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## **Difficulties of translation and evaluative idioms in English and Arabic**

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**Abstract**---Essentially, translation is not simply a transfer of every word with its equivalent in the target language, but rather a transfer of the rules of the language that communicate the information and the transfer of the same information and the writer's thought, culture and style as well. However, theories differed in translation on how to transfer this information from the source to the target. The trinity of translation: literal or word by word, free (significant) and faithful translation. The aim of this article is to discuss evaluative idioms in English and Arabic to show difficulties that form issues for translating idioms—from a variety of perspectives, focusing mainly on Moon's 1998 approach and on Abdou's 2012 study of Arabic idioms. Furthermore, to show the comparison between evaluative idioms in the two languages is meant to reveal differences and potential difficulties for translators translating from Arabic into English and vice versa, focusing mainly on Moon's 1998 approach and on Abdou's 2012 study of Arabic idioms. Furthermore, to show the comparison between evaluative idioms in the two languages is meant to reveal differences and potential difficulties for translators translating from Arabic into English and vice versa.

**Keywords**---Literal and Evaluative Translation, English and Arabic Idioms, Translation Issues, Cultural.

## Introduction

Generally speaking, it is well known that culture and ideology play a role in how meaning is expressed. This cultural and ideological component is also apparent in a comparison between English and Arabic idioms which express evaluation. Thinking about translation issues regarding these idioms, it is this very reality that makes it difficult to transfer the precise meaning of an idiom that is commonplace in one language to another. This struggle is often based on how the idiom was formed, which may relate to religious or cultural beliefs unique to a country or language, or a set of beliefs that is not shared across language groups.

In both English and Arabic, the use of figurative/evaluative idioms is often necessary to present a conceptual image that is impossible to convey using only literal language elements. Translators have a difficult task when attempting the translation of idioms from one language into another—whether from English to Arabic or vice versa. Unlike other forms of translation, where it is acceptable to simply replace one grammatical or lexical element in the original language for another in the target language, the translation of idioms often demands completely ignoring the existing linguistic elements in the text under translation. Misinterpretation and failure to understand cultural differences were the most critical problems cited for translators. If the translator fails in either of these areas, the translation will be inaccurate.

Admittedly, it is often very difficult (if not impossible) to transfer the precise meaning of an idiom that is commonplace in one language to another. This difficulty is often based on how the idiom was formed, which may relate to religious or cultural beliefs unique to a country or language, or a set of beliefs that is not shared across language groups. At their most basic level, idioms are viewed as figures of speech which Collins English Dictionary defined as “an expression such as a simile, in which words do not have their literal meaning, but are categorized as multi-word expressions that act in the text as units” (cited in Shojaei, 2012, p. 1221). Another reference work—Longman Idioms Dictionary—defined idioms as “a sequence of words which has a different meaning as a group from the meaning it would have if you understand each word separately” (cited in Shojaei, 2012, p. 1221). Based on this clarification, an idiom cannot be understood from its individual elements but, as a form of fixed expression, must be taken as a whole.

Idioms are used for various purposes in their given language. Newmark (1988) labelled idioms as “extended” (p. 104) metaphors and cited their two primary functions as either pragmatic or referential. The pragmatic function, according to Newmark, is designed to stimulate an individual’s senses or to attract interest, either aesthetically or cognitively. On the other hand, the referential purpose is “to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language” (Cited in Strakšiene, 2009, p. 14). In either case, an idiom is designed to convey a message in a simple manner that is readily understood by native speakers of the language. The use of figurative evaluative idioms is often necessary to present a conceptual image that is impossible to convey using only literal language elements. Moon (1998) noted that this is especially true in

cultural or language contexts wherein the reader or listener subconsciously constructs an assessment by means of the literal elements of an idiom, effectively assigning a positive or negative meaning. This point was furthered by Langlotz, who stated that, “in cognitive-linguistic terms, the literal scene works as a rich resource for weak implicatures because it encodes directly accessible basic conceptual and preconceptual experiences that are rich in both [sic] conceptual, sensory and emotional content” (2005, p. 140). Evaluation thus seems to occur based on shared cultural norms, which also explains why many (if not most) English idioms are extremely confusing to non-native English speakers.

Evaluative idioms, as noted previously, express either a negative (unfavorable) or positive (favorable) evaluation. Interestingly, in the English language, the former are much more prevalent than the latter. In this regard, Carter (2004) observed that “idiom uses do not simply describe but comment in positive and (more usually) negative ways on events, processes and persons” (p.132). One of the unique properties that idioms possess is indirectness—inasmuch as an idiom does not evaluate or provide any other quality to its extended text directly. Since there is often a desire to provide commentary (evaluative or in the form of information) without directly revealing the nature of the author or speaker’s feelings or intentions, idioms serve that role very well. Moon (1998, 2004) reported on this process as one way that direct insults or otherwise directly rude comments may be avoided. Moreover, as clarified by Abdou (2012), numerous idioms are closely related to topics that are considered inappropriate or insensitive to speak openly about, including sex or death. Based on this understanding, some texts opt to render such idioms literally in order to avoid the implied meaning that is not so subtle to the person experienced in the culture in which the idiom is based.

## **Method**

The researchers will adopt the analytical method. Without a doubt, translators have a difficult task when attempting the translation of idioms from one language into another. Unlike other forms of translation, where it is acceptable to simply replace one grammatical or lexical element in the original language for another in the target language, the translation of idioms often demands completely ignoring the existing linguistic elements in the text under translation.

## **Translation issues**

Translation is typically understood by nonprofessionals as substituting words or phrases from one language with similar words or phrases from another language, while attempting to maintain the meaning of the original. From a professional perspective, McGuire (1980) reasoned that the key element is maintaining meaning of the source language while assuring that “the structures of the source language will be preserved as closely as possible, but not so closely that the target language structures will be seriously distorted” (p. 2). Nida and Taber (1982) added that “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” (p. 12). Thus, as rightly noted by Nida and Taber, protecting meaning is the fundamental commission of a translator,

meaning that stylistic elements—if not critical to meaning—may be sacrificed if necessary. But, Bell (1991), expressed a difference of opinion with the previous authors, stating that the objective of translation is “the transformation of a text originally in one language into an equivalent text in a different language retaining, as far as possible, the content of the message and the formal features and functional roles of the original text” (p. xv). This seems to imply that stylistic elements should be preserved in addition to the fundamental meaning of the text.

Unfortunately, the concept espoused by Bell (1991) does not seem to coincide with what is known of language and translation fundamentals. This was succinctly summarized by Ivir (1987) who affirmed 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 as well as the two languages structures” (p.208). Therefore, unlike Bell’s assertion that all stylistic elements should be preserved whenever possible, the reality is that some stylistic elements—including idioms—cannot be translated easily from one language to another. Newmark (1988) noted that one of the primary reasons for this difficulty is the gulf that exists between many cultures and thus prohibits an understanding of the idioms frequently used in the foreign culture. In this regard, Nida (1994) defined culture as: “the total beliefs and practices of a society” (p. 157). It is a truism that language—and, by extension, words—only possesses meaning in the context of the culture that created them. Accordingly, figurative words like idioms serve to reflect much of the culture that uses them in everyday language.

There is little doubt that cultural differences create an environment that is less than ideal for second language acquisition. This similar dynamic prevents translators from providing accurate renditions of the original language text or speech into the target language, according to Dweik (2000). He noted some of the same issues already cited earlier as well as problems created by a less-than-complete understanding of one language or the other when translating. In many ways, culture overshadows good intentions or positive feelings about the translation process, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate translation.

Without a doubt, translators have a difficult task when attempting the translation of idioms from one language into another. Unlike other forms of translation, where it is acceptable to simply replace one grammatical or lexical element in the original language for another in the target language, the translation of idioms often demands completely ignoring the existing linguistic elements in the text under translation. In this regard, Awwad (1990) listed two primary issues that any translator of idioms faces: Misinterpretation and failure to understand cultural differences. If the translator fails in either of these areas, the translation will be inaccurate.

Similarly, Baker (2011, p.68-71) provided a summary of the most frequent issues encountered by translators of idioms. The first problem area involves the lack of any truly equivalent expression in the target language. This is a very real and reoccurring problem faced by all translators. As explained by Baker,

Idioms may be culture specific such as "yours faithfully" and "yours sincerely" in English. These terms have no equivalents in Arabic. The expression "watafadalu biquul fa'iq al-ihiraam" may be used instead, but it has no direct relationship to yours sincerely or yours faithfully. (2011, p. 68) The second issue described by Baker involves identifying an equivalent phrase in the target language, but then realizing that the context is very different from that of the original language. This was illustrated by Baker (contrasting an English idiom with one in German):

To go to the dogs ('to lose one's good qualities') has a similar counterpart in German, but whereas the English idiom can be used in connection with a person or a place, its German counterpart can only be used in connection with a person and often means to die or perish. Though similar in meaning, the contexts in which the two idioms can be used are obviously different. (2011, p. 69). A third problem facing translators of idioms between languages occurs when

An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time. Unless the target-language idiom corresponds to the source-language idiom both in form and in meaning, the play on idiom cannot be successfully reproduced in the target text. (Baker, 2011, p. 69). These are just a few of the problematic issues experienced by translators of idioms and it seems that nearly all such issues are based on a few, similar overriding concerns.

Baker (2011) declared that "the main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret the idiom correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or affixed expression conveys into the target language" (p. 65). In many cases a translator may not be aware at all that an idiom is contained within a section of text translated. On the other hand, a translator typically fares better in the translating process if an idiom conveys an obvious unreality. For example: "It is raining cats and dogs القرب كأفواه تمطر انها." In other cases, a translator identifies an idiom because it fails to follow established rules of grammar, such as "by and large عن النظر بغض." Baker also provided a simple guideline for translators by stating that phrases beginning with the word 'like' are rarely translated literally.

Following are some examples of problems with translations of idioms, both from Arabic to English and from English to Arabic "ضع يدك في ماء بارد" Put your hand in cold water; "Do not worry/Be certain". The majority of these examples are derived from the work of Al-Shawi and Mahadi (2012). This Arabic idiom refers specifically to someone who is overly concerned about the proper manner of dealing with a problem or some significant issue. The implication of the idiomatic phrase is based on the meaning of hot and cold water. Simply put, in Arabic culture hot water implies a state of worry or concern, while cold water designates the opposite—a sense of calm or coolness (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 142). Accordingly, the idiom expresses the idea that the person should not be overly concerned, but accepts that the issue will be taken care of. However, since English speakers do not share this cultural knowledge of the meaning of cold water, they would be hard-pressed to interpret the idiom's meaning correctly.

مسنود ظهره	His back is supported	He is backed up
مقطوع من شجرة	Cut off from a tree	He has no relatives.

The Arabic idiom مسنود ظهره “his back propped” refers to an individual with a large family (especially sons and brothers). In Arabic culture, this generally provides an individual with a higher social rank or greater influence in society (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 142). Being a part of a large family is a point of pride in Arabic culture. Since this concept is not universally held among native English speakers for the most part, the idiom is difficult to translate. Thus, the English equivalent “he is backed up” does not at all convey the true original language meaning with its clear reference to family. The literal meaning in English is more confusing, since the Arabic idiom has nothing to do with supporting someone’s back.

Similarly, the Arabic idiom مقطوع من شجرة cannot be translated literally into English, since it does not relate in any way to a literal tree. However, the English equivalent listed above (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 142) provides a clearer understanding of what is meant in Arabic. Just as a limb cut off a tree can no longer rely on the support and nourishment provided by the tree and suffer ill effects, so a person cut off from family will likewise eventually wither away. Clearly, providing a literal translation is highly ineffective in conveying the true meaning of idioms.

Many idioms are part of religious culture, and this is true of both Arabic and Western idioms. Here is one example in Arabic, “رمضان كريم Ramadan is generous; Excuse me for not offering something to eat or drink for it is fasting time”. This idiom is used exclusively during the Arabic holy month of Ramadan and is essentially an apology for the inability to provide food or drink to a visitor or guest. In Arabic culture such gifts are always offered, except during Ramadan when religious fasting is required during daylight hours (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 144). Thus, the literal English translation “Ramadan is generous” makes little sense to a non-Arab who is anticipating such generosity to be expressed in a literal way. The English equivalent clarifies the meaning for those not familiar with Arabic religious culture.

Similarly, the Bible contains idioms that are difficult to translate into Arabic. The first phrase listed below, taken from the book of Job 20:20, implies an inability to be satisfied. A literal translation of this English idiom into Arabic is nonsensical. There is simply no way to convey the appropriate meaning from one culture to another by means of translating each individual element of the phrase literally (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 145).

The second idiom listed below and taken from the Bible (Psalms 75:5) “lift up your horn” also cannot be translated literally into Arabic. Lifting up a horn or trumpet conveys no significant meaning and certainly does not convey the meaning originally intended by the Bible writer who penned the idiom. However, Bible readers will likely understand the reference as a warning against rebelling against or defying God (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 145). Accordingly, the goal of an effective translator is to provide an equivalent phrase that is as close to the English version as possible.

The following English idioms are impossible to translate literally into Arabic due to differences in culture that prevent understanding of the concept expressed.

They knew no quiet in their bellies (عرفوا انهم لا هدوء في بطونهم) They were greedy (كانوا طماعين).

Lift up your horn (يرفع البوق) defy God (يتحدى الله).

To break the bank (يكسر البنك) (تدعو المدير لربح مالا كثيرا في لعب القمار للعب لإيقاف اللعبة) (يكسر البنك).

To a native English speaker, the phrase “break the bank” is readily understood in the context of a gambler winning so much money that he or she is asked to leave the establishment. In Arabic, however, such a concept is completely foreign inasmuch as gambling is forbidden by religious and cultural restrictions. Therefore, a translator needs to formulate a rather lengthy equivalent meaning in Arabic (“win a lot of money playing a game, manager calls to stop playing”) to try and convey the relatively short English idiom (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 143). Of course, even that rendering does not fully convey the meaning of the English phrase, since there is no mention of gambling; this is essentially the centerpiece of the idiom’s meaning. Just as the Arabic idioms listed earlier are understood as part of Arab culture, these English idioms are likewise comprehended by Westerners due to cultural knowledge.

Three sheets to the wind (ثلاث اوراق للريح) (ثمل, مخمور سكران).

In English, this idiom is clearly understood to refer to the condition of an individual who has imbibed of too much alcohol and is now extremely intoxicated. Translating this phrase into Arabic is problematic since alcohol is forbidden in the religious culture, so the literal translation shown above simply repeats the English wording, without providing any context or understanding of its meaning. The equivalent rendering, however, is quite explicit: “drunk, drunk, drunk.” This is one of many examples illustrating how differences in culture inhibit accurate translation of idioms between languages (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012, p. 143).

As these examples indicate, the primary issue regarding translating an idiom from one language into another is the attempt to translate each individual component of the idiom rather than as a whole. An example of this problem may be viewed if an attempt is made to translate the English idiom included in the sentence “This work is a piece of cake” literally into Arabic as “الكعكة من قطعة عن عبارة العمل هذا” (work is a piece of cake) rather than هذا عمل سهل جدا (this work is easy). The problem, of course, is that the attempt to translate this sentence literally by means of each individual piece of the phrase results in something far from the actual meaning of the idiom in its original English forms. Literally, “piece of cake” in English refers to something that is simple or easily accomplished and so the Arabic translation should convey a similar meaning. Since idioms are not constructed based on the individual words they contain, translation of each individual word cannot possibly result in an accurate rendering.

Finally, the English idiom, “He who sows the wind, shall reap the whirlwind”, which was originally a Biblical reference but later adopted into general linguistic usage, is impossible to translate literally into Arabic. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, this idiom means to “Suffer as a result of your actions”

(2006, p. 318). The Arabic language does not use words such as wind or whirlwind to denote the concept of distress caused by one's actions. Rather Arabic translators are more likely to use (الشوك—thorns) which represents evil and (العنب—grapes) which represents good when attempting to convey the results of an individual's actions or course of life.

However, Yowelly and Lataiwish (2000) observed that “the greater the gap between the source and target culture, the more serious difficulty would be” (p. 107). The few translation issues noted above indicate that the differences between English and Arabic culture is so significant that problems are simply a matter of course. Since idioms are constructed based upon cultural and often historic knowledge and points of reference, it should come as no surprise that translation of idioms is an extremely complex and difficult undertaking. In reality, many efforts at such translation fail.

The evidence found in the literature clearly indicates that idioms must be translated as one entity rather than based on its individual words. This idea is supported by Newmark (1988) among others, who acknowledged that successful translation and understanding of idioms in a second language contributes to language comprehension.

Simply put, since idioms are figurative linguistic constructs, it is always futile to try and understand them literally. That being the case, a translator must first attempt to glean the original meaning of the idiom and keep that meaning clearly in focus throughout the process of translation. This was highlighted by Larson (1984) who stressed the need for translators to go to whatever length necessary to first determine the precise meaning of the idiom to be translated. If a translator is unable to distinguish between the literal and figurative meaning of the idiom, the final translation is bound to be incorrect or inaccurate. Clearly, a translator must have a superior command of the source language so that the actual meaning is reflected in the translation (Larson, 1984). It is pointless to provide a literal translation that serves only to confuse rather than inform.

Baker (2011) gave a valuable explanation and examples of the strategies used in translating idioms, including using an idiom of similar form and meaning (p. 76); using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form (p. 78); translation by paraphrasing (p. 79); and translation by omission (p. 85). Considering these strategies one at a time, attempting to locate an idiom with similar form and meaning in the target language is certainly the optimal choice for a translator. Nevertheless, for any number of reasons, it is also the strategy that is the most difficult to accomplish. There are simply too many variables between languages, especially between languages and cultures as disparate as English and Arabic. Finding such an equivalent in the target language is essentially (to borrow another English idiom) “the Holy Grail” of translation, defined by Merriam Webster online dictionary as “something that you want very much but that is very hard to get or achieve”.

An alternative strategy as outlined by Baker (2011) is using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form. According to Strakšiene (2009), “In this case the lexical items of an idiom are not preserved; it is translated as a semantic

equivalent” (p. 15). The end result of using this technique is arriving at an idiom in the target language with approximately the equivalent meaning of the original language idiom.

Baker defined paraphrasing as “translating a source language idiom by giving its meaning in the target language. By using this strategy the impact of the idiom and its cultural significance will be lost” (2011, p.74). Translation by paraphrasing is one of the most common strategies employed by translators to address the problem of translating idioms accurately, according to Strakšiene (2009). The reason for its frequent usage is quite simply because it is much simpler than exhaustively searching for an accurate equivalent, especially when it is unlikely one exists. Strakšiene explained that “Using this kind of strategy a translator transfers the meaning of an idiom using a single word or a group of words which roughly corresponds to the meaning of idiom but is not an idiom itself” (2009, p. 16). One of the unfortunate side effects of this strategy is a loss of the original cultural significance or a failure to convey the full figurative nature of the original language. This is apparent in many of the idioms translated between Arabic and English cited earlier.

Translation by omission is a rarer strategy used by translators. According to Baker (2011), it is only used “when there is no close equivalent in the target language; secondly, when it is difficult to paraphrase; finally, an idiom may be omitted for stylistic reasons” (p. 77). It is never preferred to eliminate any content from an original language text during the process of translation, and that is why this method is used so infrequently. In effect, however, if the overall meaning of the broader text is not altered by the removal of an idiom there is no damage done and the reader of the target language receives fundamentally all that was written originally. As long as the expression is deemed relatively superficial to the overall message, omission is acceptable for translators.

Additional clarification for translating idioms was provided by Mollanazar (2004) who suggested two ways to translate an idiom: “a) an appropriate idiom is found in the target language as its equivalent; b) When there is no proper idiom in the TL, meaning should be used” (p. 52). In other words, “the first step in translating idioms is to recognize them. The pitfall for the translators is to translate idioms literally. A word-for-word translation of idioms is often nonsense or even sometimes amusing” (Mollanazar, 2004, p. 52). This may seem like common sense, but many translators are so used to simply providing precise and literal translations that basic direction and reminders such as these are required.

English idioms in the form of verbs translated into Arabic were studied by Aldaresh (2008). The research was designed to investigate difficulties encountered by students of translation as well as professional Arabic translators. The purpose of the study was to provide suggestions for improvement, based on the findings. An overview was provided to the researcher based on a sample translation test of specific types of English idioms into Arabic, designed to ascertain consistencies and similarities in translation errors. True to the researcher’s hypothesis prior to the study, multiple issues related to improper translation were noted during the study. Predominantly, the overriding issue consistently encountered was the inability to identify and use appropriate

equivalents (Aldahesh, 2008). In many cases, translators attempted literal translations, or translated an idiom using a unique Arabic dialect rather than a broader linguistic replacement more accessible to the target audience. Multiple other issues were also observed.

Another study designed to determine the effectiveness of students of translation (English to Arabic and Arabic to English) was carried out by Bekkai (2010). This study also provided the students with idioms as well as proverbs, combining Arabic and English phrases, and asked the students to provide translations in both directions. Although the students included in the research were in their third year of study, the results indicated a surprising lack of ability to accurately convey the meanings of the idioms and proverbs into another language. In most cases, students simply rendered literal translations in spite of the complete lack of clarity that resulted. For instance, Rugayah paper (2015) tested some Arabic idioms in translating into English language Idioms used by Arabic speakers in the University of Mu'tah. She found that there are several factors that may stand behind the problems in translating idioms. For example:

مثل ما راح مثل ما جا (Rugayah paper 2015, p. 124)

This idiom is used to express "a person who does not achieve anything". (45%) students used the literally translation as "as he went as he come ", "as he go as he return ". On other hand (35%) of the students translated it by using a meaning such as "doing nothing "nothing changed" and "no result ". (15%) of the students do not provide any translation. Only one student used irrelevant translation as "easy go easy come ".

حاشا السامعين (Rugayah paper 2015, p. 124)

The word "حاشا" is an exceptional term used to show respect. This idiom is used in a situation when a person mentions in his speech saucy names of animals such as donkey and dog and wants to exclude the listener from that .4 (20%) of the students translated the idiom literally such as "beyond the listeners", "a way from a listeners" and "except the listeners". only 1(5%) of the students paraphrased the meaning of the idiom such as "he speaks bad speeches and doesn't mean the listeners". Furthermore, 10 (50%) of the participants did not provide any translation. 5 (25%) of the students used unrelated translation such as "no harm feeling " and " no offence taken ".

Other students simply left confusing translations blank or incomplete, while still others attempted to interpret the meaning of the original language idiom, which also achieved disastrous results.

Similarly, Meryem (2009) investigated the translation abilities of Master's level students when provided a series of both English and Arabic idioms to translate. The goal of the study was to provide input that would enable students to improve their translation skills. As found by other researchers, this study's results indicated significant problems with attempts to translate the idioms. The major issue in the study was an inability on the part of the students to understand the context of the idiom. Without such an understanding, the students attempted to use a variety of strategies to determine meaning, and the majority of these failed.

Meryem observed that students typically simply fell back into word-for-word translation since they were unable to grasp the proper meaning of the idioms—both English and Arabic. Success in translation was only achieved in the case of idioms that were extremely transparent so that the meaning was clear from the outset.

An original data collection by me from some Arabic media and journals. In turn, translate those data initially into English literal meaning, and secondly translate into English equivalent meaning to demonstrate that translation is often a difficult process under the best of conditions and even when the two target languages share many similarities—specifically, from Arabic to English because a lot of linguists say that Arabic language is more eloquence, and needs to realize the meaning before the translation process. For instance:

### **Primarily evaluative idioms vs. idioms with an extra layer of function**

The literature indicates that, while some idioms are restricted in function, other idioms are able to execute multiple discursive functions simultaneously. Multiple idioms examples are,

أنت من أهل البيت	ممکن تزورنا بأي وقت
You are the people of the house, People (FAMILY) (OWNERS) of the house	Possible visit us at any time
<i>Said to welcome someone to the house. A typically hospitable expression used for saying: you are not a stranger!</i>	

أشوف أمورك أستغرب	أسمع كلامك أصدقك	اللي بسمعك بصدقك
I see your affairs surprised overhear believe you	I hear your words believe you.	Elly
The one who listens to you, believes you. <i>When someone mentions a matter in a way you don't like, you try to deny it, its accuracy or to show false.</i>		

According to Abdou (2012), these fall into two categories: one is determined by an evaluative function of the idiom, and the other takes into consideration multiple functions carried out by a single idiom. Based on this assessment, Abdou asserted that idioms can only be evaluative or non-evaluative in function. Non-evaluative idioms are, by process of elimination, informational-modalizing idioms. In contrast, an evaluative idiom may be classified as informational, modalizing, or a possessing combination of all these functions. For examples:

اكله ضربة	He ate (TOOK) a hit
To take or receive a hit (non-physical punishment).	

انت تفصل و احنة نلبس	You sew and we will wear it.
I'll do whatever you want. (You decide).	

انفتح علي	It was opened on me.
To receive unexpectedly strong reaction, usually followed by an argument.	

The first idiom refers to the phenomenon, i.e. the punishment, and indicates its extent by situating it on the harsh-soft scale, here it is only a light punishment. The second idiom refers to the state of receiving public attention and indicates the high intensity of this attention at the same time. Finally, the third idiom refers to the state of being surprised and indicates that it receives unexpectedly strong reaction.

Significantly, Moon (1998) recounted a minimal number of organizational phrases in her study that she could appropriately term as metaphors (her preferred term for what this discussion refers to as an idiom), “this is significant with respect to the markedness or saliency of such items in text” (p. 234). As may be inferred by the very nature of idioms, a figurative expression is preferred over a literal expression since the object is to attract attention and make a clear point within the text. In contrast, an organizational function seeks only accuracy, which lends itself to a literal, not figurative, rendering. In contrast to the above-mentioned finding by Moon (1998), she was able to identify a significant number of incidents for both evaluative and informational functions of metaphors (idioms) during her study. Fernando (1996) clarified that this class of idiom also comes under the umbrella of so-called ideational idioms, which often express action, events or evaluations. To clarify why she selected the term ideational in this context, Fernando explained:

To designate the macro-function of language realized through the clause and concerned with articulating the speaker’s or writer’s experience of the world: participants, actions and processes, the attributes of the participants and the circumstances associated with actions and processes [...]. Typically, ideational idioms are realized by units smaller than the clause [...]. These units function as parts of clauses. (pp. 97-98) Clearly, the two functions mentioned above are found more readily in the data studied and analyzed by Moon (1998) as well as that investigated by Fernando (1996).

Idioms are typically used to imply a certain evaluation or affective stance toward the things they denote. A language doesn’t ordinarily use idioms to describe situations that are regarded neutrally – buying tickets, reading a book – though of course one could imagine a community in which such activities were sufficiently charged with social meaning to be worthy of idiomatic reference. (p. 493) Additionally in this regard, Carter (2004) pointed out that:

Idioms are not simply neutral alternatives to less semantically opaque expressions. There is a difference between ‘I smell a rat’ and ‘I am suspicious’, or ‘She’s on cloud nine’ and ‘She’s extremely happy’, or ‘The garden’s a real mish-mash of different herbs’ or ‘The garden’s a real mixture of different herbs.’ In all cases the idiomatic expression is used evaluative and represents a more intense version of the literal statement. (p. 132)

There are a number of etymological sources for the evaluative nature of idioms. Fernando (1996) opined that this may “arise from their informational content, the imagery conveying this content, habitual collocates, and habitual contexts of use over time and space” (p. 146). Examining the sources is therefore a critical step for investigation of this topic.

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## **Conclusion**

This article has discussed numerous elements related to evaluative idioms in English and Arabic. From the outset, culture and ideology play a role in how meaning is expressed. Accordingly, the idiomatic expressions and collocations of individual languages do not typically share common ground. It is difficult (if not impossible) to transfer the precise meaning of an idiom that is commonplace in one language to another. This struggle is often based on how the idiom was formed, which may relate to religious or cultural beliefs unique to a country or language, or a set of beliefs that is not shared across language groups.

Idiomaticity, which, in this context, refers to the ability to properly use native-language expressions, includes knowing when the use of idioms is required and, more importantly, understanding how to form the idiom properly. Idiomaticity implies an ability to construct the appropriate clauses (based on the appropriate functions) and phrases so that the generalized meaning of an idiom remains intact in spite of the fact that the context may not seem to carry the meaning desired. This requires selecting the proper potential combinations of words.

Unlike English idioms, verb-preposition collocations are one of the primary means of structuring idioms in Arabic. In some cases, collocations of this sort render a phrase that is non-idiomatic and the combined meaning is readily apparent. However, comparable to English idioms, the collocation becomes idiomatic once the meaning of the new phrase exceeds its individual parts.

In both English and Arabic, the use of figurative/evaluative idioms is often necessary to present a conceptual image that is impossible to convey using only literal language elements. Evaluation occurs based on shared cultural norms, which also explains why many English idioms are extremely confusing to non-native English speakers. The link between the figurative and evaluative nature of many idioms is a topic of much research, since it is believed that such an examination, especially including their etymology, may contribute to a better understanding of their contextual development.

Translators have a difficult task when attempting the translation of idioms from one language into another—whether from English to Arabic or vice versa. Since both the form and the meaning of these expressions are already in place and standardized, there is often very little variation permissible to maintain the thought intended. This is one of the primary reasons why it is so difficult to translate idioms from one language to another and why second language learners struggle with mastering the use of idioms. Unlike other forms of translation, where it is acceptable to simply replace one grammatical or lexical element in the original language for another in the target language, the translation of idioms

often demands completely ignoring the existing linguistic elements in the text under translation. Misinterpretation and failure to understand cultural differences were the most critical problems cited for translators. If the translator fails in either of these areas, the translation will be inaccurate.

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