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Linguistic and Cultural Considerations in Translating Idioms into Arabic

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate this work to my mother and to my father , I also dedicate it to my wife, the source of my support and love, and to my dear children. Warm thanks go to my colleagues at Amar Thelidji University of Laghouat.

Ksenna Mhamed

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the challenges of translating idioms from English into Arabic, focusing on how cultural and linguistic differences between the two languages affect the accuracy and effectiveness of translations. The study addresses key questions related to the impact of these differences on the translation process and their effect on Arabic readers. A mixed-methods approach, combining comparative and analytical methodologies, is used. The study includes a set of selected English idioms and their Arabic translations, followed by an analysis based on cultural and linguistic features. The results indicate that linguistic and cultural differences have a significant impact on the translation of idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic. Thus, the study emphasizes the need for a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures to achieve effective translation. Additionally, it highlights the necessity for translators to develop a variety of strategies specifically designed for translating idiomatic expressions to overcome the challenges posed by cultural and linguistic differences.

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General introduction

Background of the Study

Idioms are among the most important components of the English language, characterized by figurative meanings that often differ from their literal interpretations. This reflects their complexity and the difficulty of understanding them outside their original context. Translation is an essential tool for transferring knowledge and facilitating understanding between cultures; however, translating idioms poses significant challenges due to the difficulty of preserving their original meaning. This process is not limited to finding equivalent words; it also requires a thorough understanding of both linguistic meanings and cultural associations. The complexity of translating idioms increases when dealing with culturally and linguistically different languages, such as English and Arabic.

Statement of the problem

The differences between the Arabic and English languages in the fields of culture and linguistics pose significant challenges when translating idioms, particularly in maintaining their original meaning and ensuring an appropriate impact on readers. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following questions:

What are the linguistic and cultural challenges faced when translating English idioms into Arabic?

From this question, several sub-questions arise:

Sub-question 1: How do Linguistic differences between English and Arabic impact the translation of idioms?

Sub-question 2: How do cultural differences between English and Arabic impact the translation of idioms?

Sub-question 3: What strategies can translators use to ensure that translations are linguistically accurate and culturally relevant?

Hypotheses of the study

Based on the above research questions, we propose the following research hypotheses:

Translators face numerous linguistic and cultural challenges when translating English idioms into Arabic, which can result in a loss of meaning or cultural relevance.

From this central hypothesis, several sub-hypotheses emerge:

Hypothesis 1: Linguistic differences between English and Arabic can significantly affect the accuracy of idiom translations.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural differences between English and Arabic can significantly affect the accuracy of idiom translations.

Hypothesis 3: Translators can employ various strategies to ensure that idioms are translated while preserving their linguistic and cultural contexts.

Significance of the study

This study is expected to be useful for the following audiences:

For the researcher: This study can highlight the linguistic and cultural considerations necessary for effective translation.

For academics: Understanding how to effectively translate idioms between English and Arabic can greatly improve cross-cultural communication, facilitating better interaction and understanding between speakers of these languages.

Objective of the study

Corresponding to the formulation of the problem, the research objective is aimed at:

- Examining how linguistic differences between English and Arabic impact the translation of idioms.

- Examining how cultural differences between English and Arabic affect the translation of idioms.
- Exploring strategies that translators can use to overcome these linguistic and cultural challenges.

Motivation of the Study

The primary motivation for this study is to explore the gap between English and Arabic in the translation of idioms, taking into account linguistic and cultural differences. The goal is to preserve the original meaning of these expressions while ensuring that the translation effectively reaches the target audience.

Methodology

To address the problem at hand, this study will employ comparative and analytical methods by comparing and analyzing the structural and cultural differences in translating idioms from English into Arabic.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted on translating idioms into Arabic. Examples of these studies include:

One study conducted by Monira Akbari, titled “The Role of Culture in Translation,” published in the *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies* in 2013, emphasizes the influence of cultural factors on the translation process. However, her study does not illuminate specific strategies to overcome the challenges faced in translating idioms between languages with significant cultural differences, such as English and Arabic.

Furthermore, Magda Madkour, in her article “Linguistic Levels of Translation: A General Exploration of Translation Difficulties in Literary Texts,” published in the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* in 2016, explores how different linguistic levels—

such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics affect the translation process and highlights the need for translators to possess not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness. However, her study does not specifically focus on the strategies needed to address the translation of English idioms into Arabic.

Additionally, Atiqah Nurul Asri and Dia Rushmawati, in their study titled “Innovative Teaching of English Idioms to EFL Learners,” published in the *Journal of English Language Teaching Adi Buana* in 2017, emphasize the effectiveness of interactive and context-based teaching techniques in enhancing learners’ understanding of idioms. However, while the study provides valuable insights into pedagogical strategies, it does not extensively address the challenges of translating these idioms into other languages, especially in contexts where cultural differences play a significant role, such as between English and Arabic.

Another study conducted by Mostafa Oualif, in his article “Translating Idioms from English into Arabic: Difficulties and Strategies,” published in *AWEJ for Translation & Literacy Studies* in 2017, addresses the challenges faced by translators when rendering idioms from English into Arabic. He identifies key difficulties, such as cultural differences, lack of direct equivalents, and the potential loss of meaning during translation.

Also, Faruquzzaman, Rezaul Karim, and Abdullah Mohammad Kabir Chowdhury, in their study “An Analysis of Arabic-English Translation: Problems and Prospects,” published in *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* in 2019, examine the challenges in translating between Arabic and English. The authors identify several key issues that translators face, including linguistic differences, cultural nuances, and the lack of equivalent expressions in the target language. However, the study primarily focuses on the linguistic aspects of translation, offering limited discussion of the cultural challenges that idioms present. This leaves a gap in

understanding how cultural factors influence the translation process, particularly when dealing with culturally bound idioms.

Mimouna Zitouni, in her article “Interdependence of Culture and Translation with Special Reference to the Arabic Translation of Cultural Terms in *Romeo and Juliet*,” published in the *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* in 2022, examines the intricate relationship between culture and translation, specifically focusing on how cultural terms are rendered in the Arabic version of Shakespeare's play. Zitouni argues that cultural context plays a crucial role in the translation process, as the meaning and significance of cultural terms often vary between languages. However, while her study provides important insights into the challenges of translating cultural terms, it does not focus on the impact of linguistic considerations on the translation of idioms.

These studies highlight the complexities involved in translating idioms from English to Arabic, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach that considers both linguistic and cultural factors. Despite the extensive research on idiom translation, there is a lack of studies that specifically address the translation of idioms from English to Arabic. This gap underscores the necessity for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural and linguistic differences affect translation accuracy between English and Arabic.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured into an introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction outlines the statement of the problem, the significance and objectives of the study, the methodology employed, and a literature review. The first chapter reviews the nature of idioms by providing an overview of their definitions, characteristics, related concepts, and classifications based on usage, semantics, and syntax. The second chapter delves into the cultural and linguistic aspects of translating idioms, defining culture and translation while exploring their

interrelationship; it identifies the challenges translators face and presents effective strategies for overcoming these challenges. The third chapter offers a linguistic and cultural analysis of selected English idioms translated into Arabic, illustrating the complexities involved in idiom translation through specific examples. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the study's findings and suggests recommendations for future research.

Chapter One: The Nature of Idioms

Introduction

Idioms are widely used in many languages and are essential for language acquisition. English is rich in idioms, and understanding and using them correctly is crucial for developing language skills; thus, they pose a significant challenge to translators due to their figurative meanings and cultural complexities.

This chapter provides an overview of idioms, starting with an examination of their foundational concepts and distinctive features, by differentiating idioms from related linguistic phenomena such as proverbs, collocations, and metaphors. Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate the significance of idioms and classify them based on various criteria, such as usage, semantics, and syntax.

I.1 The Concept of Idioms

Several researchers have provided diverse definitions of idioms. Simpson (2004) describes idioms as “clusters of words whose meaning can hardly be deduced from their constituent parts” (93). This illuminates two key characteristics of idioms: their metaphorical origins and their non-compositional meanings. However, it does not address the crucial role of cultural and contextual factors in idiomatic usage and interpretation.

Similarly, Langlotz (2006) defines idioms as “peculiar linguistic constructions that have raised many eyebrows in linguistics and often confuse newcomers to a language” (1). This definition emphasizes the puzzling nature of idioms, but it lacks mention of their figurative, non-compositional meanings and their dependence on cultural and contextual knowledge.

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009) provides a broader definition, stating that “an idiom is a group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word” (871). While this definition highlights the fixed relationship between a group of words and their specialized meaning, it could also encompass other types of multi-word expressions, such as collocations or metaphors. Additionally, the definition does not address the importance of cultural and contextual factors.

O'Dell and McCarthy (2010) concisely point out the key characteristics of idioms as “fixed combinations of words whose meaning is often difficult to guess from the meaning of each individual word” (6). This definition underlines the fixed, unalterable form of idioms and their non-literal meanings. However, it is important to note that some idioms have more transparent and straightforward meanings.

After showing many definitions of idioms, it can be said that idioms are fixed, figurative, non-compositional multi-word phrases that derive their specialized meanings from metaphorical

origins. Their usage and interpretation is crucially dependent on the cultural knowledge and contextual factors surrounding their use.

I.2 Related Concepts

Several concepts are related to idioms, including proverbs, collocations, and metaphors. These concepts will be explored and explained below.

I.2-1. Proverbs

Proverbs are a concept related to idioms, according to the Langlotz (2006) “a proverb or proverbial expression invokes a concrete situation as the metaphorical model for a recurrent culturally significant situation involving abstract relations or entities” (44). Langlotz's definition agrees with the essential characteristics of idioms, which also rely on metaphorical, non-literal language to express specific meanings.

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009), proverbs are “a short well-known statement that gives advice or expresses something that is generally true” (1398). This definition also reveals an important conceptual overlap between idioms and proverbs. Both proverbs and idioms use figurative, non-literal language and rely on concise, concrete expressions to convey meanings.

As O'Dell and McCarthy (2010) note, “proverbs are short sentences which refer to something most people have experienced and which give advice or warnings. Like idioms, their form is fixed, and it is not always possible to guess the meaning from looking at the individual words in the proverb” (26). In their definition, O'Dell and McCarthy highlighted that proverbs, like idioms, share certain characteristics such as utilizing concise language to communicate meanings.

After outlining some definitions of proverbs, we can say that the basic similarity between proverbs and idioms is evident in their use of figurative language, which relies on context and culture rather than literal language to convey meaning and implications. Additionally, both proverbs and idioms aim to provide advice or express something true in a general way.

I.2-2.Collocations

There is also a similarity in meaning between idioms and collocations. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009), collocations are defined as “the way in which some words are often used together or a particular combination of words used in this way” (319). This definition stresses the tendency of some words to frequently occur together, forming common, fixed combinations. On the other hand, idioms are a specific type of collocation. This suggests that idioms can be viewed as a subcategory of collocations, as they share a defining characteristic.

As Zubakina (2020) points out, “collocations refer to the way in which certain words regularly appear together” (7). Zubakina’s definition emphasizes that collocations refer to word pairings in a language where specific combinations of words tend to occur naturally and frequently in the speech and writing of native speakers.

Therefore, idioms can be considered a specific type of collocation. While not all collocations are idioms, the fundamental basis is similar: certain words tend to cluster together.

I.2-3. Metaphors

There is also a connection between metaphor and idioms. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009) defines metaphor as “a way of describing something by referring to it as something different and suggesting that it has similar qualities to that thing” (1099). According to this definition, metaphors work by making a comparison between two different

things that share some common characteristics, while idioms compare their metaphorical origins to their literal meanings.

As O'Dell and McCarthy (2010) state, “Metaphors describe a person, object, or situation by comparing it to something else with similar characteristics” (12). According to this definition, metaphors describe something by comparing it to something else, while the foundation for how idioms operate lies in understanding the fixed relationship between a group of words and their specific meaning.

The definitions provided show that while metaphors work by directly comparing two different things that share common characteristics, idioms operate by making a more indirect comparison between the metaphorical origins of a group of words and their specific, fixed meanings.

I.3 The Importance of Idioms

Idioms are an essential part of language, as they allow speakers to convey complex ideas and emotions in a concise way that would be difficult to express literally. Understanding and using idioms is crucial for several reasons:

Adrian and D'Arcy (2007) note that “idioms are very common in spoken English and informal written English, so it is important and fun to learn some of them. In spoken English, they are used in most situations, from friendly conversations to business meetings. In written English, they are especially common in newspapers because the writers want to make the headlines and articles interesting and lively” (8). Adrian and D'Arcy state that understanding and mastering idioms is a crucial goal for language learners and users alike.

According to Beloussova (2015), idioms “enable language learners to use the language in a variety of social situations” (qtd. in Pucelj 6). Additionally, Beloussova states that mastering

idioms is important as it enables language users to employ them suitably in a range of social situations.

In addition, Gibbs (1995) claimed that “idioms are regularly used in each language and that disregarding them will lead to numerous problems for students regarding fluency and competency in a language” (qtd. in Tabley 2). Furthermore, according to Gibbs, idioms are common across languages, and neglecting their mastery can obstruct language learners' fluency and overall competency. This emphasizes the critical role of idioms in developing comprehensive linguistic proficiency.

As Jon (2022) said, “All native speaker English is idiomatic” (qtd. in Wright 9). This statement reveals the central role that idioms play in authentic, conversational English used by native speakers.

As a result, the importance of idioms can be summarized as follows:

1. Idioms allow for the concise expression of complex ideas and emotions.
2. Mastering idioms is crucial for effective communication in a variety of social contexts.
3. Neglecting idioms can significantly hinder language proficiency, fluency, and overall competency.

I.4 The Distinctive Features of Idioms

There are many distinctive features of idioms, but this dissertation will focus on five of them: Metaphoricity/figurativeness, analysability vs. non-compositionality, fixedness of form and internal structure, literalness, familiarity and predictability of idioms, and formality vs. informality.

I.4-1. Metaphoricity / figurativeness

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “metaphor is omnipresent in everyday life, in thought, action, or language” (qtd. in Dąbrowska 17). Lakoff and Johnson's view of metaphor, in fact, emphasizes that it is one of the fundamental and distinctive features of idioms.

While Mäntylä (2004) stresses that “figurativeness is one of the most commonly acknowledged features of idioms, and that the roots of Metaphoricity often derive from real situations or acts, or an image created by the connection between the idiom and its meaning” (qtd. in Dąbrowska 18), Mantilla's focus on the role of metaphor as a fundamental feature of idioms is insightful. The metaphorical basis of many idioms contributes to their expressive power.

I.4 -2. Analysability vs. non-compositionality

According to Lakoff (1987), the non-compositionality of idioms is a key feature, as “the meaning of an idiomatic expression is not predictable from the meanings of the individual words that make it up” (qtd. in Dąbrowska 36). Lakoff provides a concept of the non-compositional nature of idioms, a key distinctive feature that sets them apart from literal, compositional language. This means that the overall meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot be derived solely by understanding the literal meanings of its constituent words.

On the contrary, Stock et al. (1993) note that “there is a whole class of idioms for which non-compositionality is false” (qtd. in Dąbrowska 37) . This suggests that some idioms may display a degree of analyzability or compositionality, where the meaning can be inferred from the individual words. For example, “spill the beans” means to reveal a secret. While it is an idiom, the meaning can be partially inferred from the individual words. “Spill” suggests something is being let out, and 'beans' can metaphorically represent information, leading to an interpretation that something hidden (a secret) is being revealed.

I.4 -3. Fixedness of form and internal structure

According to Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994), “Idioms typically appear only in a limited number of syntactic frames or constructions, unlike freely composed expressions “ (492). This demonstrates the fixedness of form and internal structure, which is one of the distinctive features of idioms.

Contrary to the traditional view, Valentina (2013) notes that “despite the general view that idioms are frozen structures, research has shown that idioms vary in their degree of frozenness” (22). This view differs from the traditional view of idioms as entirely rigid, fixed expressions. For example, “kick the bucket” (meaning to die) can be modified without losing its meaning. 'Kicked the bucket' (past tense) or “kicking the bucket” (present continuous) are acceptable forms that still convey the same underlying meaning, demonstrating flexibility in the structure of the idiom.

I.4 -4. Literalness, familiarity and predictability of idioms

According to Geoffrey Nunberg, Ivan A. Sag, and Thomas Wasow(1994), “Idioms are conventionalized; their meaning or use can't be predicted, or at least entirely predicted, on the basis of a knowledge of the independent conventions that determine the use of their constituents when they appear in isolation from one another” (492). This means that idioms have a figurative meaning that is different from the literal meaning, and they are often fixed expressions rather than new words.

Additionally, Dąbrowska (2018) states, “The literalness of an idiom is sometimes called idiom transparency, defined as the degree to which the meaning of an idiom can be derived from the constituents of an idiom” (46). This means the degree of transparency, or literalness, in an idiomatic expression can vary, with some idioms having a more transparent connection between

the literal meaning and the idiomatic meaning. For example, “break the ice” this idiom means to initiate conversation or ease tension in a social setting, while others are more ambiguous. For example, “bite the bullet” means to endure something painful or unpleasant. Its meaning is not immediately clear from the literal components, as “biting a bullet” does not obviously relate to facing difficulties, making it more ambiguous.

While familiarity is identified by Titone and Connine (1994) as “the frequency with which a listener or reader encounters a word in its written or spoken form and the degree to which the meaning of a word is well known or easily understood” (qtd. in Dąbrowska 47), this means that familiarity is also important, as idioms have well-known, easily understood meanings.

I.4 -5. Formality vs. Informality

According to Geoffrey Nunberg, Ivan A. Sag, and Thomas Wasow, “idioms are typically associated with relatively informal or colloquial registers and with popular speech and oral culture” (493). This statement reveals the informal and colloquial nature of idioms. Salah Mohammed Salih states that “idioms are typically associated with relatively informal or colloquial language, popular speech, and oral culture” (21). This stresses that idioms are more commonly found in informal, conversational contexts rather than in formal settings.

I.5 Classification of Idioms

Idioms are often classified into different groups depending on their usage, semantics, and syntax.

I.5 -1. Idioms Classified by Usage

Idioms can be classified into two main categories based on their usage: frozen or pure idioms, and semi-literal or decoding idioms.

Frozen or Pure Idioms: “These idioms have fixed meanings that cannot be deduced from the individual words” (qtd. in Dumitraşcu 2). For example, an idiom like “kick the bucket” means to die.

Semi-Literal or Decoding Idioms: “These idioms consist of two constituents, one with a literal meaning and the other with a non-literal meaning” (qtd. in Yusifova 69). For example, an idiom like “spill the beans” implies revealing a secret.

I.5 -2. Idioms Classified by Semantics

Idioms can be classified into two main categories based on their semantics: literal idioms and figurative or metaphorical idioms.

Literal idioms: “Invariable and allowing little variation, transparent, or can be interpreted on the basis of their parts” (qtd. in Asri 48). For example, an idiom like “to throw in the towel” literally refers to the act of throwing a towel, but it conveys the meaning of giving up or surrendering in a situation.

Figurative or Metaphorical idioms: “Ordinarily designates one thing as inferred to another, making an implicit comparison. It compares two situations, objects, or actions” (qtd. in Asri 49). For example, a “carrot and stick method” is used to mean a method of coercion. It compares the situation at hand to the practice of luring a stubborn horse or mule by dangling a carrot in front of it and prodding with a stick behind.

I.5 -3. Idioms Classified by Syntax

Below are three common syntactic classifications of idioms:

Verb-Noun idioms: These are phrases where a verb is directly followed by a noun. These idioms often describe actions or behaviors in a figurative sense. For example, “to make a mountain out of a molehill” (qtd. in Juknevičienė 29).

Noun-Noun idioms: These consist of two nouns placed together to form a phrase. These idioms often describe relationships, states, or things in a figurative sense. For example, “a drop in the ocean” (qtd. in Juknevičienė 29).

Prepositional Phrase idioms: These are phrases that begin with a preposition and are followed by a noun or pronoun. These idioms often describe situations or states in a figurative sense. For example, “in the long run,” “on the spur of the moment” (qtd. in Juknevičienė 29).

Conclusion

Idioms play a vital role in language because they summarize complex ideas in concise forms and enhance their meanings. They are characterized by their figurative origins, non-structural nature, and cultural significance, making their understanding crucial for effective communication. This chapter has revealed the complex connections between idioms, proverbs, collocations, and metaphors, and it shows the distinctive features of idioms, including figurativeness, analysability, fixedness, literalness, familiarity, predictability, and formality. In addition, it shows the classification of idioms by usage, semantics, and syntax.

Chapter Two: Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Translating Idioms

Chapter Two: Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Translating Idioms

Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between language and culture in translation, beginning with key concepts like culture, language, and translation, while emphasizing the cultural dimensions of translation. It also examines the challenges of translating idioms, including cultural, social, religious, and linguistic issues, and discusses strategies proposed by scholars like Nida, Newmark, and Baker to overcome these challenges. Translation is a crucial means of communication and knowledge transfer, essential for understanding different cultures. However, translating idioms is particularly challenge due to the deep connection between language and culture. Translating idioms involves more than just finding equivalent words; it requires a profound understanding of both the source and target languages as well as their cultural contexts

II.1 Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Translation

II.1-1 Culture and Translation

Before discussing the relationship between culture and translation, it is essential to define both terms.

II.1.1-1 Concept of Translation

According to Catford (1995), “Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)” (qtd. in Sonou 103). Catford's definition is more technical in nature, but he does not refer to other factors that may impact translation.

In contrast, Dubois defines translation as “the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences” (qtd. in Sumarni 3). Dubois's definition emphasizes the importance of preserving meaning and style across languages.

Bassnett (1980) also states, “Translation involves the transfer of 'meaning' contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar; the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria as well” (qtd. in Akan 58). Bassnett takes a broader view. This illuminates the complex, multifaceted nature of translation.

After presenting various definitions of translation, it can be said that translation is a complex process involving more than just the linguistic conversion of text or speech from one language to another. It necessitates a profound understanding of the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of both the source and target languages, alongside a deep familiarity with the social, historical, and cultural contexts that influence language use. This ensures that both meaning and context are preserved throughout the translation process.

Chapter Two: Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Translating Idioms

II.1.1-2 Concept of Culture

Taylor's (1871) definition of culture is the oldest. He defined it as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (qtd. in Firth 16). Taylor emphasizes the fixed components of culture, which he identifies as including tangible aspects, such as art and custom, and intangible elements, such as knowledge and morals.

Malinowski's definition of culture, given in 1960, states that “culture is an integral composed of partly autonomous, partly coordinated institutions. It is integrated on a series of principles such as the community of blood through procreation, the contiguity in space related to cooperation, the specialization in activities, and the use of power in political organization” (qtd. in Malinowski 40). This definition emphasizes the integration and coordination of different cultural elements, viewing culture as a system of interconnected parts that work together to meet the needs of individuals and society as a whole.

After presenting various definitions of culture, it can be said that culture is a complex and ever-changing concept that encompasses a constantly evolving process influenced by social, economic, and political factors. It is not a static or homogeneous entity; rather, it involves both structural and dynamic aspects that reflect the diversity and complexity of human experiences.

II.1.1-3 The Relationship between Culture and Translation

Whorf asserted that “no language can exist unless it is saturated with the context of culture; and no culture can exist without the structure of natural language at its center” (qtd. in Bassnett 23), which underscores the fundamental connection between language and culture. This statement reinforces the idea that translation is inherently intertwined with cultural contexts, as understanding and conveying cultural differences is essential for effective communication across languages.

Chapter Two: Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Translating Idioms

The cultural shift in translation studies, first predicted by Even-Zohar in 1979 and Toury in 1980, was a significant breakthrough in the field of translation. They argued that translation is not merely a linguistic process but a cultural one, emphasizing the need to shift the focus from language alone to the interaction between translation and culture, and the influence of culture on translation practices (qtd. in Saroukhil 107).

Sugeng Haryanto also addressed the relationship between culture and translation by identifying two basic ways in which culture manifests itself in translation. “First, cultural cues embedded in lexical items can be highly specific to the source culture. Second, even when concepts or references are general, they are often expressed in ways that reflect the nuances of the source language culture” (qtd. in Akbari 14). This underscores the need for translators to draw on broader cultural expressions to achieve accurate and meaningful translations.

To summarize the above, it can be said that:

1. Translation is not just a linguistic activity but a cultural activity that requires a deep understanding of the cultural differences between the source language and the target language, as well as the ability to translate them in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
2. Culture and translation are closely related, as accurate translation is an effective means of transmitting and developing cultures.
3. The close relationship between culture and translation emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness for the translator in order to carry out the translation activity efficiently and effectively.

II.1-2 Language and Translation

The concept of translation has been discussed; below, we will discuss the definition of language and its relationship to translation.

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1.2-1 Concept of Language

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009), language is “a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area” (977). This definition considers language as a means of communication and focuses only on written and spoken forms, while excluding other modes of communication such as sign language. Moreover, the definition does not take into account the role of language in shaping thought, culture, and identity.

Zadeh (1975) states that “language is a systematic tool for conveying ideas or feelings by using agreed signs, sounds, gestures, or signs that contain understandable meanings” (qtd. in Oviogun 2). Zadeh’s definition appropriately focuses on language as a tool for conveying and exchanging ideas or feelings but does not address the other functions of language.

According to Chaika (1974), “language is a system of meaningful and articulating sound symbols (produced by speech tools) that is arbitrary and conventional, which is used as a means of communication by a group of people to produce feelings and thoughts” (qtd. in Oviogun 3). Chaika’s definition presents a broad concept of language by addressing several key characteristics, such as meaningful symbols, articulatory processes, and its role in communication.

After presenting different definitions of language, it can be said that language is a set of symbols with connotations and meanings that are conveyed through logical processes to exchange ideas and express emotions.

1.2-2 The Relationship between Language and Translation

Language and translation directly influence each other. Language is not just a tool for communication; it is also a fundamental aspect of culture and an essential means of translating and transferring meanings into the target language. As Wittgenstein (1958) stated, “The limits of

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my language are the limits of my world” (qtd. in Akbari 13). This indicates that the process of translation is not merely about converting words from one language to another but also about understanding languages and their roots.

Olshtain and Blum-Kulka stated in 1996, “Translators ought to work within the core of the target culture and know the rules of the target language community so as to find appropriate equivalents to achieve pragmatic competence, which consists not only of linguistic knowledge but also of knowledge of the rules of language use” (qtd. in Agliz 158). This emphasizes the importance of mastering the grammar of the language, as it is crucial for accurately conveying meaning and ensuring effective translation.

To sum up, there is a strong relationship between language and translation, as language serves as a vital component of culture and a primary means of conveying meaning during the translation process. Mastering the grammatical rules and cultural nuances of a language is essential for achieving an accurate and meaningful translation.

II.2. Problems of Translating Idioms

Translating idioms is one of the most challenging tasks translators face. Baker (1992) claims that “the first difficulty that translators come across is being able to recognize that they are dealing with an idiomatic expression” (qtd. in Mohammed 14). Among these challenges are the cultural and linguistic differences between the source and target languages. Culturally, idioms are deeply embedded in the context of the language's culture, encompassing cultural, social, and religious nuances. This makes the task of finding an equivalent expression in the target language difficult. Linguistically, translators face semantic difficulties and differences between language systems, especially when it comes to languages belonging to hugely different cultures and language families.

II.2-1 Cultural Problems

There are many cultural problems facing the translator, and in this dissertation, the focus will be on cultural contexts and social and religious differences.

II.2.1-1 Cultural Differences between Languages

Cultural differences refer to the diversity of customs, traditions, and social values among different societies. Hui Guo (2012) states that “translation not only involves the translator's or interpreter's linguistic competence but also calls for an acquaintance with the respective cultures” (343). This underscores the importance of cultural factors in the translation process. It suggests that a translator needs to do more than just understand the languages; they must also be familiar with the subtleties of both the source and target cultures.

Hui Guo (2012) also states that “because of the cultural differences between the source language and target language, semantic and pragmatic equivalence cannot be achieved at the same time” (346). This reflects the significant impact of cultural differences between languages on the difficulty of achieving semantic (the literal meaning of words) and pragmatic (the context-driven use of language) equivalence.

Similarly, Bassnett (2011) pointed out “that translator should identify which words could be used to precisely transfer the senses of their terms, including their connotations and cultural relevance” (qtd. in Zitouni 236). Bassnett emphasizes the critical role of cultural factors in translation, as it ensures that the translation reflects the original's meaning and conveys it to the target audience in a way that maintains the same meaning as the source text.

In short, the translation process requires the translator to have comprehensive knowledge of the cultural differences between languages, not just linguistic proficiency, to achieve a meaningful translation. This entails understanding the nuances of both the source and target cultures, which can greatly influence the interpretation and conveyance of meaning.

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II.2.1-2 Social Differences between Languages

Social differences refer to the diversity of characteristics and practices among people in different societies. These differences include a wide range of factors, such as customs, traditions, social norms, values, beliefs, languages, and lifestyles.

Oualif points out that “problems of translation involve not only the linguistic and stylistic features but also the cultural and social differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL)” (qtd. in Oualif 25). Oualif emphasizes the importance of incorporating cultural and social dimensions, which greatly influence the translation process. Idioms in the source language may not have direct equivalents in the target language, requiring translators to be mindful of social differences.

Fromkin et al. (2007) argue that “the way you use language may also indicate an inclination on your part to belong to a group” (438). They emphasize that idioms are not just linguistic structures but are closely linked to social contexts, especially when the expressions reflect social practices that have no direct counterpart in the target language. Thus, the translation process must take these social differences into account in order to preserve the integrity and impact of the original expression.

In short, understanding and addressing social differences is crucial in translation, as it ensures that idioms are translated in a way that maintains their intended meaning and cultural significance.

II.2.1-3 Religious Differences between Languages

Religious differences refer to the diversity of beliefs, rituals, and doctrines among various religions.

Nida (1997) state that “religious terminology has always been conservative because the words themselves are regarded by many as being essentially dictated by the deity. The longer

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these words have been in use, the greater and stronger the importance attached to them” (qtd. in Alhaddad, and Gamal Abdullah 56). Nida points out that religious terms often retain their original form and meaning not only linguistically but also ideologically. This retention contributes to the continued importance of these terms within religious communities and enhances their authority and sanctity over time. The more a word is used in a sacred context, the more sacred it becomes.

Larson (1998) argued that many factors should be considered, including differences in beliefs, customs, geography, and worldview (qtd. in Zitouni 236). Larson also highlights another important factor that greatly impacts translation: religious differences when translating religious texts or concepts. The doctrinal differences of one religion may not be compatible with those of another religion.

Hui Guo (2012) also points out that religion is an integral part of human culture. Religious culture can be reflected in many ways, such as religious beliefs, values, worship, and taboos. Religions have a profound impact on people's lives. As a result, we should be mindful of cultural differences in translation (346). Hui Guo emphasizes the impact of religious differences on translation. Translators may encounter challenges when the target language lacks equivalent religious concepts.

II.2-2 Linguistic Problems

Linguistic problems are considered one of the most significant issues in the translation process. As Sinclair (1992) states, “Linguistics helps to trust the text or interpret the text rather than impose interpretations upon it” (qtd. in Balama 8). In the next section, semantic difficulties and linguistic differences between language systems will be discussed.

II.2.2-1 Semantic Difficulties

Semantic translation, as defined by Newmark (1981), involves "an attempt to preserve the semantic meaning and syntactic structure of the ST as much as the TL allows while considering the exact contextual meaning of the original" (qtd. in Abuarrah 132). This suggests that semantic difficulties in translation arise from the challenge of preserving the meaning and structure of the original text while adapting it to the target language. To achieve this balance, translators must leave their mark on the text.

However, Balama (2016) underscores the difficulty of this task, noting that “the translator faces two main linguistic obstacles when translating a text: terminology and semantics” (8). These challenges emphasize that achieving an effective translation is a complex process.

II.2.2-2 Linguistic Differences between Language Systems

Bram Vanroy (2021) states that “linguistic problems relate to structural differences between source and target language systems” (13). Vanroy succinctly identifies structural differences as a key aspect of linguistic problems, a fundamental challenge in translation.

Culler (1976) also points out that “languages are not nomenclatures, and the concepts of one language may differ radically from those of another” (qtd. in Baker 10). This highlights an important factor in translation: the linguistic differences between the source and target languages, which can lead to potential translation gaps.

Ervin and Bower (1952) attribute translation distortions to language differences, noting that the meaning of the source text has been changed in the translation due to a number of language-related categories (qtd. in Vanroy 14). Therefore, it can be said that understanding linguistic differences is essential for effective translation. This requires translators to address these differences carefully in order to preserve the intended meaning and ensure that the translation accurately reflects the source text.

II.3 Strategies for Translating Idioms

Loescher (1991) defines strategies for translating as “a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text or any segment of it” (qtd. in Robo 254). Loescher's definition of translation strategies shows that translation is both an art and a skill. Sometimes, the translator may rely on experience when translating certain texts or idioms.

According to Leppihalme (1997), translation strategies are “means which the translator, within the confines of his/her existing knowledge, considers to be the best in order to reach the goals set by the translation task” (qtd. in Robo 254). This definition focuses on the translator's competence and ability to choose the most appropriate strategies to achieve the translation objectives. Below, some strategies will be discussed as models.

II.3-1 Nida & Taber's views

Eugene A. Nida's theory of translation (1964) equivalence became a fundamental concept in translation studies. He suggests two main types of equivalence formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

Formal equivalence is “the quality of a translation in which the features of the form of the source text have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language” (qtd. in Al-Sulaimaan 764). This type emphasizes strict adherence to the source text's structure, syntax, and vocabulary. These strategies prioritize preserving the original form, but they may fail to convey the original text's intended meaning, as they do not account for the differences in cultural context and linguistic expression between languages.

Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, aims to ensure that “the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors” (qtd. in Al-Sulaimaan 764). Unlike formal equivalence, which focuses on maintaining the exact structure and vocabulary of the source text,

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dynamic equivalence allows for more flexibility in translating idioms. For example, in terms of formal equivalence, the translation of the phrase “kick the bucket” into Arabic is “ركلة الدلو,” which does not convey the idiomatic meaning in Arabic. The dynamic translation of the phrase “kick the bucket” into Arabic is “توفي” (to pass away), meaning “to die.” This translation conveys the correct idiomatic meaning while preserving both the meaning and the cultural significance.

II.3-2 Peter Newmark's view

Peter Newmark made an attempt in 1988 to propound a theory of translation pedagogy revolving around the notion of text. This means that the text is pulled in ten different directions:

- 1.The individual style or idiolect of the SL author.
- 2.The conventional grammatical and lexical usage for the type of SL text, depending on the topic and the situation.
- 3.Content items referring specifically to the SL culture.
- 4.The typical format of a SL text in a book, newspaper, as influenced by tradition at the time.
- 5.The expectations of the putative readership, bearing in mind their estimated knowledge of the topic and the style of language they use, expressed in terms of the largest common factor.
- 6.The conventional grammatical and lexical usage for the type of TL text, depending on the topic and the situation.
- 7.Content items referring specifically to the TL culture.
- 8.The typical format of a TL text in a book, periodical, as influenced by tradition at the time.
- 9.What is being described or reported, ascertained or verified.
- 10.The views and prejudices of the translator, which may be personal and subjective or may be social and cultural. (qtd. in Carrové 49)

II.3-3 Mona Baker's view

Baker (1992) discussed four strategies for translating idioms: using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, and translation by omission. First, using an idiom of similar meaning and form: “This strategy involves using an idiom in the target language which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom” (qtd. in Baker 72). For example, the English idiom “spill the beans,” meaning to reveal a secret, can be translated into Arabic using the idiom “أفشى السر”, which carries the same meaning of disclosing information. Second, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form: “It is often possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a meaning similar to that of the source idiom or expression, but which consists of different lexical items” (qtd. in Baker 74). For example, the English idiom “back to square one,” meaning to restart something from the beginning, can be translated into Arabic as “رجعنا إلى نقطة الصفر”. Third, Translation by paraphrase: “This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic Equivalence above word level preferences of the source and target languages” (qtd. in Baker 74) . For example, the English idiom “break the ice,” meaning to initiate conversation in a social setting, can be paraphrased in Arabic as “كسر حاجز الصمت”, which explains the idea without using a direct idiom. Last, Translation by omission: “As with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons” (qtd. in Baker 77) . For example, the English idiom “hit the nail on the head,” meaning to describe something accurately, might be omitted in translation if no equivalent idiom or suitable paraphrase exists in the Arabic language.

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Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the significant influence of cultural and linguistic factors on the translation process, in addition to social and religious differences. Translating idioms poses a particular challenge for translators because of their connection to cultural contexts. Therefore, successful translation requires a comprehensive understanding of both the source and target languages in order to convey meaning effectively and maintain context. Finally, this chapter has demonstrated the importance of cultural awareness and linguistic competence for translators in overcoming the challenges posed by idioms.

Chapter Three: A Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of Selected English Idioms Translated into Arabic

Introduction

This chapter applies the theoretical insights from the previous chapters to a practical analysis of specific English social and religious idioms translated into Arabic. It examines the linguistic and cultural intricacies involved in translating idioms. The analysis focuses on how these idioms, rich in cultural significance, are adapted or transformed to retain their intended meaning and impact within the Arabic context.

III.1 Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of Selected Social Idioms

III.1-1 To give someone the cold shoulder

The English idiom “give someone the cold shoulder” is commonly used in casual conversation. As mentioned in *Dictionary of Modern Colloquial French*, in English, it means “to make someone feel unwelcome” (111), often as a form of silent rejection. This expression originated in nineteenth-century England and is believed to stem from the practice of serving a cold shoulder of meat to unwanted guests. Linguistically, the idiom poses challenges, as its meaning is not directly derivable from its constituent words; the expression's figurative nature adds a layer of complexity to its interpretation. Culturally, it reflects a tendency within English culture to avoid direct confrontation, opting instead for subtle hints to express disapproval. This approach allows for maintaining social harmony while conveying unwelcomeness.

In contrast, the literal translation of this idiom into Arabic does not retain the same idiomatic meaning and is often replaced by equivalents such as **أعرض عنه، أدبر عنه، لقيه بجفاء**. Arabic culture tends to favor direct communication, highlighting a significant difference in the approach to expressing disapproval between the two languages.

III.1-2 To bring coal to Newcastle

The English idiom “bring coal to Newcastle,” mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, refers to “something brought or sent to a place where it is already plentiful.” Coal from Newcastle-upon-Tyne in northern England was famously abundant in previous centuries, and carry coals to Newcastle has been an expression for an unnecessary activity since the mid-seventeenth century (57). Linguistically, the idiom highlights the pointless repetition of something, but culturally, it emphasizes that some actions may be inherently unnecessary based on specific geographical and economic circumstances.

On the other hand, the translation of the idiom into Arabic does not convey the same meaning or effect. Instead, Arabic has its own idioms that express the idea of engaging in pointless activities, such as *بييع التمر في البصرة*. The land of Basra was famous for its abundance of palm trees and dates. Consequently, some English idiomatic expressions are derived from specific geographical contexts.

III.1-3 To be as mad as a hatter

The English idiom “mad as a hatter,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, refers to “Lewis Carroll's character, the Mad Hatter, in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865). Hatters suffered from the effects of mercury poisoning due to the fumes produced by the use of mercury nitrate in the manufacture of felt hats” (181). Linguistically, the term uses vivid historical imagery to convey extreme irrationality. Culturally, the idiom “mad as a hatter” reflects a specific British cultural context, as the word “mad” may also have a positive connotation, indicating uniqueness and difference.

However, translating the idiom “mad as a hatter” into Arabic may not be clear to Arabic speakers due to the specific historical reference. A literal translation might be *مجنون كصانع القبعات*, though it could confuse readers unfamiliar with the historical context. Effective translation, therefore, requires adapting the imagery to fit cultural familiarity while maintaining the tone and meaning of extreme strangeness. In Arab culture, perceptions of madness vary, and strange or eccentric behavior can have either negative or positive connotations depending on the context. For example, the idiom might be translated as *جن جنونه* to maintain the sense of strangeness, but it would miss the historical reference to the hatter.

III.1-4 To have a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp

The English idiom “to have a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp,” mentioned in the *Idioms through Time and Technology*, describes “someone as being ridiculously ugly, looking a sight, or appearing untidy” (185) . It is used informally, often with sarcasm, creating a striking mental image through exaggerated description. Linguistically, the literal meaning of to have a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp refers to a person’s face being unattractive, similar to the expression of a bulldog in discomfort (chewing a wasp). In English-speaking cultures, the bulldog is often associated with stubbornness and resilience, particularly in British and American contexts. The image of chewing a wasp adds a layer of discomfort that may not resonate similarly in other cultures.

In contrast, in Arabic, the literal translation “his face is like a bulldog chewing a wasp” may not be immediately clear. Linguistically, Arabic expressions might use different imagery to describe a stern or unhappy face, such as **وجهه مكفهر كالسحاب الداكن، عابس الوجه، قبيح المظهر**. Culturally, the concept of a bulldog may not carry the same connotations, and different animals might symbolize stubbornness. For example, using an expression that describes an unattractive or unpleasant facial expression without relying on specific animals or scenarios might be more effective in preserving the idiom's impact.

III.1-5 Go Dutch

The English idiom “go Dutch,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, means “to share the cost of something equally” (89). The origin of this idiom is uncertain, but it is believed to stem from historical stereotypes about Dutch economics. “Go Dutch” literally refers to sharing the cost of something, particularly meals, where each person pays for their portion. Culturally, “go Dutch” is a common practice that reflects a norm of equality in social situations.

However, a literal translation into Arabic, such as *كل يدفع نصيبه*, could lead to confusion, as it may not effectively convey the intended meaning. The idiomatic meaning emphasizes financial independence and equality, concepts that may not resonate in the same way in Arabic cultures, where social norms around paying in social settings often emphasize generosity and hospitality, particularly by the host.

III.1-6 To paint the town red

The English idiom “paint the town red,” as mentioned in *Unifying Structure-Building in Human Language*, means “to celebrate out on the town” (117). The origins of this idiom are unclear, but one theory links it to a celebration in Milton Mowbray, England, where a group literally painted the town red. The idiom suggests going out and enjoying life extravagantly, often through parties and celebrations. Linguistically, it combines the literal act of painting with a metaphorical sense of bringing liveliness and charm to an area. Culturally, it evokes images of vibrant nightlife and joyful festivities.

Conversely, in Arabic, the literal translation is “to paint the town red,” but without context, it may be interpreted literally or sound strange, as it does not carry the same idiomatic weight. Linguistically, it refers to a direct action without strong metaphorical implications. Culturally, Arabic expressions for celebration are more straightforward, such as *الأمور انقلبت رأساً على عقب*, reflecting a preference for clear descriptions of events rather than metaphorical imagery. Thus, the concept of “painting the town red” may be unfamiliar in Arabic culture and may require further explanation.

III.1-7 To have a chip on one’s shoulder

The English idiom “have a chip on one’s shoulder,” as mentioned in *In the Loop: A Reference Guide to American English Idioms*, refers to “a feeling of bitterness caused by a sense

that one has been treated unfairly” (21). This expression has historical roots linked to a practice where individuals would balance a piece of wood on their shoulders and challenge others to knock it off, often leading to a fight. Over time, the idiom has come to describe someone perceived as resentful or ready to argue, often indicating that they are overly sensitive or angry about trivial matters. Linguistically, the idiom suggests carrying an emotional burden. Culturally, the idiom “to have a chip on one's shoulder” reflects a Western cultural understanding of personal grievances and confrontations. In many Western societies, holding a grudge or expressing resentment openly is more culturally acceptable.

Conversely, in Arabic, the literal translation of “have a chip on one's shoulder” may not convey the same meaning due to a lack of familiarity with this specific cultural reference. Therefore, it is crucial for the translator to grasp the figurative sense of the idiom and find an equivalent expression in Arabic that carries the same connotation, such as **يحمل في قلبه غيضا، هو حائق** , which means to harbor a grudge. The expression **يحمل في قلبه غيضا، هو حائق** is more culturally relevant, as it conveys the idea of harboring ill feelings without the need for a literal confrontation, aligning with cultural norms of expressing discontent in a less direct manner. Additionally, social norms regarding the expression of resentment may differ, with a greater emphasis on maintaining social harmony and avoiding direct confrontation.

III.2 Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of Selected Religious Idioms

III.2-1 The writing on the wall

The English idiom “the writing is on the wall,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, indicates that there are clear signs something unpleasant or unwelcome is going to happen. This idiom originates from the biblical story of Belshazzar's feast, where a disembodied

hand appeared and wrote a message on the wall foretelling the fall of the Babylonian kingdom^① to the Medes^② and Persians^③ (320). Linguistically, this idiom metaphorically represents the expectation or recognition of trouble ahead. It is used in both formal and informal contexts to describe situations where there are obvious signs of a negative outcome. Culturally, the idiom “the writing on the wall” carries the weight of a specific cultural reference to a biblical story, which might not resonate in the same way with Arabic-speaking audiences, especially those unfamiliar with the Bible.

In Arabic, the translator could use an expression like *الشر يلوح في الأفق، نذير شوم*, which translates to “evil is looming on the horizon,” capturing the essence of an impending threat. This option not only conveys the intended warning but also resonates more effectively with the cultural context of Arabic speakers. Additionally, cultural references may instead be drawn from Islamic texts or local proverbs, which have different connotations and implications when translating the writing on the wall into Arabic.

III.2-2 To be a good Samaritan

The English idiom “Good Samaritan,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, refers to the parable of the Good Samaritan recounted in Luke 10. A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked and robbed during the course of his journey. He was left lying by the road, and the first two people who saw him passed by on the other side. It was the third traveler, the Samaritan (a man from Samaria), who helped him (214). The idiom is used to describe altruistic behavior in both formal and informal contexts and carries positive

^① - The Babylonian kingdom, centered around the ancient city of Babylon, was one of the most influential civilizations in Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq.

^② - The Medes were an ancient Iranian people who settled in the northwestern part of modern-day Iran. They established the Median Empire around the 7th century BCE.

^③ - The Persians were another ancient Iranian people who inhabited the southern region of Iran. They rose to prominence in the 6th century BCE under Cyrus the Great.

connotations of humanity. Culturally, the idiom holds deep cultural and religious connotations rooted in Judeo-Christian traditions.

In contrast, a direct translation of “to be a Good Samaritan” into Arabic may not fully convey its meaning due to cultural differences. For example, in the case of “to be a Good Samaritan,” the Arabic text may lose its biblical context if it is translated literally as “to be a good person.” Therefore, a clarified translation or replacement of the idiom with one that is more culturally relevant to Arabic may be required while preserving the essence of the meaning. Idioms like **صاحب معروف** more effectively capture the essence of selfless assistance in Arabic.

III.2-3 To have a Messiah complex

The English idiom “to have a Christ complex” refers to the belief that someone has a special mission to save or help others, often accompanied by an exaggerated sense of their own importance or power. This idiom uses to highlight a grandiose self-perception and carries negative connotations, implying arrogance or delusions of grandeur. In many Western cultures, the term “messiah” harkens back to Judeo-Christian beliefs, where it refers to a figure expected to bring salvation. Culturally, referring to someone as having a “Messiah complex” may reflect societal attitudes towards leadership, responsibility, and humility, often criticizing individuals who assume leadership roles without the requisite humility or understanding.

In contrast, the literal Arabic translation of “to have a Christ complex” may not fully convey the idiomatic meaning. Expressions like **يلبس عباءة / ثوب المنقذ**, meaning someone who imagines having extraordinary abilities, more effectively communicate the idea of inflated self-importance within the Arabic cultural context.

III.2-4 To play God

The English idiom “playing God,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, means “to behave as if all-powerful or supremely important” (125). This idiom is used in both formal and informal contexts to criticize someone for exceeding their limits or interfering in areas outside their expertise. Linguistically, this expression conveys a sense of arrogance or interference in matters beyond human capability.

In contrast, in Arabic, the direct translation يتحكم بمصير الآخرين captures the literal meaning but may not fully encompass the idiomatic essence present in English. Culturally, Arabic society places a strong emphasis on divine authority and the concept of God. The idiom may lack a direct equivalent in Arabic, as it could conflict with religious and cultural sensitivities surrounding the perception of God’s role in human affairs.

III.2-5 A David and Goliath situation

The English idiom “David and Goliath,” as mentioned in *Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*, is used as a metaphor for an improbable victory (13). The idiom, which originates from a biblical story, consists of two proper nouns, “David” and “Goliath.” This choice of names establishes a clear contrast between the two characters and highlights the power dynamics at play. The term “situation” refers to a specific context or scenario, implying a struggle or conflict. The idiomatic meaning refers to a scenario where the weaker party faces a much stronger opponent and embodies themes of courage and perseverance. Culturally, the story of David and Goliath is widely recognized in Western contexts, and the idiom often evokes positive feelings of hope and triumph over adversity.

In Arabic, a direct translation may not effectively convey the intended meaning. For instance, a literal translation such as “the case of David and Goliath” may confuse readers

unfamiliar with the biblical context. Instead, using **كمن يقاتل طواحين الهواء** might effectively convey the idea of an underdog facing overwhelming odds.

III.2-6 Straining at a gnat

The English idiom “strain at a gnat,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, means to make a fuss over something trivial. Linguistically, the idiom originates from Matthew 23:24 in the Bible: “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (279). Culturally, the original context of the idiom involves a criticism of religious leaders who focus on minor ritualistic details while ignoring more important ethical principles. This cultural and religious background is vital to understanding the idiom's full meaning and implications in the English-speaking world.

When translating this idiom into Arabic, the challenge lies in preserving both the linguistic imagery and the cultural connotations. A direct translation may not resonate with Arabic speakers unfamiliar with the biblical reference. Therefore, finding an equivalent Arabic proverb that conveys a similar meaning is crucial. An Arabic equivalent, such as **تقنات على الفتات**, might successfully capture the contrast between focusing on something large versus something small, maintaining the idiom’s core message while adapting it to the target culture.

III.2-7 Job's comforter

The English idiom “Job’s comforter,” as mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, refers to “a person who aggravates distress under the guise of giving comfort. In the Bible, Job was a prosperous man whose patience and piety were tested by a series of undeserved misfortunes. The attempts of his friends to comfort him only added to his sense of despair, leading him to say, ‘Miserable comforters are ye all’” (Job 16:2). Despite his ordeals, Job remained confident in the goodness and justice of God, and in the end, he was restored to his

former situation (156). The idiom “Job’s comforter” carries significant semantic complexity because it is rooted in the biblical story of Job, whose friends were known to offer “comfort” that only increased his suffering. The concept of “comfort” is central to the idiom. While comfort generally means alleviating suffering, in this context, it is used ironically to describe something that exacerbates the problem.

Although “Job’s comforter” can be directly translated into Arabic as معزي أيوب, the irony and negative connotation may not be conveyed because the cultural perception of Job varies, affecting the understanding and impact of the idiom. Therefore, the translator should consider using an idiom that describes false comfort or unhelpful advice, such as يسكب الزيت على النار.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the linguistic and cultural intricacies involved in translating selected English idioms into Arabic, emphasizing the need for careful consideration of both language and cultural context. The analysis demonstrated that idioms are not merely phrases but are embedded with cultural significance, reflecting the values, norms, and historical backgrounds of the societies from which they originate.

General Conclusion

This dissertation examines the crucial role that idioms play in language, highlighting the significant influence of cultural and linguistic factors on the translation process, especially in relation to social and religious contexts. It also addresses the challenges faced in translating idioms, emphasizing that successful translation requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages in order to convey meaning accurately while preserving context. Finally, the dissertation delves into the linguistic and cultural complexities involved in translating selected English idioms into Arabic, demonstrating that these idioms are rich in cultural significance and reflect the values, norms, and historical contexts of their originating societies. This underscores the need for translators to thoughtfully engage with the linguistic and cultural dimensions of their practice.

Key Results

This study reveals several critical findings regarding the translation of idioms:

1. Understanding the linguistic differences between Arabic and English is essential for translating idioms.
2. Comprehending the cultural contexts of both Arabic and English is vital for effective idiom translation.
3. Designing various strategies specifically tailored for translating idioms plays a crucial role in achieving translation efficiency.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are essential for improving the translation of idioms.

1. Translators should prioritize understanding the linguistic and cultural contexts of both Arabic and English to improve the effectiveness of idiomatic translation.
2. Translators should be encouraged to create a diverse set of translation strategies tailored to specific idioms, enabling them to tackle the unique challenges each idiom presents.

3. Educational programs should include idiomatic expressions in their curricula, allowing language learners to engage with these expressions early on to build cultural and linguistic competency.

Future studies could focus on idioms across different languages to deepen the understanding of cultural and linguistic differences and their impact on translation practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Selected English Social Idioms and Their Meanings in Arabic

English	Arabic
1.To give someone the cold shoulder	أعرض عنه، أدبر عنه، لقيه بجفاء
2.To bring coal to Newcastle	يبيع التمر في البصرة
3.To be as mad as a hatter	جن جنونه
4.To have a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp	وجهه مكفهر كالسحاب الداكن، عابس الوجه، قبيح المظهر
5.Go Dutch	كل يدفع نصيبه
6.To paint the town red	الأمور انقلبت رأساً على عقب
7.To have a chip on one's shoulder	يحمل في قلبه غيضاً، هو حائق

Appendix 2: Selected English Religious Idioms and Their Meanings in Arabic

English	Arabic
1.The writing on the wall	الشّر يلوح في الأفق، نذير شؤم
2.To be a good Samaritan	صاحب معروف
3.To have a Messiah complex	يلبس عباءة / ثوب المنتقذ
4.To play God	يتحكم بمصير الآخرين
5.A David and Goliath situation	كمن يقاتل طواحين الهواء
6.Straining at a gnat	تفتات على الفتات
7.Job's comforter	يسكب الزيت على النار

Résumé

Cette dissertation examine les défis liés à la traduction des idiomes de l'anglais vers l'arabe, en se concentrant sur la manière dont les différences culturelles et linguistiques entre ces deux langues affectent l'exactitude et l'efficacité des traductions. L'étude aborde des questions clés concernant l'impact de ces différences sur le processus de traduction ainsi que leur effet sur les lecteurs arabes. Une approche méthodologique mixte, combinant des méthodologies comparatives et analytiques, est employée. L'étude inclut un ensemble d'idiomes anglais sélectionnés et leurs traductions en arabe, suivi d'une analyse fondée sur des caractéristiques culturelles et linguistiques. Les résultats indiquent que les différences linguistiques et culturelles ont un impact significatif sur la traduction des expressions idiomatiques de l'anglais vers l'arabe. Ainsi, l'étude souligne la nécessité d'une compréhension approfondie des cultures source et cible pour réaliser une traduction efficace. De plus, elle met en lumière l'importance pour les traducteurs de développer une variété de stratégies spécifiquement conçues pour traduire des expressions idiomatiques et surmonter les défis posés par ces différences culturelles et linguistiques .

ملخص

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على التحديات التي تواجه ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية، مع التركيز على كيفية تأثير الفروقات الثقافية واللغوية بين اللغتين على دقة وفعالية الترجمات. تهدف الدراسة إلى معالجة الأسئلة الرئيسية المتعلقة بتأثير هذه الفروقات في عملية الترجمة ومدى تأثيرها في القارئ العربي.

تم استخدام مقارنة مختلطة تجمع بين المنهج المقارن والمنهج التحليلي، كما تضمنت الدراسة مراجعة لبعض الأدبيات السابقة من أجل استكشاف أثر الاختلافات اللغوية والثقافية في ترجمة بعض التعبيرات الاصطلاحية المختارة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية.

تشير النتائج إلى أن الفروق اللغوية والثقافية لها تأثير واضح على ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. ولذلك، تؤكد الدراسة على ضرورة الفهم العميق لكل من ثقافتنا المصدر والهدف لتحقيق ترجمة فعّالة. بالإضافة إلى ضرورة قيام المترجمين بتطوير مجموعة متنوعة من الاستراتيجيات المصممة خصيصاً لترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، مما سيساعد في التغلب على التحديات التي تفرضها الاختلافات الثقافية واللغوية.