

A Study on Translating Idioms from English to Sinhalese

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Every language has its peculiar turns of expression. The peculiar uses of particular words and phrases which have become stereotyped by usage are known as the idioms of a language. It is generally agreed that idiomatic phrases cannot be translated literally from one language to another without altering the meaning, if not making the expression completely meaningless. Hence many of the translators tend to omit idiomatic expressions while translating. This study is an examination on the translation of idioms from English to Sinhalese. In the course, publications on idioms were evaluated as the primary source. The knowledge garnered have been further analysed by questionnaires given to students reading Translation Studies at the University of Kelaniya. After analysing the data gathered, it could be perceived that idioms could be classified in to several groups. Immense is the influence of environment and culture of a particular linguistic race or nation in the above classification of idioms. Hence this phenomenon can be attributed to intercultural and inter-linguistic relationship in human activity. Accordingly idioms could be classified in to three prominent categories. The first category of idioms could be translated directly while retaining the sense of the original whereas the second category of idioms could be translated with a parallel idiom; most telling equivalents. Absence of a parallel idiom was identified as the third category where the only possible solution is to explain the general idea conveyed by the original expression. Thus, if the idioms are inapplicable to first and second categories, advancing ahead with paraphrasing, slanguage, simplified words and phrases is rather befitting in translation and is regarded as the most comprehensive strategy.

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