

# SEMANTICS AND TRANSLATABILITY OF WINGED EXPRESSIONS IN THE RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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## Annotation:

This article examines the semantic features and translatability of winged expressions—idiomatic phrases or fixed expressions with cultural or historical significance—in Russian and English languages. It discusses the origin, classification, and semantic fields of such expressions and explores the translation challenges they pose. By comparing examples from both languages, this study highlights the importance of cultural context in achieving accurate translation and proposes strategies for effective equivalence.

## Keywords:

*Winged expressions, idioms, semantics, translation, cultural context, equivalence*

Winged expressions are fixed idiomatic constructions with figurative meanings that have evolved into culturally loaded references over time. They often originate from literary texts, political speeches, religious sources, and media. Their stability in usage and imagery makes them a rich object of study in both semantics and translation theory.<sup>1</sup> The complexity of such expressions lies not only in their linguistic form but also in their intertextual and symbolic layers. In the context of Russian and English, many winged expressions serve as cultural shorthand for historical experiences and literary heritages.

A significant number of winged expressions have literary roots. For example, Shakespearean lines such as 'All that glitters is not gold' have entered everyday English use. In Russian, similar examples include 'И кто кого — мы или он нас?' from Bulgakov's works.<sup>2</sup>

Another category includes socio-political phrases, like 'Big Brother is watching you' (Orwell) or 'железный занавес' (Iron Curtain), which encapsulate complex ideologies. Folkloric expressions, such as Russian proverbs ('Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда') or English idioms ('Don't count your chickens before they hatch'), also fall under winged phrases due to their popular and enduring nature.

The semantics of winged expressions are rich in metaphor, allusion, and sometimes irony. These expressions convey meanings that extend far beyond the literal interpretation. For instance, 'skeleton in the closet' in English or 'пустить пыль в глаза' in Russian implies hidden shame or deceit, which can be challenging to convey accurately across languages. Winged expressions often rely on shared cultural knowledge, which determines their semantic transparency. This makes them highly context-dependent and semantically layered.

<sup>1</sup> Vinay, J.P. & Darbelnet, J. (1995). *Comparative Stylistics of French and English*. John Benjamins.

<sup>2</sup> Baranov, A.N. & Dobrovol'skii, D.O. (2008). *Phraseology in the Russian Language*. Moscow: Znack.

The translation of winged expressions poses serious semantic and pragmatic difficulties. Direct or literal translation can distort or obscure the intended meaning. Translators often face the dilemma of balancing faithfulness to the source text with clarity and resonance in the target language. Linguistic gaps, cultural disparities, and pragmatic differences require translators to be both linguistically competent and culturally informed.

Moreover, some idioms are untranslatable due to a lack of equivalent cultural concept in the target language. This may require paraphrasing, annotation, or complete omission, depending on the communicative priorities of the text.

Translation strategies vary depending on the purpose of translation and target audience. Among them:

- **Literal Translation with Annotations:** Used in academic texts where precision is important.
- **Equivalent Substitution:** Finding an idiom with the same meaning in the target language (e.g., 'Когда рак на горе свистнет' → 'When pigs fly').
- **Descriptive Translation:** Explaining the idea behind the expression when no equivalent exists.
- **Borrowing:** Directly adopting expressions that are globally recognized (e.g., 'Achilles' heel').<sup>3</sup>

Each strategy has its own merits and must be chosen based on context, audience, and text function.

Let us examine some Russian-English examples and the corresponding translation strategies:

- 'Не всё то золото, что блестит' → 'All that glitters is not gold' (equivalent substitution).
- 'После дождика в четверг' → 'When pigs fly' (equivalence + cultural substitution).
- 'Авгиевы конюшни' → 'Augean stables' (mythological borrowing).
- 'Заруби себе на носу' → 'Make a mental note' (descriptive translation).
- 'На всякий пожарный случай' → 'Just in case' (functional translation).

These comparisons show that no single approach fits all situations. A flexible strategy based on context produces the most accurate and idiomatic translations.

To ensure the meaningful translation of winged expressions, translators must employ a blend of linguistic accuracy, cultural awareness, and stylistic flexibility. The translator acts not only as a linguistic mediator but also as a cultural interpreter. Ignoring the figurative and historical essence of winged expressions may lead to significant communication failure. Therefore, translation studies should continue to prioritize this area for further theoretical and practical development.

## References:

<sup>1</sup> Vinay, J.P. & Darbelnet, J. (1995). Comparative Stylistics of French and English. John Benjamins.

<sup>3</sup> Newmark, P. (1988). A Textbook of Translation. Prentice Hall.



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- <sup>6</sup> Bassnett, S. (2014). Translation Studies. Routledge.