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Problems and Solutions for the Translation of Idiomatic Expressions from English into Arabic

Abstract:

Idioms form an integral part of any language, and are widely used to express various aspects of life in formal contexts as well as in informal ones. An idiom is indeed a special combination of lexical items with a restricted meaning that cannot be deduced from its constituents. It functions as one lexical unit, in the sense that it engenders a particular meaning that can cause a difficulty for translators lacking a previous knowledge of the target language specificities including its social and cultural background. Within this context, this paper attempts first to bring into light the major predicaments to an accurate and correct translation of idiomatic expressions, which are metaphoricity and culture. We subsequently suggest six strategies that can help translators to convey the exact meaning of the idiomatic expression from such two distinct languages like Arabic and English namely total equivalence, partial equivalence, translation by paraphrasing, translation by omission, translation by cultural substitution, and translation through borrowing.

Key words:

metaphoricity-total equivalence- partial equivalence- paraphrasing- omission

Introduction

In order to discuss the difficulties of translating idiomatic expressions and the solutions that should be adopted to overcome these strains, we divided our paper into three major parts. The first part discusses the concept of “idiom” as a technical term with a reference to its basic classification. We also judged it appropriate to discuss the disparity between English and Arabic idioms. The second part illustrates two major issues in the translation of English idioms into Arabic, which are: metaphoricity and culture. The last part, brings into light some strategies and solutions for overcoming these translation difficulties.

I-Conceptual Considerations

Language is a system that communicates information literally and figuratively. The literal communication is the direct reference of the lexical items included in a given sentence to objects, situations or events. The figurative communication, however, is used for providing an imaginative and creative description to a certain situation or event aiming the production of a given effect on the audience. In this case, the meaning of individual words does not convey the message of the expression. Such a phenomenon characterizes idiomatic expressions, which is the issue to be discussed in this paper. In this respect, this concept is conceived as a complex

translation problem for various reasons that are to be illustrated later on in this paper. For the time being our focus will be on its nature and how it functions in both Arabic and English languages.

I-1 Definition of Idioms

Idioms have been defined from different perspectives. For some, it refers to “any fixed expression, covering a given meaning of a peculiar expression that conforms to non basic principles.” (Shawn1975:79). For others, it is “a multi-word lexical item, where the meaning of the whole is not directly related to the meaning of the individual words,” (Lewis 1998:217) or as “the use of familiar words in an unfamiliar sense,” (Ball 1968:1) in other words, some lexical items are combined together to express cultural aspects such as religious ideas, superstitions and ideologies. Hence upon, it is “a fixed expression that embodies a particular meaning, and should not in any way be broken into separate elements in order not to lose its semantic value. (Cowie and Burger 1998) Idioms have a “multi-word nature and a semantic opacity, which functions as a unit of meaning.” (Cowie and Mackin 1975: viii) “They are well-established lexical combinations, which consist of one or more word forms or lexemes.” (Mc Carthy1990:11). Hence upon, they are special combinations with restricted forms and meanings that cannot be deduced from the literal meaning of the words that make them. As an instance, the idiomatic expression “*back against the wall*” describes a person, who is in an extremely difficult situation, and where escape from this situation is even more difficult. Obviously, the lexical units of the idiom make no sense if considered separately. Its Arabic equivalent is *طار عقله*, which literally means “his mind flew” that is also meaningless out of its idiomatic context. The combination of the lexical units refers to a person, who becomes mad or loses reason because of a given situation. On that, the comprehension and translation of idioms cause major difficulties, in that the meaning of the whole can by no means be determined from the meaning of the idiom’s constitutive parts. “Idioms are frozen patterns of language, which allow little or no variation in form and carry meanings, which cannot be deduced from their individual components.” (Baker1992:87) Additionally, idioms are characterized with compositeness, institutionalization, and semantic opacity. Compositeness refers to the nature of idioms as a set of lexical items, while institutionalization implies that these conventionalized expressions serve specific purposes. Semantic opacity points out to the figurative and non literal peculiarity of idioms, in the sense that the meaning of an idiom is not the mere sum of its constituents. (Fernando 1996) It is to be pointed out that the use of idioms aims an emphasis on particular ideas and cultural beliefs aiming the production of an effect, which is similar to the one produced by the source idiom. Therefore, unawareness of the idiom’s connotation may cause confusion, bewilderment or even lost of meaning from the part of the audience. It should also be noted that idioms are semantically different; thereupon they are used in different contexts, and accordingly should be learnt as single units. In the same perspective, Newmark claims the pragmatism and referentiality of idioms. Pragmatism relates to the idiom’s cognitive specificity, and includes feelings of surprise, delight,

astonishment and amazement, while the referential function describes a mental process more comprehensively than it is literally (1988:104) Therefore, an idiom is used from the speaker’s point of view, and is based on his or her choice of words based on the constraints he/she encounters in a given social interaction. It is also imposed by the effects the speaker wishes to produce on the interlocutor. Hence, the use of idioms in a certain context is indicative.

I-2 Basic Classification of Idioms

Due to the complexity of comprehending and translating idioms, a classification of four types have been settled (A. P. Cowie, R. Mackin and I.R. McCaig: (1984: xii-xiii)) This classification is illustrated in the following figure:

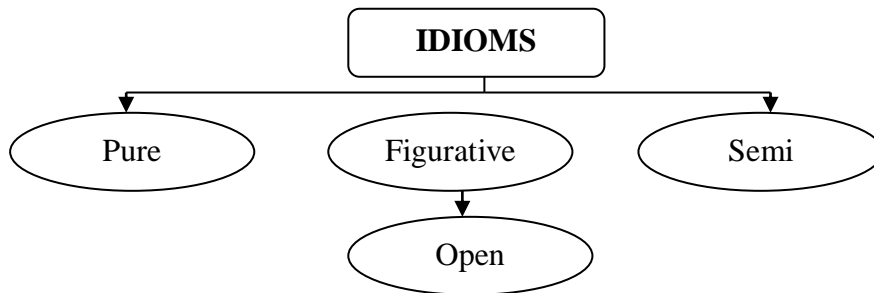


Figure 1: Basic Classification of Idioms

A pure idiom’s meaning cannot be understood through the addition of its constituents. Indeed, it establishes itself in a given society, petrifies and congeals through constant use. The figurative idiom carries a metaphorical meaning that is in contrast with its literal meaning. The semi idiom comprises one literal and one figurative component, which gives it an overall partial compositional meaning. The literal element makes the idiom interpretable and least idiomatic. The open idiom’s constituents –whether are verb, noun or adjective- are freely changeable without any alteration in the overall meaning. Nevertheless, the principle of open idiom contradicts with the concept of “lexical fixedness” proclaimed by (Cowie 1998; Burger 1998)

| Types of Idioms | English version | Arabic Translation |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Pure | to spill the beans | إزاحة الستار |
| Figurative | to carry coals to Newcastle | كمن يبيع الماء في حارة الساقيين |
| Semi idiom | it cost an arm and a leg | يكلفك الذي ورائك و الذي أمامك |
| Open idiom | to add fuel to the fire | صب الزيت على النار |

Table 1 Illustrations of the Basic Classification of Idioms

The first idiom mentioned in the table above implies revealing secrete information in the purpose of making it known. The idiom, in the table is derived from an ancient Greek voting

process, when people used to vote by placing one of two colored beans in a box. The white bean typically meant yes and the black one meant no. Hence, if someone spills the beans, the secret results of the election would be revealed before intended. Visibly, the meaning of the idiom cannot be detected from its constituents. To understand the meaning of the second idiom, one needs to have a historical background concerning the economy of this English city. Newcastle was the UK's first coal exporting city and has been well-known as a coal mining centre since the middle Ages. The research I undertook concerning the Arabic equivalent of this idiomatic expression was not much fruitful as the nearest idiom, which we could find is the one suggested in the table, and which according to us does not provide us with a concrete reference, as is the case in the English idiom. Newcastle is a populous city and metropolitan borough in North East England, while the Arabic translation is syntactically undefined, hence the reference is abstract.

In the semi idiom, the verb “cost” kept its literal meaning, while the use of human body parts gave the idiom a figurative inference. The idiom “it *costs an arm and leg*’ is used to describe something that is extremely expensive. In the last example, the idiom “*to add fuel to the fire* or “*to add oil to the flame*” are the same in meaning “*fire*” can be replaced with “*flame*” without causing any change in meaning. In fact the expression describes a situation, which is at once extremely bad and is at the point of being aggravated or becoming even worse.

I-3 Disparity between Arabic and English Idioms

Arabic and English are two languages that belong to different origins and distinct linguistic families. Arabic belongs to the Semitic family of languages, while English is regarded as a member of the Indo-European language family. Both of them are rich with idiomatic expressions. Idioms in English originated mostly from the bible, the Greek and Roman mythologies. Arabic like English developed its idioms from its religious and cultural heritage, and it is highly acknowledged that the Arab’s use of idioms reveals much wisdom and genuineness. In fact, there are two main reasons that should be highlighted concerning the use of idiomatic expressions in the Arab world: the first aims to beautify the language by giving it stylistic distinctiveness, while the second consists in avoid mentioning a word that may cause discontent or annoyance to the audience. Two types of idioms existing in Arabic are to be mentioned. (Abu Saad 1987) The first is the contextual idiom, which acquires its meaning in contextual use. For example *a number cruncher* corresponds to the Arabic idiom *مهووس الأرقام* This idiom may have two meanings: the first refers to someone, whose job consists in working with numbers and mathematics like an accountant, while the second invokes a sophisticated type of computer capable of solving complex and complicated mathematical problems. Hence, the understanding of such an idiom relates to its context of use. The second type of idioms stated by Abu Saad relate to the ones that acquire their meanings through the image they portray. (Idem) For example, the idiom *من كان بيته من زجاج لا يرشق الناس بالحجارة* is a very well-known idiom, and is currently used in different contexts. It corresponds to the

English idiom “*People who live in glass houses should not throw stones,*” which implies that one should not criticize others for bad attributes that he or she has himself or herself. It also pertains to hypocrisy meaning that one, who is vulnerable to criticism regarding a certain issue, should not criticize others about the same issue.

It should also be noted that Arabic idiomatic expressions are more found in dialects than in its standard form, and in many cases, they are easily comprehensible than is the case in English. This is due to the fact that their meaning is not far from the total sum of their respective components. On the other hand, English idioms exhibit more difficulty of comprehension simply because their meaning is farer from the sum of their components, besides the cultural connotation, which is more instilled. Worth noting that differences between English and Arabic idioms result from their opposing convictions, beliefs and customs. Arabic is a Semitic language based on the Islamic religion. Additionally, most Arabic countries have a hot climate, and are desert-based, hence still characterized by Beduinity, whereas the English idiom derives from Indo-European heritage, and thus manifests the Christianity of its speakers, the coldness of its climate, and the Greek and Roman culture. These differences in terms of culture, habits and climate resulted in major differences in idiomatic expressions. The idiom “*the fox is not taken in the same snare twice*” its nearest equivalent in Arabic is لا يلدغ المؤمن من الجحر مرتين is a good example of these differences. We notice that the Arabic language prefers to use a religious term instead of making reference to an animal (the fox) to express the meaning of faithfulness and loyalty.

II-Difficulties in Translating Idioms

Translating idioms constitutes a great challenge for translators. The main difficulty for the translator consists first in understanding the idiom. According to Baker " the main problems that idiomatic expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly and the difficulties in rendering its various aspects of meaning (1992:65). The same view was shared by Mollanazar, who claimed “the first step in translating idioms is to recognize them, and that the great pitfall is to translate idioms literally. A word-for-word translation of idioms is often nonsense or even sometimes amusing.” (2004:52) For example, the idiom “*to get an egg in one’s face*” implies to be embarrassed or feel ashamed. The embarrassment usually results from failure or clumsiness. The meaning has nothing to do with “egg” or “face” and if translated literally into Arabic will result into a meaningless translation as is the case in this translation: الحصول على بيضة على الوجه The nearest and most probable translation is يُلطخ العار جيبني

Within, this context, Baker (1992: 68-71) mentions a number of difficulties encountered in the translation of idioms, among them:

- 1-Absence of an equivalent idiom in the target language
- 2- Idioms with similar counterpart in the target language, but different contextual use
- 3-Idioms displaying differences in literal and idiomatic meanings
- 4-Idioms displaying differences in conventions

The following difficulties are illustrated through the examples provided in the table below:

| Difficulties | English idiom | Arabic idiom |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | to put one's cards on the table | يفصح/يكشف عن نواياه |
| 2 | to eat one's words | يسحب كلامه |
| 3 | to get cold feet | يرتبك/ يتوتر |
| 4 | to warm the heart | أثلج الصدر |

Table 2 Illustrations of Baker's Difficulties in Translating Idioms

The idiom “*to put ones cards on the table*” does not have an equivalent in Arabic because of the idiom's cultural connotation. Playing cards is indeed not permitted in Islam, even when no money is involved because it distracts people from remembering Allaah and from undertaking their religious duties as well. It may also lead to gambling, which is expressly forbidden in the Qur'an. [Al-Maa'idah 5:90] The figurative meaning of the idiom in English is to be open and honest in declaring one's intentions. In this context, Straksiene states that “the lack of equivalence on the idiom's level in the target language constitutes a major problem for the translator”. (2005) He adds, “all languages have idioms but finding an equivalent in the target language that corresponds to the idiom in the source language in both form and meaning is not a simple issue.” The second idiom “*to eat one's words*,” implies to have to take back one's statements or to confess that one's predictions were wrong. However, in some Arabic dialects, if someone eats some letters or words, this can result from a handicap that causes verbal disorder making the person speak very quickly or stutters. Hence upon, the idiom in the source language has a very close counterpart in the target language, which looks similar on the surface, yet, totally different in use. The third idiomatic expression in the table above, “*to get cold feet*” if literally translated into Arabic produces “الحصول على أقدام باردة” which is meaningless. The intended meaning of the idiom is to be nervous or afraid to engage in a particular action that should generally be done at urge. The nearest Arabic translation is “يتوتر.” Distinctly, the Arabic translation focuses only on the consequence of the action -of doing something at urge- without giving any particular image of the action, as is the case in the English idiom, which displays the feeling of getting cold feet, which is extremely unpleasant and irksome. Thereupon this idiom clearly displays opposition in literal and idiomatic meanings, a situation, which justifies the difficulty of translating idioms. The fourth and last idiomatic illustration in the table is “*warm the heart*” or “*cool the chest*” translated into Arabic as *أثلج الصدر*, which is an example of differences in conventions and agreements between the Arab's culture and the English one. What the English feel or conceive as warm is oppositely felt in the other side. The use of the word “*snow*” in the Arabic translation can be explained by the fact that for an Arab, who lives in a hot environment anything that is cool, is desired. However, English would express the same emotion, with the verb “to warm”. Hence, the Arabs relate happiness to coldness, whereas the English associate it with warmth. Thus, different climatic environments engender different expressions for the same experience.

Within the context of difficulties of translating idioms, our discussion in the next part will be oriented towards an in-depth analysis of two major causes related to the hardships of translating idioms, which are metaphoricity and culture.

II-1 Metaphoricity

Metaphorical idioms are constructions using senses including sight, touch, and hearing to express particular situations. Their understanding consists in comprehending the topic of the metaphor, which relies on the understanding of the image employed in it. The metaphorical image refers to the lexical item used to describe a particular image. Such idioms are meant to make a strong impact on the receiver. The more appropriate and original, the metaphorical image in the idiom is the more powerful its impact will be, despite its sense of exaggeration. (Mollanazar2005) An idiom such as “like honey” carries an exaggerated meaning as the sweetness of honey is personified.

Examples of metaphorical idioms using sensory images include:

| Senses | Idiom in English | Meaning | Idiom in Arabic |
|---------|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Sight | to turn a blind eye | not to acknowledge a legitimate matter | غض الطرف |
| Hearing | to lend one's ear | to give someone attention | أَرْهَفَ السَّمْعَ لَهُ |
| Smell | to smell a rat | to detect a betrayer | أمر مريب يلعب الفأر في عُنْبِهِ |
| Taste | to taste of one's medicine | to make someone endure the same bad treatment that the one you have been endured | الإذاقة من نفس الكأس المتجرعة |
| Touch | to hit a nerve | to provoke someone by talking about an unwanted issue | الضرب على الوتر الحساس |

Table 3 Metaphorical Idioms

The above illustrations (table1) clearly show that it is not evident for the translator to translate a metaphorical idiom from English into Arabic. Sight idioms cannot be successfully translated without a prerequisite of Arabic language. Hearing idioms also display a difficulty of translation. Asking for attention in English is expressed through the verb “to lend” whereas in Arabic it is expressed by using the verb “أَرْهَفَ”, which implies in English demonstrating a great feeling of sympathy and kindness. The use of the “rat” in the smell idiom would also be very strange in Arabic as this animal is disgusting and repelling and its use to express thoughts, wants or whatever is excluded in the Arabic both socially and religiously. Idioms relating to the taste sense are also expressed differently in both languages. As is seen in the above idiom, a situation, where someone wants to make someone else endure what he himself

made him endure is expressed through tasting medicine, while in Arabic, the focus is more on reference to taking a liquid with great hardness. Lastly, in the last idiom, hitting a nerve in English is perceived in Arabic as stroking on a chord.

Another example, which clearly shows the difficulty of translating idioms because of figures of speech, is the idiom “*blind as a bat.*” Besides the confusion caused by the fact that “bats” have eyes and hence, can see, there is a correlation between a bat and a blind person and this is unacceptable mainly in the Arabic society, where a person should not in any way be compared to an animal. Additionally a blind person has a special status in the Arabic society. He is respected and helped by his brothers because of his handicap. Lastly, the bat as an animal is not much appreciated in the Arabic culture. It is perceived as frightening and is an embodiment of sin and evil.

II-2 Culture

Culture as defined by Nida represents “the total beliefs and practices of a society.” (1994:157) Words have meaning only in their cultural context. The difficulty of translating idioms arises from the problem of finding adequate target language equivalents for terms or expressions conveying culture-sensitive notions in the source language as a result of the fact that the two languages have different meaning subsystems and cultures” (Teilyano 2007:16) Differences between two cultures may also cause interference problems resulting from either lack of knowledge in language two. (Dweik 2000) Language is part of culture. It is inevitably influenced by socio-cultural factors such as traditions and beliefs. “Language is not an isolated phenomenon suspended in a vacuum, but an integral part of culture” (Snell-Hornby1988:39). Thereupon, language and culture are interwoven and constitute a single universe of experience. (Kramsch1991: 217) To the same point, Ivir stated that “language is a part of culture and, therefore, translation from one language to another cannot be done adequately without knowledge of the two cultures” (1987:208). Adequately, it should be noted that language is not merely a tool of expression, but carries with it people’s ways of thinking, values, perceptions and beliefs making the transfer from one language to another difficult, and this is what makes the translation of idioms a hardship task. For example, the English say “*to be caught red handed,*” which implies to be caught in the act of doing something wrong or illegal. The Arabs express the same situation differently *قبض عليه متلبسا بالجريمة* without making any reference to the color red, which obviously represents the color of blood. Their decision not to refer to blood may have implications resulting from a religious background as Islam forbids the use of words that make reference to what may cause harm to human beings. Indeed human blood is a sign of life that should be preserved in order to protect one’s life. Smadi, claims that when translating culturally-bound expressions from one language to another, translators encounter many hurdles in cultural and religious transferring, (2015:124) which become even tougher when a translator embarks on translating expressions with a historical background. For example, the idiom “*it is raining cats and dogs*” translated literally into Arabic as *إنها تمطر قطط و كلاب* carries a story behind it, which happened in England

at a time roads were not paved and had big holes. During rainy days many cats and dogs run in these holes trying to shelter from rain, and when running under the rain, the cats and dogs would fall into them. The nearest equivalent idiom in Arabic is إنها تمطر بغزارة Therefore, in order for a translator to provide an exact and accurate translation of an idiom, he should first go back to its origins and search deeply for the historical reasons for its emergence.

| Idioms | Meaning | Arabic Equivalent |
|------------------------|--|--------------------|
| to turn a blind eye | to refuse to acknowledge a known truth | غض الطرف |
| through thick and thin | to support someone through good and bad times to do something even in difficult circumstances | في السراء و الضراء |
| to butter someone up | to praise or flatter someone in order to gain a favor | تَمَلَّقَ |

Table 4 Idioms with a Historical Background

The idiom “*to turn a blind eye*” originated in 1801 from a comment made by a British Admiral to his assistant in a battle in Copenhagen. The admiral was blind in one eye, and while communicating with his assistant via flags, he holds a telescope to his blind eye, and made a comment to a fellow officer about reserving the right to use his blind eye every now and again. The second idiom carries different meanings, and its understanding should be in contextual use. It is said that it dates back to the 1300s, where the majority of England was covered by wooded areas. The idiom implies entering a dark forest, where the trees are thick and overgrown. It is derived from an old hunting expression “through thicket and thin wood.” Thicket relate to bushes that grow close together. The last idiom in the table dates back to a customary religious act in ancient India included throwing butter balls at the statues of gods to seek good fortune and their favor.

To conclude this part, one can say that without any doubt culture poses a predominant difficulty in the translation of idioms. Some idioms originated in certain countries only because of a particular cultural aspect in that place that may not be understandable outside that particular context. Therefore, translators should have a cultural former knowledge concerning the idioms they are about to translate.

III Strategies for Translating Idioms

A translation strategy is a "translator's potentially conscious plans for solving concrete translation problems in the framework of a concrete translation task,"(Krings 1986:18)or ."a strategy for finding an idiom of similar meaning and form in the target language, a thing that offers the ideal solution for the translator, yet, this is not necessarily always the case." (Baker 1992:72) It is "a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem." (Loescher 1991:8)

Idioms should never be translated word for word or literally, as the result will be unintelligible for the receptor. (Newmark 1981:125) The most important issue is the ability to distinguish the difference between the literal and real meaning of the idiomatic expression. Being able to translate idioms appropriately requires excellent command of both the source and target languages. Translator's awareness of an idiom-related meaning and the suitable strategies for translating it is of utmost importance. “A literal word-for-word translation of the idioms into another language will not make sense. (Dweik&Thalji 2016) Given what has been said, the strategies suggested in this paper are those provided by Baker. (1992:72 -77) We will first discuss each strategy separately then we will provide illustrations in both English as a source language and Arabic as a target one.

III-1 Total equivalence (Form + Meaning)

The first strategy suggested by Mona Baker for translation of idiomatic expressions is the use of an idiom that is very similar in form and meaning to the source idiom. This is may seem ideal. Yet, due to the peculiarities of each language, it can occasionally be achieved. (Baker 1992:72) The effect of this strategy, when obviously possible is the preservation of the impact of the English idiom on the Arabic one. Hence upon, the translation will retain the lexical constituency, the semantic content, the brevity of the source idiom and its effect on the audience. (Idem)

Instances of idioms with similar meaning and form are illustrated in the following table.

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| lion's share | حصة الأسد |
| to give green light | يعطي الضوء الأخضر |
| in the twinkling of an eye | في لمح البصر |

Table 5 Idiomatic Total Equivalence

III-2 Partial Equivalence (Meaning-Form)

The second strategy suggested by Mona Baker in the translation of idioms is finding an idiom in the target language, which has a similar meaning but is dissimilar in form. In such a case, the lexical constituency of the source language idiom differs from its counterpart in the target language though the semantic content is identical. Based on this, the meaning of the target language idiom is the same as the one in the source language, but the lexical pattern is different. It is a partial correspondence, where an idiom is translated by substitution, i.e. by finding an idiom in the target language, which is semantically equivalent to the English idiom, but with a different lexical form. Yet, it creates the same impact on the audience.

Examples of idioms displaying partial equivalence are illustrated in the following table:

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| to move earth and heaven | يقيم الدنيا ويقعدها |
| to add insult to injury | يزيد الطين بلة |
| to dig his own grave | سعى إلى حتفه بظلفه |

Table 6 Idiomatic Partial Equivalence

III-2 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the most common way of translating idioms in case of an unavailable match in the target language. This strategy is also referred to as “communicative paraphrase (Hervey and Higgins1992:32) or ‘reducing metaphor to sense’ (Newmark1988:109). In such a case, the translator has to add more clarification to his translation by focusing on the source idiom meaning as much as possible. However, this strategy does not always preserve the exact meaning of the source idiom. as its impact besides its cultural significance may be totally scarified. Paraphrasing is applicable only when it becomes the safest strategy for the translation of the source idiom into the target one. However, this can lead to a lost in the quality and stylistic flavor of the idiom. While using this strategy, not only components of sense will be missed, but the emotive or pragmatic impact as well.(idem)

Examples of paraphrasing are illustrated in the following table:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| to have no backbone | ضعيف الإرادة والشخصية |
| to let the cat out of the bag | يفشي سر |
| to be in the hole | منقل بالديون |

Table 7 Idiomatic Paraphrasing

III-3 Omission

Translation by omission consists in omitting translating a word or expression in the target language mainly when the item is not important for the conveyance of the meaning of the source language idiom. Toury refers to it as ‘metaphor to 0.’ (1995:82) In such a case, it is advisable to put the idiom aside and translate just its meaning. “The technique of omission does not alter the meaning of the idiom, yet it remains the worst resort.” (Baker 1992:28-36) However, this strategy is not much approved by many scholars and some of them do not include it among the translation strategies. (Veisbergs 1989)

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| to hit the ceiling | انفجر غضبا |
| wear and tear | جار عليه الزمن |
| to leap in the dark | يجازف |

Table 8 Translation by Omission

III-4 Cultural Substitution

Culture definitely dominates the translation of idioms in all languages. Idioms have cultural associations, which give them a peculiarity that is not properly handled by all translators. The translator should conduct a research concerning the idiom that he has to translate and adopt a smooth translation in case no corresponding cultural or institutional idiomatic expression exists in the target culture or language. (CheSuh2005:117) Such being the case, cultural matching occurs only when both the source language and the target one belong to the same family, hence, having cultural similarities. When, on the other hand, this concerns two culturally remote languages such as English and Arabic, it is advisable to resort to cultural

substitution. It is also worthy to mention that having a good cultural background about idioms is a necessity which is supposed to make the translator not only get the true and complete meaning behind idioms, but also “to enable him to find equivalent idioms having the same or similar functions in the TL.” (Sadiq2008:50).

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| jack- of- all- trades | صاحب الصنائع السبع |
| to bell a cat | خاطر بنفسه |
| to cry wolf | استغاثة كاذبة |

Table 9 Idiomatic Translation by Cultural Substitution

The first idiom mentioned in the table refers to someone, who is competent at many things but does not excel at any of them. It dates back to the 14th century, when the name “Jack” was currently used to describe any ordinary man. The idiom “to bell a cat” implies to hang a bell around a cat's neck to provide a warning. Figuratively, the expression refers to any task that is strenuous. This idiomatic expression derives from the fable: “The Mice in Council,” which narrates the tale of a group of mice, which were scared by the cat of the house. A mice in the group suggested that a bell should be placed around the cat's neck so that they can hear it at its arrival. Yet, none of the mice accepted to accomplish the task. The moral of the fable is that any plan should be achievable or it is useless. “To cry wolf” is used about someone, who keeps asking for help, even when he does not need it. The result is when he is really in need of help no one believes him. The idiom is based on a story about a young shepherd, who kept on calling the villagers and telling them that a wolf was attacking his sheep and it always proved to be a joke. When a real wolf came no one believed his cries and all of the sheep were attacked. The moral is that no one believes a liar, even when he is telling the truth. Even though, the cultural context has a particular impact in the production, reception and consumption of idioms, the translations provided for the three above mentioned idiomatic expressions do not make any reference to the cultural contexts of the idioms nor to their historical heritage, yet the translations attempted to keep the ideas of the idioms. Expressions are conveyed differently in the Arabic context resulting in a universality of concepts among languages.

However, and by contrast, there are some idioms with cultural connotation, but which have been integrated into the Arabic language.

Examples of such idioms include:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| a bad bet | رهان خاسر |
| put one's cards on the table | لعب الورقة الرابحة |

Table10 Arabic-English Idioms with Cultural Connotation

An explanation to the phenomenon of integration of idioms with a cultural connotation in the Arabic society-although in contradiction with the Islamic world- is that once an idiom has been translated, it may be adopted by other translators. Hence, it is sustained for a considerable time, and may possibly survive.

Conclusion

In sum, and as clearly shown above, translation of idioms engenders various difficulties that are not so easy to overcome. Yet, the main problems that were analyzed in this paper relate to lack of an equivalent idiom in the target language due to its cultural connotation, which cannot be transferred in the target language.

The feature of metaphoricity characterizing most idioms also induces a major hardship mainly for translators lacking cultural knowledge of the target language. Hence, it is hard for them to guess the meaning without having a previous background about the culture from which the idiom originated. Translators, therefore, need to be open minded and well educated and read continuously about the culture of the language they translate.

The major translation difficulties -related to the translation of idioms- disused in this paper are recapitulated as follow:

- An idiom may have no equivalent in the target language
- An idiom may have a different meaning in the target language.
- An Idiom may convey a meaning, which is different from its literal sense
- The meaning of an idiom is understood from its context.

Hence upon, this paper recommends the following:

- The field of translating idioms from English into Arabic is still overlapping, and should necessarily be supplemented with more contributions to meet the needs of the Arabic language.
- Translators should adopt the most appropriate translation strategy in order to achieve the most precise meaning of the idiom.
- Conducting more research regarding the strategies of translating idioms.
- Conducting more research in the translation of idioms in fields, such as politics, economics, culture, medicine, religion...etc
- Producing bilingual dictionaries specialized in idiomatic expressions by field that allow the translator to understand the meaning of the idioms and their correct use.

Yet, it should be noted that there are no ready-made, fixed strategies to be prescribed. Social and cultural factors have great influence in the translation of idioms. Additionally, people have their own perception of life, which is probably affected by their social experiences including every aspect of life: customs, morals, feelings, emotions, beliefs, etc. Hence it is up to the translator to adopt the strategy that suits the nature, peculiarities and distinctiveness of the idiom to be translated.

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