioms, collocations, fusions, and unities, integrates descriptive, functional, and cultural paradigms to address their semantic opacity, motivational inner form, and contextual embeddedness during cross-linguistic transfer.

Initial analysis employs Vinogradov's typology to classify units: fusions ("kick the bucket") demand de-literalization due to zero motivation; unities ("to wash one's dirty linen in public") permit partial image retention; collocations ("to bear a grudge") allow synonymic substitution within valency limits. Semantic macro-component mapping denotational, evaluation, emotive, etc. identifies translatable cores versus culture-bound elements, prioritizing holistic integrity over component fidelity.

Strategic Hierarchy. Domestication leads for accessibility: replace "carry coals to Newcastle" with Uzbek equivalents evoking surplus (e.g., "o'rmonga o'tin bilan bormoq"). Functional equivalence preserves pragmatics, as in "the green-eyed monster" rendered via local jealousy metaphors. Paraphrasing (86% efficacy per empirical reviews) or omission suits untranslatable, while foreignization retains etymological traces (e.g., footnotes for "Procrustean bed"). Corpus validation tests target-language naturalness.

Cultural and Pedagogical Application. Target-poly-system norms (Toury, 1995) guide adaptation, favoring Skopos-driven shifts in literary contexts like Dickensian idioms. Pedagogically, this trains translators via contrastive phraseology (English-Uzbek), emphasizing motivational reconstruction to mitigate loss in evaluative/stylistic layers. This approach ensures phraseological units function as cultural mediators, balancing source fidelity with receptor resonance

Summary

Phraseology, a lexicology branch, studies stable word-groups like idioms and collocations with fixed structure and figurative meaning, distinct from free combinations governed by logic and grammar. Phraseological units feature fixed components, immutable order, and metaphoric semantics, classified syntactically as substantive, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, or interjectional. Their semantic structure includes seven macro-components: denotational (referent reality), evaluative (value judgment), motivational (inner form), emotive (feelings), stylistic (register), grammatical (morphosyntax), and gender (object class). Units originate from professional terms, literature, traditions, superstitions, history, and borrowings. And translation demands strategies like functional equivalence, domestication, and paraphrasing to preserve motivational and emotive layers amid cultural gaps, as explored in global studies.

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