Difficulties facing Advanced Iraq EFL Learners in Translating English Idioms into Arabic

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Abstract

The present study is a linguistic investigation of equivalence above word level. It deals with the difficulties of non-equivalence posed in translating English idioms into Arabic and vice versa, and the methods used by 4th year students of English to find the suitable equivalent in the target language. The aim of this study is to examine the type of difficulty students at this level face while translating idioms and tries to suggest solutions and identify strategies that may help to limit or avoid these difficulties. In this respect, a test made up of twelve English idioms and ten Arabic ones is given to fourth level students to be translated. The results of the study show that there are potential problems in the process of translating idioms from English into Arabic and vice versa. Furthermore, the findings show that the context of use helps a lot of students of English to guess the appropriate meaning of idioms. They also confirm the hypothesis and reveal that, except word for word translation, students' use of other translation strategies is limited.

General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

Language is a system of communication that is used by a particular community of speakers. It has literal and figurative
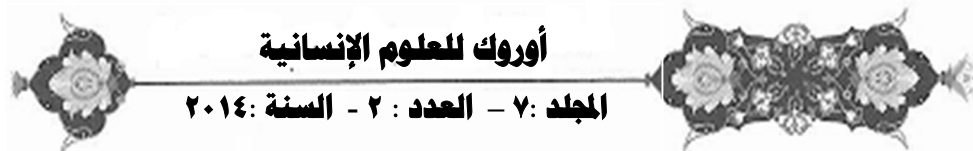
meanings. The literal meaning is the direct reference of words or sentences to objects. The figurative sense, however, is different from the literal one that it is used for giving an imaginative description or a special effect. So ,the meaning of individual words in an expression has nothing to do in the comprehension of the whole meaning. Such a meaning characterizes notions like metaphors, similes and idioms. Idioms have a great extent use in everyday language Their frequent, spontaneous and appropriate use is usually a mark of good English, and an indication of native or near native command of the language. In this respect, ESL/EFL learners do their best to use and, especially, to translate idioms correctly and efficiently in order to achieve idiomacity and provide a native like language. The problem, however, is that despite recent development in the field of translation theory and application, idiomatic expressions still pose a serious challenge for translators and foreign learners.

2. Aim of the study

Taking into consideration the great importance of idioms, and believing in the difficulties that may be posed while translating this type of figurative language, the main aim of this study is to examine the type of difficulty students of English face in translating idioms, and try to suggest solutions and identify strategies that may help to limit or avoid these difficulties.

Chapter One
Translation and Idioms

Introduction

Translating idioms is one of the most difficult tasks for translators. The main problems consist in recognizing an idiom, understanding it and distinguishing idiomatic from non-idiomatic usage. Aiming at investigating the problem of
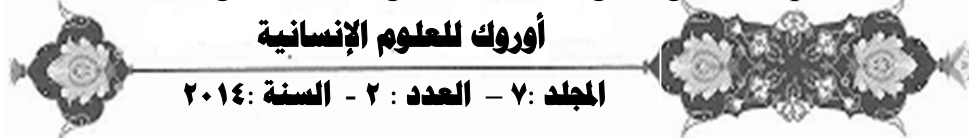
recognition and comprehension of idioms, this chapter which is divided into two parts, gives a detailed theoretical background about idioms. Part one is an introductory section that provides some definitions of translation, equivalence and non-equivalence and culture. It also lists the translation difficulties and the accurate strategies that may help students to solve these problems. Part two, however, is more detailed. It includes many definitions of idioms together with their different types, categories and characteristics. In addition, an explanation of the way idioms should be used and interpreted is given. Moreover, similar notions like metaphors and clichés, proverbs and fixed expressions are also discussed and compared to idioms in order to highlight the main differences between them, and provide a clear image for students about idioms.

1.1. Translation

1.1.1. Definition of Idioms

The field of translation has been recently given a major concern in applied linguistics, and this has led to many definitions of translation. According to Nida and Taber (1982:12),

"Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language (SL) message firstly, in terms of meaning and secondly, in terms of style". In their definition, Nida and Taber highlight the major bases of translation. It involves two languages, the source language and the target one, and it can be oral or written. It is highly dependent on the context, and equivalence is one of its essential elements.

Zagy (2000:146), on the other hand, considers the translation aim as transferring the meaning to the target language (TL) rather than converting the words and grammatical

forms of the original language. Catford (1995:20) however, defines the translation process as the replacement of textual material in one language, by equivalent textual material in another language. He distinguishes between total translation which is the replacement of SL grammar and lexis by equivalent TL grammar and lexis, and restricted translation that is based on the replacement of SL textual material at only one level.

1.1.2. Equivalence and Translation

Equivalence is a term used by many writers to describe the nature and the extent of the relationship which exist between the SL and TL text. Leonardi (2000) states that for Nida (1964:9) defining and explaining the equivalence nature and conditions is considered as the main objective of translation studies. Therefore, Nida (1964: 8) makes a distinction between formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence. According to him, formal correspondence

"focuses attention on the message itself in both form and content". Its purpose is being as faithful as possible to the source culture and it lets the reader, as Nida (ibid.) puts it, . Dynamic equivalent, on the other hand, seeks an equivalent effect on the target reader. It follows that the features of the source culture are of secondary importance in favor of the fulfillment of the source text's function and the production of an equivalent effect. In this respect, Nida and Taber (1982) favor dynamic equivalence because it is based on "the principle of equivalent effect" (cited in Leonardi, 2003: para.9) and it aims at complete naturalness of expressions.By introducing the notion of "equivalent in different", Jackobson (cited in Bassnett1980: 39) insists on the view that translation can always be carried out regardless of the cultural or grammatical differences between the S and T text. He writes (ibid.): "whenever there is a

deficiency" where the translator cannot find a direct equivalent to a particular SL word or text, "terminology may be qualified and amplified by loan words or loan translations, neologisms or semantic shift".

1.1.3. Non-Equivalence in Translation

Sometimes the translator may face the problem of non-equivalence while translating a SL message into a TL one. This is mainly because of the existence of differences at the cultural, grammatical, lexical or stylistic levels.

According to Baker (1992) non-equivalence may be at the level of word or above it. Non-equivalence at word level can occur because of „the absence in the target culture of a relevant situational feature for the source language text (Bassnett, 1980:39). This is because the concept may be lexicalized in the SL and not in the TL. Sapir and Whorf (1964) have best illustrated this phenomenon through giving the example of „snow□. European countries have

many words for snow because it falls many times in the year, in contrast to other countries, like Arab ones, that lexicalize only one type of snow. This phenomenon is highly related to culture.

Non-equivalence can also appear above word level, since words do not occur on their own, but they "almost occur on the company of other words" (Baker, 1992:46). Sometimes the comprehension of a word meaning is impossible until it is combined with other words to form stretches of language. According to Johnson (1975),

The great pest of speech is frequently of translation. No book was ever turned from one language into another, without imparting something of its nature idiom; this is the most mischievous and comprehensive innovation, single words may

enter by thousands and the fabric of the tongue continue the same, but new phraseology changes much once; it alters not the single stories of the building, but the order of the columns (cited in Baker,2001:46).

Non -equivalence above word level characterizes notions like metaphors, collocations and idioms. Idioms will be dealt with, in details, in the second part.

1.1.4. Language, Culture and Translation

The term culture refers to a set of beliefs that control a particular country or group behaviors. It is defined by Taylor (cited in Hymes, 1964: 455) as a „complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, customs and any capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Among these beliefs, language is considered as an essential part that constitutes one's culture. It is as the Longman dictionary describes it "the heart within the body of culture" (cited in Bassnett, 1980:22). This is involved in the process of translation through the influence of the source and target cultures. Culture has a great impact on the process of translation in the sense that the degree of integration of the source text (ST) in the target culture (TC) may vary, and may cause serious problems for the translator. In this respect, culture may lead to different types of translation. Translation may, sometimes, result in a "shift towards the target culture, and the translated text may

or may not merge completely in the target culture" (Yowelly and Lataiwish, 2000:107). This is called "integration". Translation may preserve only the source culture (SC), and in this case it is termed "source translation". It may also preserve neither the source nor the target culture, and here, it is called "alienation" (Yowelly and Lataiwish, 2000:106).

1.1.5. Translation Problems
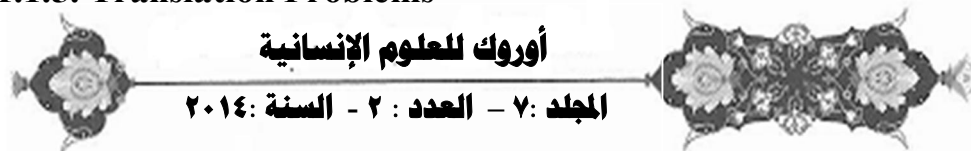
A translation problem is any type of difficulty in the source language (SL) text that obliges the translator to stop translating. This difficulty is mainly due to grammatical, stylistic, cultural or lexical problems .We would only at tackle cultural and lexical problems:

1.1.5.1. Cultural Problems

A number of problems may be raised in cross-cultural translation. According toYowelly and Lataiwish (2000:107), "the greater the gap between the source and target culture.the more serious difficulty would be". Translation between English and Arabic which belong to two different cultures (the Western and the Oriental cultures), and which have a different background is a best example of such problems. Cultural problems may include geographical, religious, social and linguistic ones. Hence, the expression *"summer's day"* in "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" will be best translated into Arabic as "*spring's day*" to convey the same meaning.

1.1.5.2.Lexical problem

Lexical problems usually occur when a word or an expression is not understood, misunderstood or totally unknown to translators. Synonymy, polysemy and monosemy, collocations, metaphors and idioms are considered as the most common lexical problems (Ghazala, 1995:24). Idioms which are special phrases with special meanings will be discussed in details in the second part.

1.2. Idioms

1.2.1. Definition

One of the most important aspects of English is idioms. They are frequently used in a wide variety of situations, from friendly conversations and business meetings to more formal and written contexts. An idiom is a group of words which has, as a whole, a

different meaning from the meaning of its constituents (The Longman Pocket Dictionary: 2001). In other words, the meaning of the idiomatic expression is not the sum of the words taken individually.

According to Langacher (1968:79), "an idiom is a kind of complex lexical item. It is a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the morphemes it comprises". This definition shows two basic characteristics of the idiom; it is a complex lexical item, and its meaning cannot be inferred from its parts.

In his turn, Carter (1987:65) defines idioms as special combinations with restricted forms and meanings that cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of the words which make them up. Accordingly, an idiom is learned and used as a single unit. It should not be analyzed into its constituents; it is unchangeable and always carries a figurative meaning

In addition, Ball (1968:1) finds that an adequate definition of an idiom is "the use of familiar words in an unfamiliar sense". Palmer (1996: 80), on the other hand, states that "an idiom is semantically like a single word, it doesn☐t function like one. A large number of idioms contain a verb and a noun, but although the verb may be placed in the past tense, the number of the noun can never be changed", for instance, the expressions ☐kick the bucket☐ and

„kicked the bucket☐ (someone who dies) are largely used in English, in contrast to „kick the buckets☐ which never occurs..Jarvie (1993:148) writes:

An idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot easily be worked out from the words it contains. Idioms have the potential to cause foreign learners of a language to some difficulty. If you say to a native speaker visiting a place for the first time, „how

did you find Stratford? you will get the response

„great-I loved it; or I did not like the place at all. But if you ask a non- native speaker the same question, the response may be how did I find Stratford? The train took me there. Here „find is used idiomatically.

This example shows that native speakers can easily understand idioms; but non- native speakers find a lot of problems in recognizing and using them.

1.2.2. Fixed Aspects of Idioms

Most idioms are unchangeable in the sense that they have fixed forms and meanings. The grammar or the vocabulary, however, of an idiom can sometimes have a slight variation.

Variation	Example
Occasionally an idiom in the active voice can be used in the passive.	-Government ministers always pass the bucket, if they are challenged about poverty (blame someone else / refuse to accept responsibility). -The bucket has been passed from minister to minister. No one seems prepared to accept the responsibility.
Some verb-verb based idioms alsohave noun-compound forms.	-There is too much buck-passing in government nowadays. No one accepts the blame for anything.
One or more words in the idiom can be varied.	_Stop acting the fool / goat (stop acting stupidly).

Table 1: Fixed Aspects of Idioms (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2003)

1.2.3. Types of Idioms
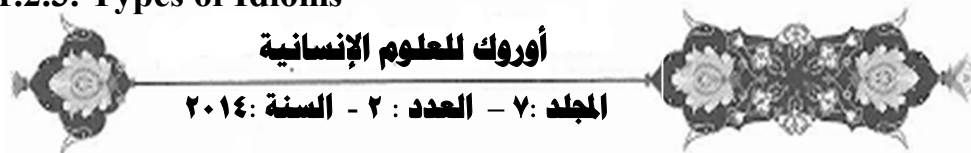
According to Makkai (1972), (cited in Fernando, 1996:3), there are two types of idioms: idioms of encoding and those of decoding.

1.2.3.1. Idioms of Encoding (Identifiable)

Idioms of encoding are those idiosyncratic lexical combinations that have transparent meanings. This type of idioms could be best recognized through making a comparison between different languages by the use of proper prepositions. Therefore, "at" is used instead of "with" in the English expression "drive at 70 m.p.h" (not drive with as in French).

1.2.3.2. Idioms of Decoding (Non-Identifiable)

Idioms of decoding refer to those non-identifiable and misleading lexical expressions whose interpretation could not be figured out by using only independently learned linguistic conventions. They include expressions like "beat around the bush" and "fly off the handle". This type of idioms could be classified into lexemic and sememic.

Form	Example	Meaning
Verb+object/complement (and or adverbial)	Kill two birds with one stone	Produce two useful results by just doing one action.
Prepositional phrase	In the blink of an eye	In an extremely short time.
Compound	A bone of contention	Something which people argue and disagree over.
Simile (as +adjective+as or like+a noun.	As dry as a bone	Very dry indeed
Binominal (word + and + word)	Rough and ready	Crude and lacking sophistication
Trinomial (word +word+and	Cool, calm and collected	Relaxed, in control, not nervous
Whole clause or sentence	To cut a long story short	To tell the main points, but not all the fine details

Table 2: **Different types of English idioms (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2003:06)**

1.2.4. Characteristics of Idioms

Technically, an idiom is a kind of lexical unit in which the whole meaning of the expression is not apparent from the meanings of its components. Bell (1974:1-2) identifies certain features which are essential in the recognition of idioms. Some of these features are:

1.2.4.1.Alteration of Grammatical Rules

The idiomatic expression is not always grammatical, but it is established, accepted and used by native speakers of the language with a fixed structure and meaning.E.g. 1. It□s ages since we met (singular with a plural noun).   2. He is a friend of mine (possessive instead of personal pronoun).

1.2.4.2. Conventional Phrases

Idioms are special expressions which are   known and agreed by all the members of a particular community .E.g. **1**. How are you doing? (Expression used to ask someone about his health).**2**. Once in a blue moon (rarely, infrequently).

1.2.4.3. Alteration of Word Order

Idiomatic expressions in English do not respect the English word order. E.g. **1**. It may be well ahead of time (normal word order).**2**. It may well be ahead of time (probably): idiomatic expression.

1.2.4.4. Figurativeness

The main feature that characterizes idiomatic expressions is that the words are used metaphorically. Therefore, the surface structure has a little role to play in understanding the meaning of the whole expression. For example, in "to bury the hatchet", meaning "to become friendly again after a disagreement", the meanings of the words "to bury" and" the hatchet" are different

from the meaning of the whole expression.

1.2.4.5. Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are the most common type of idioms in English. Many of them carry idiomatic meanings that cannot be inferred from the form, unless the phrase is already known .E.g. **1**. After war began, the two countries broke off diplomatic relations (discontinue).**2**. Most automobile companies bring out new modals each year (to show or introduce).In addition to all these features that are important in the recognition of idioms, Baker (1992:63) identifies the grammatical and syntactic restrictions of idioms. For her, a speaker or a writer cannot normally do any of the following with an idiom :Some of these grammatical and syntactic restrictions are :addition ,deletion ,substitution ,modification ,comparative and passive .

1.2.5. Classification of Idioms

The main feature that differentiates between the different kinds of idioms as easily understandable or totally opaque is the degree of idiomacity that an idiom carries. Idioms are categorized in a continuum from transparent to opaque . The latter has an important role in the comprehensibility of idioms. Therefore, idioms can be divided into two broad categories transparent and opaque,

1.2.5.1. Transparent-Opaque Idioms
1.2.5.1.1. Transparent Idioms

In this category, idiomatic expressions have a very close meaning to that of the literal one. Hence, transparent idioms are usually not difficult to understand and translate, because their meanings can be easily inferred from the meanings of their constituents (Fernando,1996).E.g. **1**. Fight a losing battle: يحارب في معركة خاسرة **2**. Stand firm: يثبت على موقفه **3**. Back and forth: ذهاباً وإياباً .

1.2.5.1.2. Semi Transparent Idioms

The idiom usually carries a metaphorical sense that could not be known only through common use. that   meaning of its parts has a role in understanding the entire meaning. As,"break the ice" means "relieve the tension".

1.2.5.1.3. Semi-Opaque Idioms

This type refers to those idioms in which the figurative meaning is not joined to that of the constituent words of the idiom. In other words, the expression is separated into two parts; a part of the phrase has a literal meaning, while the other part has a figurative sense. For example, "to know the ropes" means "to know how a particular job should be done".

1.2.5.1.4. Opaque Idioms

Opaque idioms are the most difficult type of idioms, because the meaning of the idiom is never that of the sum of the literal meanings of its parts. This is because of the presence of items having cultural references   . These culture- specific items have a great influence on the comprehensibility of idiomatic expressions .E.g. **1**.To burn one's boat (to make retreat impossible).**2**. Kick the bucket (die)

1.2.5.2. Culture-Free and Loaded Idioms

The main feature that leads to the difficulty in translating idioms is their culture specificity. An idiom, as the Oxford Dictionary (1983)

defines it, is" a form of expression peculiar to a language". The term" peculiar".

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find such an idiom in another different language. Some idioms , as metaphors and proverbs, have direct equivalents and hence, they can be easily translated into other languages. In this respect, Ponterotto (1994:3) states that "it is necessary to understand metaphorcity

and its culture-specific connotations in order to correctly interpret even simple texts."

1.2.6.Interpretation of Idioms

Translating idioms is one of the most difficult tasks for translators. It involves far more than the replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages . According to Baker (1992:65), the first difficulty   is the ability to recognize and distinguish idiomatic from non-idiomatic usage. Recognition is difficult, and sometimes impossible, since many idioms can be slightly modified, while others can be discontinuously spread over a clause. Those which are easily recognizable include expressions which violate truth conditions, such as: *'it's raining cats and dogs, throw caution to the winds, storm in a tea cup, jump down someone's throat, and food for thought.* Expressions which seem ill-formed, or which do not follow the grammatical rules of the language are also included here . Expressions which begin with "like" (like structure- simile), as "like a bat out of hell" and "like water off a duck's back", also   should not be interpreted literally. As a rule, the more difficult an expression is to understand and the less sense it makes in a given context (Baker, 1992:65-66).

1.2.7. Use of Idioms

Any kind of language is not always appropriate in all occasions. In case where a writer or a speaker uses idiomatic language, s/he usually focuses attention on his shared cultural beliefs with the members of his/her community, and the kind of audience his speech is directed to. In this respect, s/he knows that it is not at ease to deliver a message using figurative language, and to have the same effect on the target reader as it is in the SL. This is mainly because unawareness of the connotations of a given expression or phrase may cause

serious problems for those people being addressed. Idioms are also different and each one has a specific context to occur in. Standard idioms for example, are suitable for formal situations, while slang and informal ones are used in normal situations. Native speakers of a language can easily know the different uses of idioms and avoid the pitfalls of inappropriate ones. In case of non-native speakers, it will be better for them to learn idioms of the language the way they learn its other vocabularies, and try to master their appropriate contextual uses.

Idioms□ uses, however, are highly related to the functions they fulfill in discourse. Therefore, Fernando (1996:1) provides three functional uses of idioms. According to Langacher (1968:80), "if well suited to the occasion, metaphorical use of idioms is more colorfult and effective than straightforward prosaic statements."

Conclusion

Idioms always cause a lot of problems to learners of a foreign language. Students usually find difficulties in recognizing an expression as idiomatic or not, and then understanding its exact meaning. This is mainly due to the fact that idiomatic expressions carry a metaphorical sense that makes the comprehension of an idiom difficult if not impossible. In other words, the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from the meaning of its constituent parts. In addition, the source and the target cultures have a great influence on the comprehensibility as well as the translatability of idioms. Hence, better understanding and using idioms needs both knowing their historical background and familiarity with both the S and the T cultures, and having a clear idea about their different situational context.

Chapter Two
Test

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the difficulties students face during the process of translating idioms, mainly the problem of non-equivalence. It also aims at identifying learner's strategies in interpreting both familiar and unfamiliar idioms, from English into Arabic and vice versa, especially when they do not find a direct equivalence in the target language. This chapter provides also details about the research strategy adopted to check the hypothesis together with the means used to collect data for analyzing it, including site and sample selection, and the analysis approach adopted in this research.

2.1. Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to test how 4th level students translate idioms from English into Arabic and vice versa, and what are the pitfalls they face while translating. Case study is the appropriate way to study the practice of students in reality, and to collect the suitable data to analyze them. Therefore case study is the research strategy that will be used in this research.

.2.2. Data Collection and Sampling

Our research is based on a case study of the students of English. A number of students are chosen randomly to be tested in order to achieve the research objective. This case study is not meant to be an exhaustive one of all the students of English because a study like that will take a longer time to

end up with reliable results. This is mainly because the researcher has to move in his analysis from first to third year students in order to have a representative sample and to produce meaningful outcomes. Therefore, 4th year students are chosen as a sample for this study mainly because it assumes that

these learners possess an adequate linguistic competence in both English and Arabic together with some knowledge of the English culture. These students are majoring in applied languages, have studied translation for four years, and they are supposed to have some knowledge about idioms. The test is given to twenty one (21) students taken randomly from all students of 4th year students. The test is used in this study as the tool of research because it is the appropriate technique for better answering the research question and justifying the hypothesis.

2.3. Description of the Test

The test includes four main parts. The first part is a test of knowledge made up of twelve (12) de-contextualized idioms selected on the basis of their

frequency in English use and according to the degree of transparency. The second part is related to the first one. It consists of the same twelve previous idioms, but they are taken in their different contexts of use in order to make a

comparison between the results in part one and two. The third part includes ten (10) Arabic idioms given to students to be translated into English. The aim behind this is to investigate the students" pitfalls in translating idioms in both English and Arabic. The fourth part, however, deals with the students" procedures or strategies while translating English idioms into Arabic and vice versa.

All the selected English idioms are taken from the Dictionary of English Idioms in Use، "Exercises on idioms", and "Essential idioms in use". However, Arabic idioms are taken from the book of Ghazala (2004) and Kharma (1997).

2.4. Data Analysis

## 2.4.1. Translation of De-Contextualized Idioms into Arabic
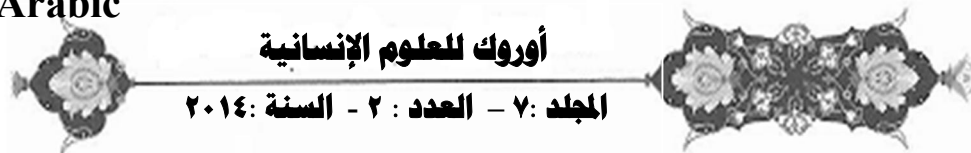
The students' test aims at investigating the student's knowledge of English idioms and the degree of comprehensibility of these idioms. . The test, as it is stated before, consists of twelve English idioms; each group of three idioms represents one category, chosen randomly from the four categories of idioms (transparent, semi-transparent, opaque and semi opaque), and they vary in their difficulty according to the spectrum of idiomacity. The following table shows the degree of familiarity and unfamiliarity of students of English with English idioms

Idioms	Number of correct and incorrect answers		Percentage of familiarity category
	Correct Answers	Incorrect Answers	
-Transparent Idioms			
1. A ray of hope	21	0	
2. Draw the line at	04	17	
3.Turn a blind eye to	19	02	
Total	44	19	
Percentage	69.84%	30.15%	69.84%
-Semi-Transparent			
4. Break the ice	05	16	
5. keeps one's word	13	08	
6. See eye to eye	07	14	
Total	38	25	
Percentage	60.31%	39.68%	60.31%
-Semi-Opaque idioms			
7. Beat around the bush	17	04	
8. Make both ends meet	04	17	
9. Know the ropes	02	19	
Total	23	40	
Percentage	36.50%	63.49%	36.50%
-Opaque idioms			
10. A basket case	01	20	
11. A barrel of laughs	04	17	
12. A horse of a different	0	21	
Total	05	58	
Percentage	7.93%	92.06%	7.93%
Total of all correct	110	142	
Percentage of all correct	43.65%	56.34%	

Table 03: Percentage of Student's Familiarity and unfamiliarity with English Idioms
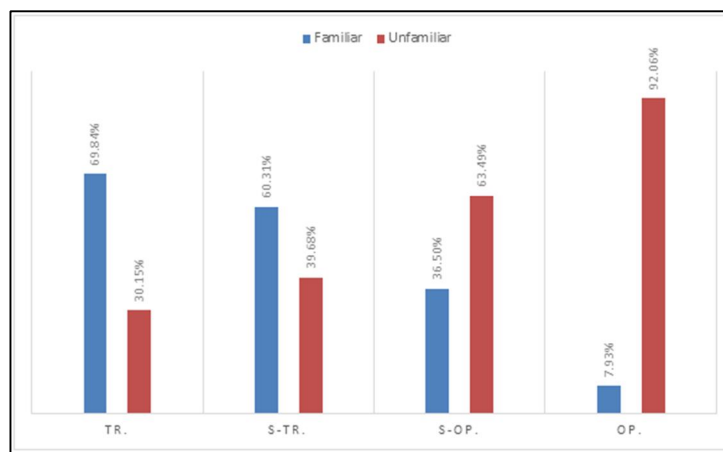
TR.   = Transparent Idioms   ,S-TR.   =   Semi-Transparent idioms ,S-OP.   = Semi-Opaque idioms,OP. = Opaque idioms

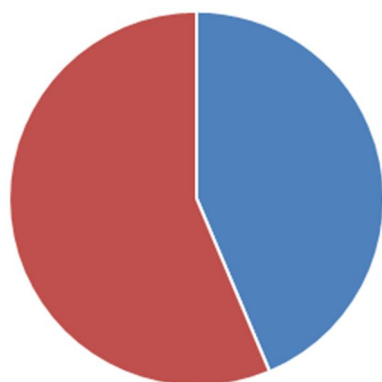**Figure 01: Percentage of Student's Familiarity and unfamiliarity with** English Idioms .

Figure 02: Familiarity and unfamiliarity with de-contextualized English idioms

2.4.1.1. Results

Table 3 above reveals that the degree of idiomaticity has a great influence on the percentage of students" familiarity and unfamiliarity with English idioms. It is observed that the highest score is recorded for transparent idioms with 69.84% for familiar idioms and 30.15% for unfamiliar ones. Semi-transparent idioms also recorded a high score and come in the second position after transparent idioms with a percentage of 60.31% for appropriate guesses and 39.68% for inappropriate ones. The other two categories of idioms (semi-opaque and opaque) get low scores and hence, they come in the last positions with rates of 36.50% for correct answers and 63.49% for incorrect ones for semi-opaque idioms, and 7.93% and 92.06% for opaque ones. In the whole we can say that students of English are familiar with English idioms with a percentage of 43.65% and unfamiliar with them with a rate of 56.34%. It is also noticed that the percentage of familiarity decreases with the increase in the degree of idiom city (69.84%, 60.31%, 36.50%, and 7.93%), in contrast to the percentage of unfamiliarity which increases from one category to the other (30.15%, 39.68%, 63.49%, and 92.06%).

2.4.1.2. Analysis

Transparent idioms recorded the highest score because they can be easily understood from their literal meanings. Transparent idioms so, are easy to interpret by most students because of the high degree of closeness between their literal and figurative meanings, and their simple structure that results in a clear and simple translation into Arabic. The high degree of transparency of idioms belonging to this category has also

facilitated the use of their literal meanings to derive the figurative meanings. This can be applied to idiom one and three in the first category "a ray of hope" and "turn a blind eye to" which are made up of simple and clear words that help students to draw a clear metaphorical image leading to the comprehension of the idiomatic meaning. In contrast to idiom two "draw the line at" which, although it belongs to the transparent category, is difficult to interpret in an appropriate way because in the surface it has the meaning of drawing a line.Therefore, the majority of students translated it as ارسم الطريق الى، ارسم هدفك، يرسم الخط "So, . familiarity decreases as the degree of idiomatcity increases. Semi-transparent idioms or partial idioms, in comparison to transparent ones, are somehow difficult to interpret. This is mainly because the expression is usually divided into two main parts; one part has a literal meaning while the other part has an idiomatic sense that cannot be understood from the constituent words. An example of that is idiom one "break the ice" in the transparent category where the first part of the expression "break" is lexically understandable, because it has a literal meaning, while the second part "the ice" is idiomatic.   In semi-opaque idioms, the percentage of difficulty and unfamiliarity increases to 63, 49% together with the degree of idiomaticity making this category nearly in the same position with opaque idioms. In opaque idioms so, the degree of complexity and indirectness increases to the highest level leading to an opaque and ambiguous combination that cannot be understood by students of English unless it is already learned.

2.4.2. Translation of English Idioms into Arabic within the Context of Use

Part two of the test consists of the same previous twelve idioms, but in this case they are used with their context. The aim

behind designing such a part is the importance of the context of use in the translation of idiomatic expressions, and the way it helps students to interpret idioms easily and correctly. The outcomes of the test of this part are shown in the following table

Idioms in Context	Acceptable Idioms	Unacceptable Idioms	Total Percentage of Familiarity
-Transparent Idioms			
1. Although her doctors told her that she has a dangerous illness, she still has a ray of hope to recover.	21	00	
2. He was utterly unprincipled, but he drew the line at black mail.	11	10	
3. You should not really drink here, but I"m willing to turn	21	00	
Total	53	10	
Percentage	84.12%	15.87%	
- Semi-Transparent idioms			
4. Andy likes to tell a jock to break the ice.	10	11	
5. If Mary said she will bring you the book, she will do it: she	18	03	

always keeps her word.		
6. After a long discussion, they did not see eye to eye on this matter.	14	07
Total	42	21
Percentage	66.66%	33.33%
- Semi-Opaque Idioms		
7. Let's come to the point; why should you always beat around the bush	19	02
8. That man made me lose half my salary last night. Now I wonder how I will make both ends meet.	05	16
9. I will enjoy my job as soon as I know the ropes.	04	17
Total	28	35
Percentage	44.44%	55.55%
- Opaque Idioms		
10. If Gloria has one more crisis, she will be a basket case	05	16
11. Let's invite Chang to our party. He is a barrel of laughs	07	14
12. If he wants money to buy a land, that's a horse of a different color.	04	17
Total	16	47
Percentage	25.39%	74.60%
Total of all answers	139	113
Percentage of all answers	55.15%	44.84%

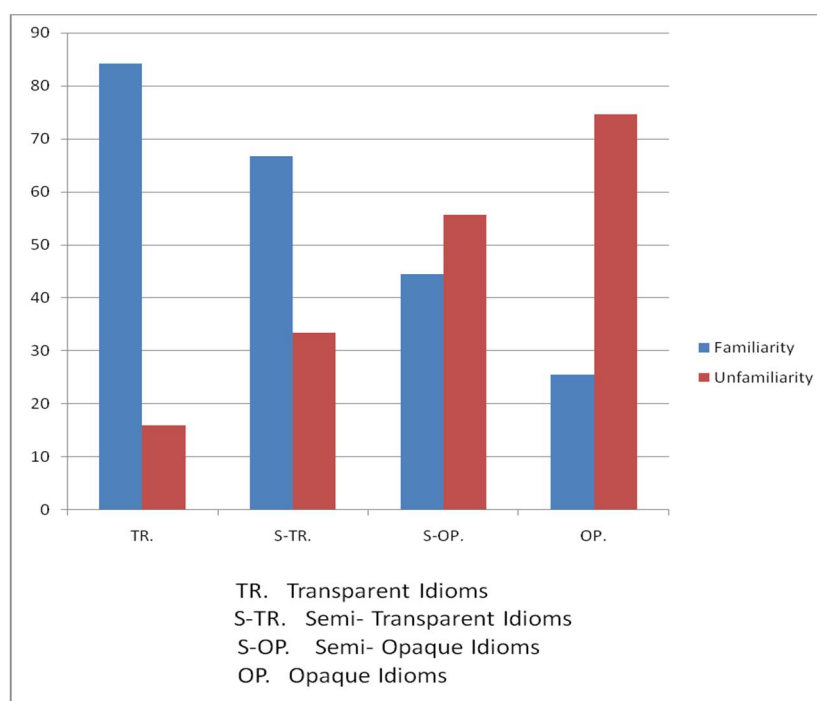**Table 04:** Frequency of Student's Familiarity with the Four Categories of English Idioms

TR. Transparent Idioms
S-TR. Semi- Transparent Idioms
S-OP. Semi- Opaque Idioms
OP. Opaque Idioms

Figure 03:   **Percentage of Students' Answers within the context**

Familiarity 55.15%   Unfamiliarity 44.84%
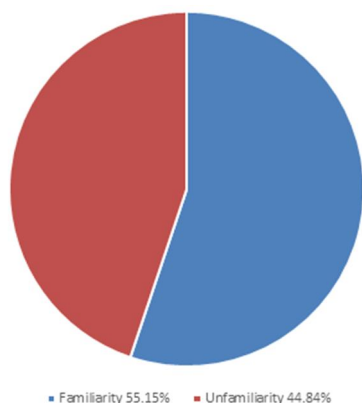
Figure 04: Familiarity and unfamiliarity with English idioms
2.4.2.1. Results and Analysis

By making a comparison between the results in part one and part two, we can notice that the number together with the percentage of correct answers increase. In the first part, where idioms are taken in isolation, the general percentage of familiarity with English idioms is 43.65%. In the second part, however, when these idioms are used in their situational context, the rate of acceptable translations increases to 55.15%.These results show that the context of use has a great impact on the comprehensibility and translatability of idioms. It helps the translator a lot in inferring the exact meaning of the idiom and, hence, provides correct answers. The situational context also in both the SL and TL removes any ambiguity and helps the translator to give direct interpretations. So, the context of use is of a major importance in translating any piece of discourse.
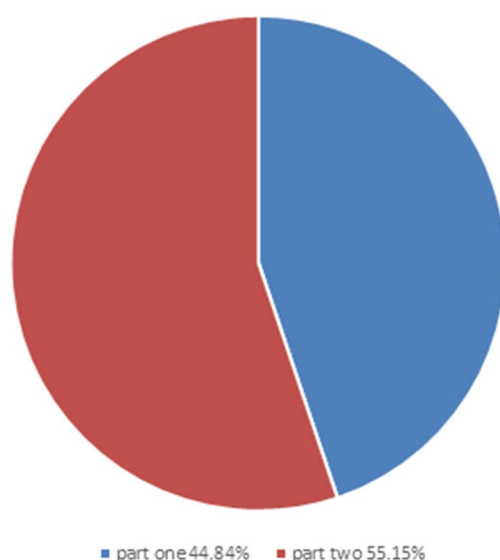

■ part one 44.84%   ■ part two 55.15%

Figure 05: Difference in Percentage between Total Correct Answers in Part One and Two

2.4.3. Translation from Arabic into English

In this part, a test consists of ten Arabic idioms taken in their context of use are given to students. The purpose of this test is to examine the students□ abilities to translate idioms from their mother language to their second language of learning. The outcomes of this test are represented in the following table:
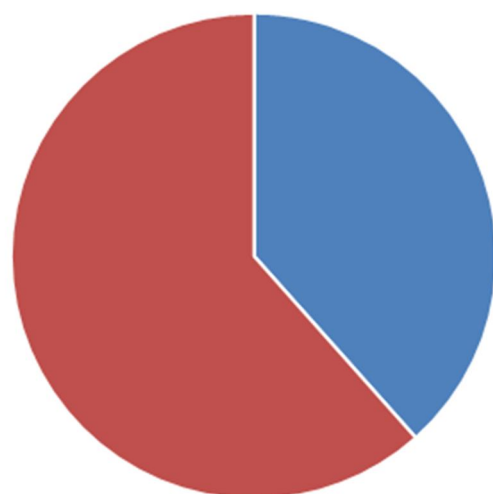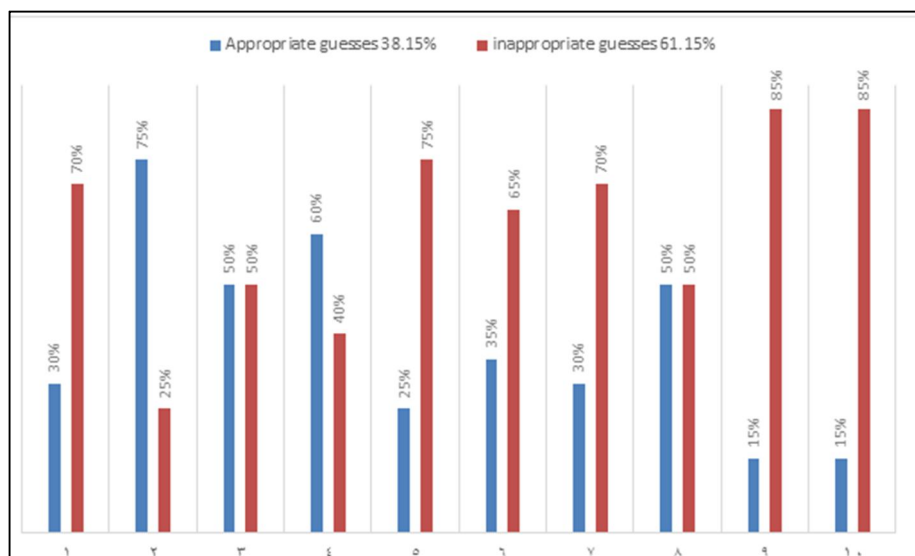
N	Idioms	Appropriate		Inappropriate	
		Number of Correct	Percentage	Number of Incorrect	Percentage
1	إنهم يطبقون شريعة الغاب	06	30%	14	70%
2	سيداتي سادتي اعيروني آذانكم	15	75%	05	25%
3	الصديق الحقيقي لايطعن في الظهر	10	50%	10	50%
4	قتل جاره بيرودة دم	12	60%	08	40%
5	إنه رجل عظيم الشأن	05	25%	15	75%
6	يستطيع ان يصنع المعجزات	07	35%	13	65%
7	كان الجنود فريسة سهلة في الحرب	06	30%	14	70%
8	ذاك الرجل يتقلب في الثراء	10	50%	10	50%
9	كان يلعب على الحبلين	03	15%	17	85%
10	سيق الناس الى الحرب كما تساق النعاج الى المذبح	03	15%	17	85%
	Total	77		123	
	Total of all	200			
	General Percentage	38, 5%		61, 15%	

**Table 5:** Percentage of Students' Appropriate and Inappropriate Guesses

Figure 07: General Percentage of Student's Appropriate and Inappropriate Guesses

2.4.3.1. Results and Analysis

Table 5 reveals that out of 200 translations there are 77 appropriate guesses (38.5%) and 123 inappropriate ones (61.15%). From these results, we can notice that there is a lower rate of successful guessing in the translation from Arabic into English than from English into Arabic in part two, which records 139 correct answers out of 252 (55.15%). This confirms that translating idioms from Arabic into English is a difficult task especially if students are not familiar with these idioms. These results also show that an idiom is hardly possible to guess unless it is already learned. Another point is that idiom 02"سيداتي سادتي اعيروني إنتباهكم" recorded the highest score (15 correct answers out of 20) (75%), in contrast to idioms 09 and10 (سيق الناس الى الحرب كما تساق النعاج الى المذبح، كان يلعب على الحبلين) which have only three correct answers for both of them, but a percentage of 85% for incorrect ones.

2.5. Students' Strategies While Translating Idioms

To check the validity of the hypothesis that students' abilities of using some accurate strategies to translate idioms may help to translate them correctly, the students□ translations are investigated .The results of the students' strategies in the translation of English idioms into Arabic are represented in the following table:
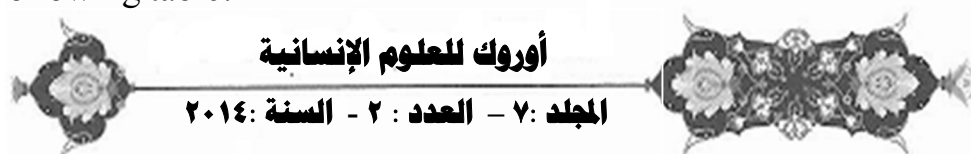
Strategy	Idioms	Number of appropriate guesses	Total Answers	Percentage in each category
Word For Word Translation	A ray of hope	10	76	60.31%
	Draw the line at	07		
	Turn a blind eye to	02		
	Break the ice	08		
	Keep one's word	01		
	See eye to eye	07		
	Beat around the bush	10		
	Make both ends meet	05		
	Know the ropes	10		
	A basket case	04		
	A barrel of laughs	05		
	A horse of a different color	07		
Translation by Omission	00	00	00	00%
Translation by Paraphrasing	A ray of hope	07	40	31.74%
	Draw the line at	04		
	Turn a blind eye to	03		
	Break the ice	03		
	Keep one's word	05		
	See eye to eye	00		
	Beat around the bush	04		
	Make both ends meet	01		
	Know the ropes	02		
	A basket case	06		
	A barrel of laughs	03		
	A horse of a different color	02		

Translation by Compensation	00	00	00	00%
Translation by Loan Words	00	00	00	00%
Translation by Illustration	00	00	00	00%
Translation By	A ray of hope	00	10	7.93%
	Draw the line at	00		
	Turn a blind eye to	00		
	Break the ice	03		
	Keeps one's word	05		
	See eye to eye	00		
	Beat around the bush	00		
	Make both ends meet	00		
	Know the ropes	00		
	A basket case	00		
	A barrel of laughs	02		
	A horse of a different color	00		
	00	00		
	126			

Table 06: **Students' Strategies in Translating English idioms into Arabic**

2.5.1. Translation of English Idioms into Arabic

2.5.1.1. Analysis

What is observed from the results in Table 06 is that except word for word strategy, students' use of other translation strategies is limited. The results show that the first strategy that has a great extent use by students of English is word for word translation (60.31%). Paraphrasing (31.74%) and translation by cultural substitution (7.93%) are less used. Word for word strategy is highly used by students because they generally think that it is the best strategy to translate idioms correctly, efficiently and effectively. According to them, the use of other strategies may distort or remove the idiom's figurative meaning

and hence, distort the message.

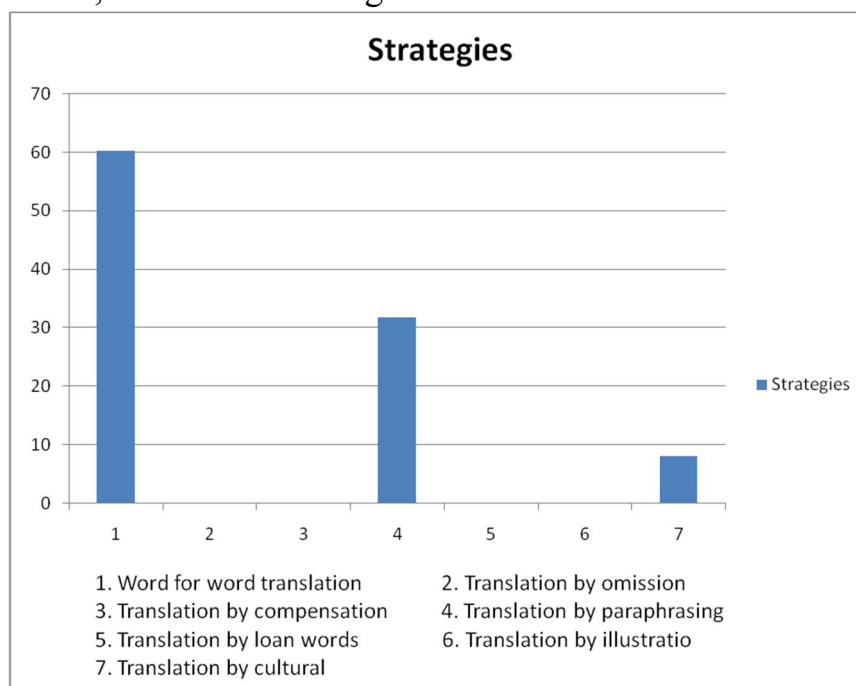**Figure 08: Students' Strategies from English into Arabic**
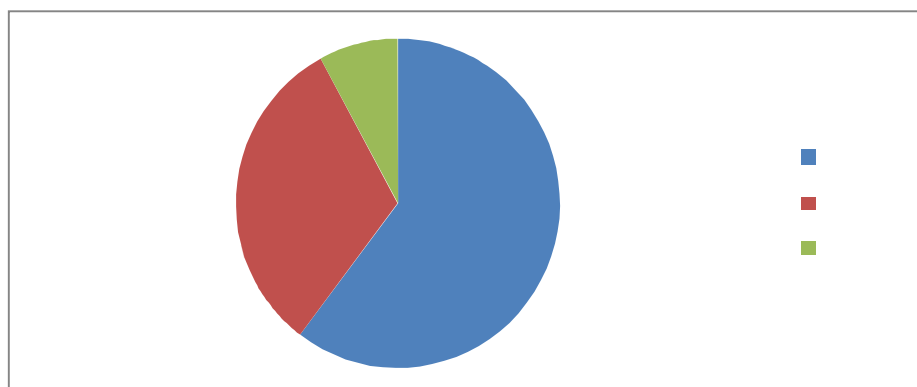
Figure 09: Total percentage of students' strategies from English into Arabic

2.5.2. Translation of Arabic Idioms into English

The results of the students□ strategies in the translation of Arabic idioms into English are represented in the following table:

tegy	No	Idioms	Number of Appropriate Guesses	Total Answers	Percentage in each Strategy
	01	انهم يطلبون شريعة الغاب	14		
	02	سيداتي سادتي اعيروني اذانكم	06		
Word	03	الصديق الحقيقي لايطعن في الظهر	05		
	04	قتل جاره ببرودة دم	15		
	05	انه رجل عظيم الشان	04		
for Word	06	يستطيع ان يصنع المعجزات	10	82	
	07	كان الجنود فريسة سهلة في الحرب	03		41.41%
	08	ذاك الرجل يطلب في الثراء	07		
Strategy	09	كان يلعب على الحبلين	08		
	10	سيق الناس الى الحرب كما يساق النعاج الى المذبح	10		
Translation by Omission		00	00	00	00%
Translation by Compensation		00	00	00	00%
Translation	01	انهم يطلبون شريعة الغاب	02		

|					
By	02	سياق سفاق اجيروش دائكر	00		
	03	الصديق الحقيقي لايفقد في الشهر رمضا	04		
	04	هل جارة سيروتا مر	02		
	05	إنه رجل حقير القدان	00		
Paraphrasing	06	يستطيع ان يصنع المعجزات	03	41	20.70%
	07	كان الجنود رؤسا سهلة في الحرب	00		
	08	ذاك الرجل يكتب في القراء	07		
	09	كان يذهب حتى الحديثن	05		
	10	سيق الناس الى الحرب كما صاق التجاج الى الفتح	00		
Translation by Loan Words		00	00	00	00%
Translation by a superordinate		00	00	00	00%
	01	انهم يطيقون شريعة الغاب	04		
	02	سياق سفاق اجيروش دائكر	02		
Translation	03	الصديق الحقيقي لايفقد في الشهر	03		
	04	هل جارة سيروتا مر	03		
	05	إنه رجل حقير القدان	03		
By	06	يستطيع ان يصنع المعجزات	05	59	29.79%
	07	كان الجنود رؤسا سهلة في الحرب	08		
	08	ذاك الرجل يكتب في القراء	08		
	09	كان يذهب حتى الحديثن	07		
Explanation	10	سيق الناس الى الحرب كما صاق التجاج الى الفتح	10		
Translation by Illustration		00	00	00	00%
	01	انهم يطيقون شريعة الغاب	00		
	02	سياق سفاق اجيروش دائكر	04		
	03	الصديق الحقيقي لايفقد في الشهر	03	16	8.08%
Translation	04	هل جارة سيروتا مر	00		
By	05	إنه رجل حقير القدان	02		
Cultural	06	يستطيع ان يصنع المعجزات	02		
Substitution	07	كان الجنود رؤسا سهلة في الحرب	05		
	08	ذاك الرجل يكتب في القراء	00		
	09	كان يذهب حتى الحديثن	00		
	10	سيق الناس الى الحرب كما صاق التجاج الى الفتح	00		
Total of all answers		198			

Table 07: Students' Strategies in Translating Arabic Idioms into English

2.5.2.1. Analysis

The figures show that, as in the translation from English into Arabic, word for word translation also comes in the first position with a percentage of 41.41%. What is also noticed is that although some translators do not consider it as a strategy of translation and state that it is acceptable only when translation is impossible, the strategy of explanation comes in the second position with a reasonable score of 29.79%. The strategy of paraphrasing and cultural substitution records scores of 20.70% and 8.08% while the remaining ones are not used at all by students. Hence, we can say that learners find many difficulties while translating both Arabic and English idioms, and for this reason they stick to either word for word translation or explaining the idiom meaning.
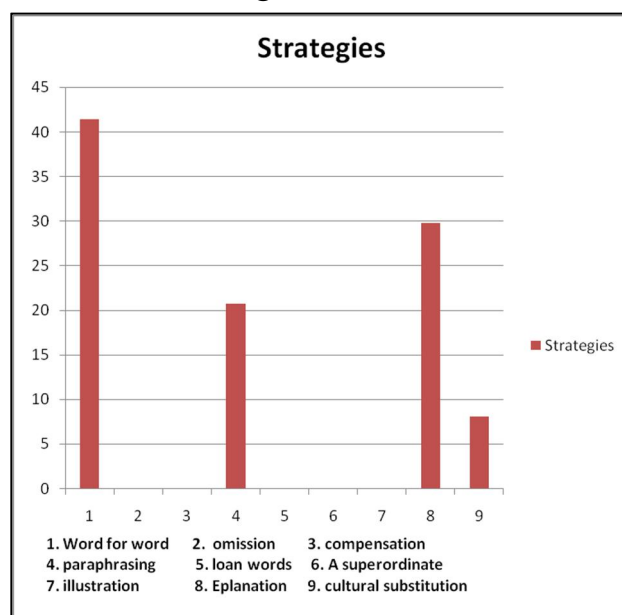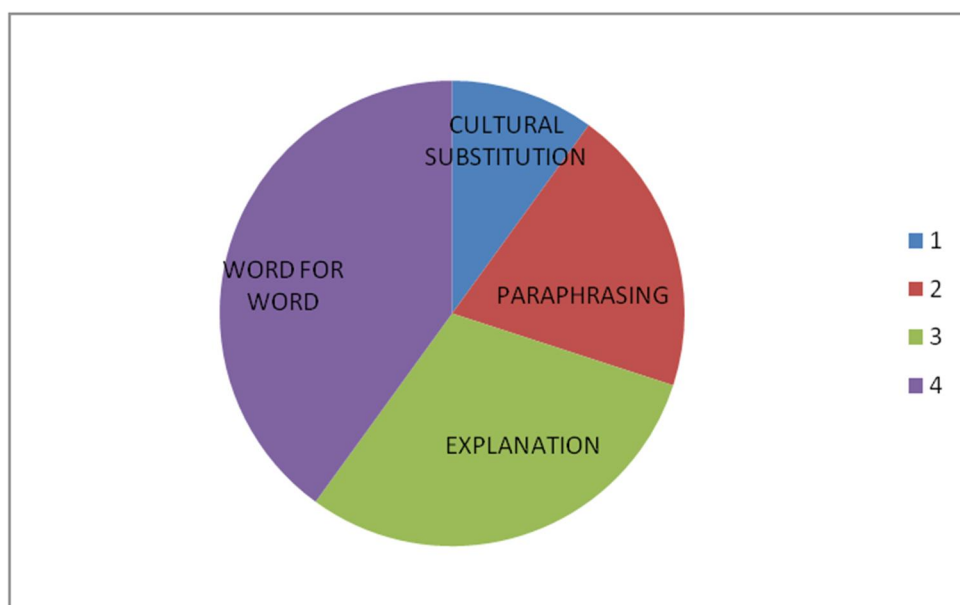
Figure 10: Students' Strategies from Arabic into English
 Figure 11: **Total Percentage of student's strategies from Arabic into English**

Conclusion

   In short, translating idioms is one of the most problematic issues for ESL/EFL learners. The meaning is considered as the main leading cause to failure in achieving the appropriate translation of a particular idiom, because it may confuse those not already familiar with this idiom. One feature that characterizes all idioms is that it should be learned and used as a single unit of language in order to end up with a meaningful expression meaning. Students, however stick to word for word strategy because they think that the use of other strategies may change the words of the idiom and hence, changes its meaning. But this strategy is not always appropriate in such a type of translation. In case of transparent

and semi-transparent idioms, it may help students to infer the meaning of the idiomatic expression

through the meaning of its parts. But, for opaque and semi-opaque idioms, it is impossible to do so, because taking into consideration the meaning of the idiom individual parts may totally confuse students.

General Conclusion

This study is concerned with investigating the problems of translating idioms from and into English, and the procedures used by 4th level students to find equivalents in the target language. The results show that students of English really find considerable difficulties in guessing the appropriate meaning of idiomatic expressions. Their familiarity with English and especially with Arabic idioms is somehow low, and their ability to interpret unfamiliar idioms is limited. This is mainly due to the fact that idioms are artistic and colorful expressions of the language in which the meaning is not obvious from the meaning of the constituent words. Hence, one way to understand and interpret an idiom is to see it in context.

The social context has an important role in facilitating the figurative interpretation of idiomatic expressions, in both English and Arabic, and hence, providing correct answers. Students' translations of de-contextualized idioms usually end up with unsatisfactory results simply because an idiom is largely related to the situation that gives it a special meaning. So, students should take into consideration the situation because it is apparently essential to make a correct translation.

In addition, the findings show that students do not use the accurate strategies that may help to achieve appropriate guesses. In both English and Arabic translations, they stick to word for word translation. Paraphrasing and cultural substitution

strategies are sometimes used, but not in an appropriate way. As a result, students usually succeed in translating transparent and semi-transparent idioms, but when it comes to opaque and semi-opaque categories they are totally confused, because this type of idioms has to be taken as a single unit in order to provide acceptable translations.

Consequently, better understanding, using and translating idioms need mastering their situational occurrences and using the accurate strategies to solve the problems of non- equivalence and familiarity with the differences between the source and target languages. Students should also be exposed, more and more, to idiomatic expressions in schools and universities in order to extend their knowledge.

الخلاصه

تعد هذه الدراسه تحقيقا لغويا للتكافؤ فوق مستوى الكلمه . فهي تتعامل مع الصعوبات في حالات غير التكافؤ في ترجمة المصطلحات الانكيزيه الى العربيه وبالعكس ، والطرق المستخدمه من قبل طلاب اللغه الانكليزيه في المرحله الرابعه لاستخدام التكافؤ المناسب في اللغه المقابله .الهدف من هذه الدراسه هو معرفة نوع الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب المرحله اثناء ترجمة المصطلحات ومحاولة وضع الحلول والستراتيجيات التي قد تساعد على تحديد او تجنب تلك الصعوبات.

في هذا المجال،تم وضع اختبار يشمل اثنى عشر مصطلحا انكليزيا وعشرة مصطلحات اخرى عربيه حيث عرضت على طلاب اللغه الانكليزيه في المرحله الرابعه لترجمتها .وقد بينت النتائج بأن هنالك صعوبات امكانية الترجمة من الانكليزيه الى العربيه وبالعكس.كما بينت النتائج بأن سياق الاستخدام يساعد الكثير من طلاب الانكليزيه على تخمين المعنى المناسب للمصطلحات وتكشف

الافتراضيه ايضا بان استحدام الطلاب للستراتيجيات الاخرى في الترجمه يكون
محدود ماعدا ترجمه كلمه لكلمه.

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