

## PHRASEOLOGICAL LACUNAE AS A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR MACHINE TRANSLATION

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**Abstract:** the development of technologies has made machine translation (MT) widely used in education, business, and international communication. However, its quality uneven, especially in rendering idiomatic and culturally bound expressions. Phraseological units are deeply rooted in national mentality and collective memory. Therefore, the inability of MT systems to correctly interpret them shows the importance of studying phraseological lacunae as a pressing issue.

**Keywords:** phraseological lacunae, idioms, machine translation, cultural meaning, translation difficulties.

The development of technologies has made machine translation (MT) widely used in education, business, and international communication. As digital tools and artificial intelligence continue to advance, more people and organizations rely on MT for translating texts, conducting cross-cultural exchanges, and facilitating global collaboration. However, its quality remains uneven, particularly when dealing with complex linguistic phenomena such as idiomatic and culturally bound expressions. Phraseological units—including idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions—are deeply rooted in the national mentality, historical background, and collective memory of a culture. These expressions often carry meanings and connotations that extend far beyond their literal words. Therefore, the inability of current MT systems to correctly interpret and translate such phraseological units accurately highlights a significant challenge. This demonstrates the importance of studying phraseological lacunae as a pressing issue, as failing to bridge these linguistic gaps can lead to miscommunication, loss of nuance, and misunderstanding in international contexts.

Although modern neural networks have significantly enhanced the accuracy of lexical and grammatical translation in recent years, they consistently encounter substantial difficulties when it comes to rendering phraseological units with precise and culturally appropriate equivalents. These challenges often stem from the unique, context-dependent meanings and deep-rooted cultural connotations that such expressions carry in each language, which frequently cannot be captured through direct or literal translation. As a result, a considerable gap exists between the technological advancements that underpin machine translation systems and the nuanced requirements of cultural adequacy and idiomatic usage. This existing gap ultimately creates a fundamental contradiction within the field of machine translation. Consequently, this contradiction leads to an important and complex question: how can machine translation systems effectively overcome the persistent problem of phraseological lacunae—those gaps in translation where phraseological expressions do not have direct, ready-made equivalents in the target language, and what strategies or technological innovations might be necessary to bridge this divide in an increasingly multilingual world?

The purpose of this research is to comprehensively analyze and elucidate the role of phraseological lacunae as a significant and often underestimated barrier in the field of machine translation. In addition, this study seeks to delve into the underlying factors that contribute to the complexity of interpreting

these lacunae, and to propose a set of practical and innovative solutions that can facilitate their more effective and accurate interpretation by automated translation systems. By addressing this specific challenge, the research aims to enhance the overall quality and reliability of machine-generated translations, particularly in contexts where idiomatic expressions and culturally specific phrases pose substantial difficulties.

Units of Phraseology often carry metaphorical and cultural meanings that exceed their literal forms. These linguistic expressions are deeply rooted in specific cultural and historical contexts, and their meanings often cannot be deduced from the meanings of the individual words they contain. As a result, Machine Translation (MT) systems frequently produce word-by-word translations, which may lead to serious mistakes in meaning and miscommunication, especially in the case of idioms, proverbs, and other fixed expressions. Human translators, on the other hand, skillfully apply functional equivalents or explanatory translation strategies, aiming to convey the intended meaning and cultural nuance, something that, at present, MT technologies cannot reliably replicate. Detailed analysis shows that MT tools (such as Google Translate and DeepL) tend to translate common collocations and basic phrases more accurately than idioms or proverbs, which often require deeper contextual and cultural understanding. Therefore, it is suggested that the integration of comprehensive phraseological dictionaries, alongside culturally informed corpora, into MT systems could potentially enhance their accuracy and make them more effective in dealing with the complexities of phraseological units and culturally loaded language.

Phraseological lacunae show one of the most important and persistent challenges for machine translation. These gaps, often rooted in deep-seated cultural, historical, and linguistic differences, underscore the limits of technological progress in the field of automated language processing. Despite significant advancements in artificial intelligence and natural language processing, the ability of machines to accurately render meanings across languages remains constrained by the absence of direct equivalents and context-specific expressions. This ongoing difficulty highlights the continuing and irreplaceable importance of human cultural and linguistic competence in translation, which cannot be fully replicated by current technologies. In light of these challenges, future research should increasingly focus on developing and refining hybrid approaches that intelligently combine the computational power of AI models with the nuanced insights provided by rich linguistic resources and human expertise. Such integration is essential to ensure not only semantic accuracy—conveying the intended meaning of the source text—but also cultural adequacy, where translated content resonates appropriately with target audiences. This balanced approach is expected to drive more effective and context-sensitive machine translation systems in the future.

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