**Strategies of translating idioms of hate and love from Arabic to English**

***Module name:*** *English Project 1*

**Student name:**

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***Introduction***

Idiomatic expressions are phrases that have figurative meaning that stands apart from a literal understanding of concepts that they include in simple words. In overall, translating Arabic idioms into English is not an easy task, for this requires high professionalism of being familiar with Arabic religion, culture and social issues. A translator should use skills of defining the cross-cultural approach of unity and distinctive features of both languages and social contexts that they are placed into within the extended historical perspective.

This study is focused on the analysis of strategies for adequate translating idioms of love and hate from Arabic into English, considering social, cultural and religious values of different nations. The expected rationale of this work is based on the search of the adequate scenario of expert translation of figurative expressions within the cross-cultural context. This will help to enhance the more stable communication between the East and the West, establishing the stronger bonds of understanding the aspects of lifestyle, beliefs, and values that English and Arabic speaking people share.

***AIM*:**

To investigate the ways of translating idioms of hate and love from Arabic to English

***OBJECTIVES*:**

The study has an objective to analyze the main strategies used for translation of idioms and focus on the specificity of translation from Arabic to English. The main focus of the study is to analyze the process of transition of specific meanings from Arabic to English taking into account cultural and linguistic specificities of both languages.

* *To select a group of love and hate idioms*
* *To analyze the main strategies that are used for translating idioms and focus on the specific once which are love and hate.*
* *To identify the cultural aspects of the idioms*
* *To identify the linguistic aspects of the idioms*
* *To identify the main issues of translating selected idioms*
* *To analyze the data*

***Research Questions***

1. What are the most effective strateies of translating idioms of love and hate from Arabic to English?
2. What are linguistic and cultural specificities the translator has to consider when performing the translation from Arabic to English?
3. How the translated idioms are affected by the cultural aspects?
4. How the translated idioms are affected by the linguistic aspects?

***Literature Review***

Translation is a process of interpreting aspects and features of a text semantically and culturally in another language. However, translating idiomatic and culturally bound expressions has been a major challenge for language translators since it involves various cultural elements. Translation is an important tool which allows people to share information. However, translating idioms is not an easy task since it requires knowledge of both languages and strategies that are necessary to convey the intended meaning. In essence, idioms are culturally bound and have associations that make them peculiar and difficult to understand and translate. Howwar (2013, p. 3) argues that translators are obliged to pay careful attention to cultural meaning when translating from one language to another. This suggests the benefits of translating cultural elements in translation in general. Hence, translation is considered as a strategy that comprises of an attempt to replace a written message and statement in a different language by applying statements in another culture (Ghazala 2003, p. 203). Therefore, it is the responsibility of translators to ensure that they facilitate the transfer of information, as well as cultural elements from one language to another. This is an important move that creates an equivalent response to the receivers. The message derived from the source language is shaped by the cultural context where it is created. For this reason, being competent in using the idiomatic expressions cannot be easily achieved.

The cultural element of language translation should be taken into consideration when translating idiomatic expressions. The cultural elements show specific implications, especially when translating idioms from English to the Arabic language because of the variations that exist and which would make the translation process become a challenging task to translators (Ghazala 2003, p. 205). Idioms are not easy to learn since they are not literal; hence they are not the sum of the meaning of its parts or constituents. As such, awareness of the idioms-related meaning and the difficulties might be encountered and the most appropriate strategies for translation.

According to Deweik & Thalji (2016, p. 120) the process of translating idioms becomes a major challenge to translators since culturally-bound expressions comprise of cultural and literal elements. However, the difference between English and Arabic is one of the factors, which contribute to the difficulty in translating idiomatic expressions through the application of Arabic language, which may hinder the effective rendering of meaning. Also, having a solid foundation in both cultures-awareness of the target and the source language provides translators with an opportunity to understand the implied meaning of idiomatic expressions.

***Definition of Idiomatic Expression***

There are numerous definitions of idiomatic expressions that are formulated by multiple scholars to highlight the specific features and connotations that they bear in them, depending on the context of use. For instance, the expert definitions of an idiom is that is “an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own” and “a style or form of expression that is characteristic of a particular person, type of art” (Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary, 2016). According to the alternative definition, it is “a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own” and “the style of expression in writing, speech, or music that is typical of a particular period, person, or group” (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2016). Despite their specific nature related to the variety of angles of understanding idioms, all definitions represented above have much in common: they are all related to context, the situation of translation, audience, cross-cultural aspects. The proper understanding of each idiomatic expression includes the proper situational analysis, regarding interests and type of audience.

***Idioms in the Arabic Language***

Arabic language is considered to be a very complicated language. Thus, in Arabic language, idioms constitute of an important part, which is embedded in both classical and standard Arabic terms, as well as in all dialects in the Arabian world. Researchers observe that old Arabic dictionaries, which were written and published during the Middle Age, had large numbers of idioms. Also, they were characterized by detailed definitions of their meanings. More recently, there have been more comprehensive dictionaries that mainly emphasized on Arabic idioms. The Quran, which forms the highest form of Arabic, applies an extensive use of idioms. Without a doubt, the verbal idioms that are used in the Quran make an emphasis on the verbal aspect which is a significant aspect of the vocabulary used in the holy text. Consequently, the statements of Prophet Muhammad, which are perceived as standard to measure the validity or correctness of Arabic language has some idioms. Therefore, the features of Arabic idioms are not unique from other languages. Hence, it becomes difficult to understand the terminology by focusing on its constituent parts. Similarly, Arabic idioms are considered to be entirely metaphorical.

There are certain difficulties when translating idioms as well as culturally bound expressions, which is considered as a problematic area for translators and learners. Therefore, when translating idioms from one language to another, translators may experience some complexities which may be difficult to overcome (Kamel 2007, p. 4). One of the challenges when translating idiomatic expressions is the lack of equivalence in a target language, which corresponds to the term both in meaning and form. Also, several problems have been cited with regards to translating idioms and the reasons behind such difficulties. For example, the ability to recognize and interpret idioms for the most suitable target language. Again, lack of equivalence in the target language is also a source of difficulty. Therefore, the kind of differences between language and the application of an idiomatic expression is also perceived as a source of difficulty for the translators.

**Idiomaticity in the English Language**

Culturally Idiomaticity is deeply rooted in human language. However, there are differences from one language to another. Hence, the use of idioms is considered as a common feature in all dialects and its appreciation is believed to be the foundation of learning and understanding language. Further, idiomatic expressions have both syntactic and semantic complexities that present a major challenge for translators and language learners. Thus, an idiom is an expression that also functions as a single unit where the meaning of a text cannot be worked out from distinct parts. Idioms can also be defined as lexicalized expressions with idiosyncratic meanings, or words that are translated non-literarily since their meanings are not easy to predict from their constituents (Ajaaj & Mohammed 2014, p. 1). Nevertheless, most idioms are applied interchangeably between the spoken and the written discourse.

Notably, idioms are mostly associated with spoken language, and their main features are mainly metaphorical; hence cannot be understood directly. Therefore, idiomatic expressions should not be viewed literarily since their meanings do not depend on constituents with a syntactic form that is usually fixed; hence cannot be viewed as ungrammatical. Besides, their meanings are considered to be invariable and usually cultural or informal. Idioms are classified in different ways through parts of speech or grammatically based on various concepts or emotions according to the image they portray. As such, the acquisition of idioms as well as their translation should be made with great care and translators are required to search for an equivalent term that can express the whole meaning (Ajaaj & Mohammed 2014, pp. 2). On the other hand, translators should avoid translating the idioms literarily. For this reason, the terms should be translated into isolation to understand the real meaning, which is conveyed by a particular term and take into account the cultural aspect as well.

***The Meaning of Culture in Translating Idioms***

The choice between translations techniques cannot exist without coming up with the long-term planning. Since “problem-solving is the most important function of the strategies” (Owjip, 2013), the adequate translation cannot go without keeping up with modern trends on the choice the proper decision making on how to translate complex idiomatic expressions. Culture, religious and social values play a huge role in selection the strategy of translating Arabic idioms into English. The adequate interpretation of idiomatic expression depends on skills of a translator and his background knowledge of the variety of emotional contrasts that present a significant role for the Eastern and Western societies. They live within different political, economical, religious and social contexts; however, they basically experience the same emotions of love, joy, anger, and hate that are basic to the human nature. Despite this fact, different cultures find different expressions of the idiomatic expressions for the variety of contrastive emotions that are the part of their daily lives. Since “an idiom is an artistic expression of the language”, it may bear the individual meaning that is mainly different from the word’s literal meaning (Al-Shavi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 140). In this relation, the variety of understanding the “perception of social experiences that include every aspect of life: customs, morals, feelings, emotions” (Al-Shavi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 142) is dependent on the layers of communication between different cultures (namely English- and Arabic based).

The knowledge of culture plays an essential part in the translation of idioms. For instance, in the Western culture, religion does not play an important part in the daily life of citizens, while in the Middle East, Islam is an integral part of everyday life. These differences determine the cultural background that can be observed in idiomatic expressions. For example, the idiom “كريم رمضان” in English means literally that “Ramadan is generous”, while in fact, it means “excuse me for not offering something to eat or drink for it is fasting time” (Al-Shavi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 142). Considering the religious aspects or translating idioms from Arabic to English, it should be noted that Muslims praise God and receive the blessing of fasting to support their faith. So, they do not share food or serve it to themselves or other people until the sunset. Therefore, the properly selected strategy to translate idioms from Arabic to English should regard cross-cultural similarities and differences to enhance the adequate interpretation of the figurative meaning of these phrases.

Also, in Middle East family and communal values are essential for every citizen, while the Western hemisphere appreciates the individualistic values. Therefore, interpersonal factors in relationships between family members and relatives in the Middle East have a stronger effect comparing to the Western citizens. For example, the social context for translation may be of the great value, when an expert has to be familiar with the importance of family relationships for Arabs. For example, the Arabic idiom “ظھره مسنود” that is “cut off from a tree” (English literal meaning) has the proper equivalent of “he has no relatives” (Al-Shavi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 142).Such cultural aspects have to be considered during the translation in order to replace or interpret the meaning correctly from SL (source language) to TL (target language). Idioms are culture-bound, yet some of the idioms may be translated using the word-to-words translations. This method can be used only if both TL and SL have similar meanings, mediums, **and possibly cultural heritage (Xiuwen, 2012). According to Ren & Yu (2013), the majority of idioms were developed as metaphors that derived from the real-life situations, where the expression serves as a medium between the recipient and the addressee.

***Approaches & Strategies to Idiom Translation***

Various strategies can be used to find an idiom of the same meaning and form in the target language, which seems to provide an ideal solution to translation. The strategies that are available are used to solve the problems, which may seem to offer a solution to the challenges faced when translating a text. For instance, an idiom may be applied with a similar meaning but in a different form or partially equivalent. Also, translation may also be done through translation or paraphrasing a text. Nevertheless, there are some idiomatic expressions in English, which are equivalent to the Arabic language and are transparent in their meaning as well as form. Concerning translation by paraphrasing, the strategy entails providing a brief explanation of the meaning behind the idiomatic expressions that are being used in the source language. Most often, this is usually applicable when a translator experiences both idiomatic as well as culturally-bound expressions in a source of language that lacks a corresponding expression in the target language (Shojaei 2012, p. 1121). Therefore, the strategy is mostly used as a strategy for translating idioms when there is no match in the target language. This may occur as a result of the differences in stylistic preferences in a source as well as in target language. On the same note, translation may also be done through the application of notes. The strategy is mainly used when there is no match between the source language and the target language and in cases where the translator fails to find an equivalent.

Farahani & Ghasemi (2012, p. 20) states that using notes during translation and as a strategy is fundamental for foreign language readership. It has been observed that lack of equivalence comprises of one of the key challenges when translating idioms. However, the major challenge when translating English idioms to Arabic is the linguistic ability that enables a translator to obtain a suitable equivalent. However, the challenge is perceived to be more salient when translating idioms that are regarded as opaque (Farahani and Ghasemi 2012, p. 21). Based on the translation strategy used, most learners tend to handle such difficulties through paraphrasing the meaning of the idiom. A literal translation may also be used as another approach to show the idiomatic expressions (Shojaei 2012, p. 1123). Despite the differences between English and Arabic idioms, it has been observed that literal translation could be used to convey the meaning of an idiom. Notably, an Arabic reader may be in a position to grasp the meaning of an expression through the application of literal translation that does not convey meaning. However, for the strategies to handle such difficulties, strategies, such as literal translation and paraphrasing may be used to handle some of the difficulties by omitting some of the most popular strategies.

As mentioned, idioms are expressions that illustrate much about individual’s traditional ways of experiencing reality. Besides, they can be best understood from the meaning of the individual words in isolation. The differences between the source language and target language coupled with cultural variation make the process of translation more veritable (Farahani &Ghasemi 2012, p. 17). Therefore, culture plays a fundamental role in the language translation process. Also, the problems of translation may involve linguistic, stylistic, as well as social variations between the source language and target language. Based on the mentioned fact, a qualified translator should have a better understanding of the cultural concepts.

It is also evident that the social aspects of Arabic and English cultures influence both languages. As such, cultural differences have a clear impact on the perception of social experienced that embodies every aspect of life, such as individual’s feelings or emotions. Language translators and learners should understand that idioms are usually impossible to translate literally since their meanings are not built from the meanings of their parts (Farahani &Ghasemi 2012, p. 18). The differences in culture may also present a direct impact on language. For instance, idioms that are mainly used in Arabic and English are usually affected by the principles of culture. Also, idioms in these cultures are used to express different feelings and moral traditions that manifest themselves to the Arabic and English cultures.

Overall, it is considered that the translation as a process is the transaction between two languages and it is conducted with the help of cultural, linguistic, and in some instances, religious mediation. While the differences between languages are evident, Popescu (2015) implied that the distinctions between the idioms in two languages may be interpreted with the help of the use of similar meanings or words. Also, the researcher admitted that linguistic and cultural distinctions between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) are particularly important. Also, another research revealed that not only the cultural specificities are crucial, but the sound knowledge in both cultures and languages has to be taken into account (Popescu, 2015). In this case, the translator has to implement proactive techniques that will target several areas of the background of both languages, including history, economy, and politics of the states or ethnicities involved.

Barriers in the translation of idioms include lack of cultural knowledge of TL or SL, limited knowledge of either TL or SL, lack of experience in artistic literal translation, and no knowledge of strategies used for the translation of idiomatic expressions. In some instances, the idioms have both the literal and idiomatic meaning. For example, in English, there is an expression “slap on the face” that has both literal meaning claiming that someone can slap the face of another person and an idiomatic expression suggesting that another person, for example, hurts you unexpectedly. Therefore, in order to translate the idiom, it is essential to transfer the literal as well as the direct meaning of the idiom.

The similarities between SL and TL can be found only in the case when both belong to one language family, thus, have the similar cultural similarity and linguistic characteristics. However, when such languages as English and Arabic are used as the TL and the SL, it is clear that the similarities between them will be rare. At the same time, according to Khalil (2004), there are numerous idioms in modern Arabic that were taken from other languages. The researcher claims that it is the unique ability of the Arabic language to digest the foreign expressions or terms and create its own unique product. For example, “to shed crocodile tears” is literally translated to Arabic (بَكى دُموعَ التَماسيحِ). This expression is derived from the Western culture, as in Arabic it did not have the same meaning, as it has in English.

There is another approach to the idiom translation that uses the framework of partial equivalence. This approach recognizes that the idioms in SL and TL are common in meaning, but are different in form of expression (Salim & Mehawesh, 2013). According to the study performed by Salim & Mehawesh (2013) that targeted the idiomatic expression in Arabic and English using the topic of colour revealed that there are crucial differences in both languages and the translator has to substitute different colours. Yet, in Arabic, the native speakers use a different approach to using the colours in the idiomatic expressions.

Idiomatic expressions are way more difficult than ordinary text, even though it may contain the traces of religious or cultural background. Idioms are deeply rooted in culture and in a lot of cases, the idioms do not have a literal meaning. However, the culture retained such an approach. According to the research conducted by Dweik & Suleiman (2013), the students who performed the translations of idioms from Arabic to English expressed the inability to find a matching equivalence to the expression. Specifically, it was difficult to substitute the words that do not have equivalent meaning in Arabic, which pointed to the limited cultural awareness among the students (Dweik & Suleiman, 2013). At the same time, it is possible to contain the knowledge about the culture, but still, fail to address the equivalency in expression. It is difficult to create equivalent meaning for the words or meanings that do not have the similarities in the TL. This is the major drawback for the translators that target the SL that has significant differences with the TL.

In this case, Salim & Mehawesh (2013) propose to use the strategy known as a translation by omission. It is another approach that translators can take into account when the TL has no direct meaning found in SL. This strategy involves paraphrasing or creation of new idiom with the help of artistic literal translation. While this approach may sound quite drastic and inaccurate in terms of translation, but in most cases, nothing will happen when one word is omitted or some context is eliminated from the original translation. In some cases, the omission is necessary, as the translator may eliminate such unwanted results as redundancy and awkwardness. Consequently, the collective result retrieved from the research revealed that the idioms can be translated by numerous methods, including omission, literal and artistic translation.

***Translating Idioms of Love and Hate***

The proper selection of the translation strategy of idioms depends on social and cross-cultural context. For instance, Bahameed (2008) is aware that the best way to prepare for the translation process is to make some notes, based on the communicational activity of the interpersonal type. He calls this strategy “employing notes”, regarding its simplicity and uses for facilitating the process of translation. Eftekhari (2008) supports this approach, extending it with the more complex translation techniques that apply situational analysis and application of the background knowledge of Islamic culture, traditions, and religion.

The practical highlight on the most suitable translation strategies is offered by Al-Shawi and Mahadi, (2012). They are aware that the most productive to translate idioms from Arabic into English may be the following strategies:

* “using a parallel idiom in the target language”;
* “using similar meaning but dissimilar form”
* “ paraphrasing the idiom”;
* using notes;
* “Consulting informant” (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 146).

Considering translation of idioms of love and hate, Noor Balfaqeeh supports the strategy of paraphrasing as the most effective to facilitate the adequate translation of idioms. However, she is aware that in some cases, when connotative meanings and emotional context vary across different cultures, it is better to literal translation or deletion as an alternative translation strategy to convey the figurative meaning of an idiom properly. The researcher insists that each translated phrase should adequately convey “an image that could symbolize the meaning of the idiom” (Balfaqeeh, 2009, p. 41). In contrast, Gile (2009) proposes two subsequent translation strategies of domestication and foreignization as the most suitable solutions for the cross-cultural approach.

In Arabic, there are idioms that cannot have equivalents in English, yet can be replaced by the expressions with the similar meaning. For example, “القرد في عين أمه غزال” translates literary as “the monkey is as beautiful as a gazelle in his mother’s eyes”, which can be interpreted by “when you love someone, you will always see them as perfect” (Ibrahim, Abdou, & Gheith, 2015). Another similar expression dedicated to the topic of love is “اذا كان حبيبك عسل، ماتلحسوش كله” that has a word-to-word translation of “if your lover is honey, don’t lick it all”, which can be replaced by different expressions, including “don't spit in the well you drink from” or explained by saying “do not take for granted those who love you” (Ibrahim, Abdou, & Gheith, 2015). Such idioms can be translated with the help of omission and artistic translation method.

Translating of idioms of emotional type is essentially difficult even for experts, for different cultures include various interpretations of connotative meanings, depending on their social contexts. In this relation, Anjad Mahasneh is aware that emotive expressions to convey strong feelings of “love, hate, joy, pleasure, fear, and grief” should be translating regarding a situation following expressive, appellative, and phatic functions (Mahasneh, 2016, p. 270). For example, a rhetorical idiom "cool my breast (chest)" اثلج صدري "means “to give relief or comfort or bring hope for good news” (Bahameed, 2008, p. 3); it has a positive connotation of joy, based on the good communication. The idioms of hate are similarly conveyed to show the correspondence between shifts in the human soul and psychological aspects of personality.

Therefore, idioms of love and hate are of the specific interest for a translator, for they present the special significance on the matter of communication between people, their personal, work, social, or religious interactions. The functionality of idioms of love and hate has major importance in the context of political and social tension between the Middle East and the West, related to terrorism. Specifically, the escalation of conflicts between two poles of the global world is possibly caused by misunderstandings that occur, based on the inadequate communication between representatives of different cultures, namely English-based and Arabic.

**Limitations**

A limited number of idioms will be analyzed which are related to love and hate. Also, the type of this idioms can be considered as a limitation. Therefore, the meanings and words used in English and Arabic are limited by this topic. Arabic and English have critical differences not only in the cultural background but also in linguistics that requires careful translation and a certain skill.

**Methodology**

The qualitative method will be used in this research. The qualitative method will help to investigate the process of translation and to recognize the most effective techniques in translating idioms by comparing the SL expressions with TL translations, also it well suits the aim of the study. Moreover, to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic aspects by expressing the meaning of the idioms.

**Research time frame:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Stages | Status | Deadline | Students signature | Supervisors signature |
| 1 | Writing introduction | Done | - |  |  |
| 2 | Review and expand literature review | In progress(expected to be completed by week 14) | 4weeks |  |  |
| 3 | Data collection/selection | To be done | 3 weeks |  |  |
| 4 | Organize/classify  Collected data | To be done | 2 weeks |  |  |
| 5 | Data analysis | To be done | 4 weeks |  |  |
| 6 | Writing a conclusion | To be done | One week |  |  |
| 7 | drafting | To be done | One week |  |  |
| 8 | Redrafting | To be done | One week |  |  |

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