

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

Sadok Abcha/ University of Tunis

Introduction

Translating literary texts from Arabic into English for native-Arabic speakers is a challenging task because of the various difficulties encountered in this process. The difficulties mainly concern the stylistic and syntactic features that are peculiar to the two languages, which come from different language families and have different cultural backgrounds. Expressing the Arabic meaning in English requires a sound knowledge of English and its culture. One of the criteria of a good translation is producing a translated text which looks as if it were written in idiomatic English and has little or no aspects that show that it is a translation. Achieving such goal requires first of all from the translator an effort to lend the English text an idiomatic colour. Therefore the translator should be concerned with idiomaticity, for the success of translation depends to a large extent on expressing the SI sentence meanings faithfully in an idiomatic way. This paper seeks to address one of the difficulties of Arabic-English translation, which is idiomacity.

Methodology

The present study is based on a corpus of sentences selected from the translation of extracts from two books entitled *Halima* by Mohamed Laaroussi Metoui and *Al-Mounaaraj* by Mustapha Al-Farsi., two prominent Tunisian writers. The two books are written in Modern Standard Arabic and the extracts have been translated into English here in this country by students preparing their papers to obtain the agégation degree, a highly selective one offered by the universities of Tunisia to teach at secondary school and in some cases at university. In selecting the sentences, the study sought to focus on those idiomatic sentences in Arabic in order to check how the translators tried to translate them into English and to identify the mistakes which they made in their translation. Also, the study sought to check whether or not the English translations have an idiomatic colour. It should be noted that as it is mainly concerned with the idiomatic dimension of the translation, the present work did not cover the other types of mistakes like the syntactic ones.. The reason is that this study seeks to focus just on one single aspect of translation and to suggest ways to improve the translator's performance in terms of the idiomaticity of translation. The corpus of the study consists of about 50 sentences that have been selected from the two translations. The sentence were afterwards classified according to the their common mistake and the translation of each sentence has been analysed in terms of

Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation: the case of ENS Agrégation papers

idiomaticity and a more idiomatic translation has been suggested as an alternative.

Findings, Analysis and suggested translations

The careful analysis of the corpus could identify three broad types of mistakes related to idiomaticity: (1) language not idiomatic, (2) the wrong use of idiom, and (3) not using the equivalent idiom. Below is the criticism of each group of sentences according to the nature of their mistake.

Table1: Language not idiomatic

Nature of mistake	TL translation	SL sentence ¹	Sentence n°
Language not idiomatic	"It was however known to young people in Africa and Asia because they fully lived its different stages." (p. 13)	"لكن يعرفها شبان افريقيا و اسيا لانهم عاشوا اطوارها و مراحلها."	1
Language not idiomatic	"Reviews die away." (p.23)	"المجلات تموت."	2
Language not idiomatic	"In this struggle, I exist." (p. 23)	"في الصراع أجد نفسي."	3
Language not idiomatic	"We are a group of intellectuals who neither consider themselves as torchlights lighting darkness nor even consider themselves as the arms holding those torchlights." (p. 18)	"نحن جماعة من المثقفين لا يعتبرون أنفسهم مشاعل تبذل الظلمة و لا حتى سواعد تحمل هذه المشاعل."	4

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

Language not idiomatic	"He was the bridge that freedom had laid, paving the crossing from the age of darkness to the age of enlightenment." (p.12)	"فهو الجسر الذي اقلت به الحرية بين عهد الظلمة و عهد النور."	5
Language not idiomatic	"He was the bridge on which the renaissance caravan passed." (pp. 12-13)	"فهو الجسر الذي سارت عليه قافلة النهضة."	6
Language not idiomatic	"The one he adopted now was beaming with happiness and thankfulness." (p.13)	"على وجهه ابتسامة لا كتلك التي سخرت من حبن الزمن منذ بل هي ابتسامة الفرح و الشكر."	7
Language not idiomatic	"Meteorites that are too short-lived to hold on for long and soon vanish to give way to darkness." (p.14)	"شهب تلمع في الفضاء الفسيح ثم تتوارى ليعود الظلام من جديد."	8
Language not idiomatic	"This feeling would annoy as much as it would dignify and strengthen him." (p.)	"و كان هذا الشعور يضرجه بقدر ما يشرفه و يقويه."	9

	12)		
Language not idiomatic	"Under the pretext that his multiple preoccupations refrained him from taking the extra charge of directing the review." (p.13)	"معتذرا بأن أشغاله الكثيرة لا تسمح له بالقيام بأعباء رئاسة المجلة."	10
Language not idiomatic	"...interrupted Adel, attacking what he called the "theory of eternity" for the threats it harboured." (p. 14)	"قطع على عادل حديثه مهاجما ما سماه "نظرية الخلود" لما تكنه من أخطار."	11
Language not idiomatic	"Some laughed at this, but Abdelazeez proceeded in calm." (p.18)	"وضحك بعض الجماعة لكن عبد العزيز تابع كلامه في هدوء."	12
Language not idiomatic	"And what has Nafta's son to say about all this?" (p. 20)	"وما رأي ابن نفطة في كل هذا..."	13
Language not idiomatic	"What's of immediate concern to my mind is finance." (p. 25)	"والأهم في نظري هو المال."	14

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

Language not idiomatic	"And resume our conversation with with renewed stimuli." (p. 25)	"ثم نعود الى درس هذا الموضوع المعقد باستعدادات جديدة."	15
Language not idiomatic	"Until victory was achieved." (p. 13)	"الى ان تحقق النصر."	16
Language not idiomatic	"So far we've been living in a serene atmosphere ruled by harmony, frankness, integrity and devotion." (p. 6)	"أقد عشنا الى حد الان في جو صاف يسوده الانسجام و الصراحة و الصدق و الإخلاص." ص 83	17
Language not idiomatic	"She left her bed." (p. 4)	"تهضت من فراشها." ص 79	18
Language not idiomatic	"As I was placing back the bullet ready to be shot to the pistol." (p. 10)	"و بينما كنت بصدد اعادة الرصاصة المهيأة للطلق الى الممدس." ص 90	19
Language not idiomatic	"Halima developed more interests in the events of the national resistance against the oppressive colonial forces." (p. 11)	"بدأت حلومة تزداد اهتماما بأحداث المقاومة الوطنية ضد القوى الاستعمارية الغاشمة." ص 91	20

Sadok Abcha

Language not idiomatic	"Starting from today, you'll be committed to performing some acts." (p. 11)	"و من اليوم ستكلفين ببعض ص 91 الأمثال."	21
Language not idiomatic	"I can benefit you a lot." (p. 11)	"انني استطيع ان افيدكم كثيرا." ص 91	22
Language not idiomatic	"Halima was satisfied with this middle way." (p. 12)	"و قنعت حليلة بهذا الحل الوسط." ص 92	23
Language not idiomatic	"Thanks God, I flawlessly accomplished my mission." (p. 14)	"لقد اتممت المأمورية و الحمد لله على افضل وجه." ص 96	24
Language not idiomatic	"Halima can really be relied on when needed." (p. 14)	"حقا يمكن الاعتماد على حليلة اذا لزم الأمر." ص 96	25
Language not idiomatic	"Spotlessly, Halima executed all the instructions." (p. 16)	"نفذت حليلة كل التعليمات على احسن وجه." ص 99	26
Language not idiomatic	"Then, he made it known to her that he would vanish for at least one week." (p. 16)	"ثم أعلمها بأنه سيختفي مدة اسبوع." ص 99	27
Language not idiomatic	"And asked her not to be upset due to his absence." (p. 16)	"و طلب منها ألا تنزعج لغيبه." ص 99	28

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

Language not idiomatic	"Abdelhamid disappeared and did not come to his house although.;" (p. 16)	"اختفى عبد العزيز. و لم يات الى المنزل رغم مضي ثلاثة أيام على اختفائه." ص 100	29
Language not idiomatic	"On the fourth day, the newspapers announced that an explosion took place in Gabes 's vally archway causing its entire demolition and interrupting traffic." (p.16)	"وفي اليوم الرابع أعلنت الصحف أن انفجارا وقع بقطرة "وادي قابس" فحطم القنطرة على آخرعا و عطل حركة المرور." ص 100	30

Own table

Sentence1:

"لكن يعرفها شبان افريقيا و اسيا لانهم عاشوا اطوارها و مراحلها ."

The translation: *it was however known to young people in Africa and Asia because they fully lived its different stages.*

The use of "fully" is unnecessary. And the use of "fully lived" does not convey the bad and unpleasant dimension of the experience and therefore the use of the phrasal verb "go through" is a must as it expresses faithfully the meaning in the SL.

The suggested translation: *It was however known to young people in Africa and Asia because they went through its different stages.*

Sentence2:

"المجلات تموت."

The translation: *reviews die away.*

The expression is not idiomatic. The word "review" is not the right translation nor is the word "die away".

The suggested translation: *magazines disappear/perish.*

Sentence3:

"في الصراع أجد نفسي."

The translation: *in this struggle, I exist.*

the word "exist" used by the author does not convey the meaning because the meaning intended in the SL is to discover where one's real interests or talents lie and follow them. Therefore "I find myself" should be used to express faithfully the meaning of the Arabic sentence.

The suggested translation: *In struggle I find myself.*

Sentence4:

"نحن جماعة من المثقفين لا يعتبرون أنفسهم مشاعل تبدد الظلمة و لا حتى سواعد تحمل هذه المشاعل."

The translation: *we are a group of intellectuals who neither consider themselves as torchlights lighting darkness nor even consider themselves as the arms holding those torchlights.*

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

The translator failed to use the correct word which is “to dissipate” that collocates with darkness.

The suggested translation: *we are a group of intellectuals who neither think of themselves as being torchlights dissipating darkness nor even the arms holding those torchlights.*

Sentence5:

"فهو الجسر الذي القت به الحرية بين عهد الظلمة و عهد النور."

The translation: *he was the bridge that freedom had laid, paving the crossing from the age of darkness to the age of enlightenment.*

The translation is awkward because the translator tried to explain what is implicit in the meaning. The bridge has the function of enabling people to move from one place to another which are separate and therefore linking them.

The suggested translation: *he was the bridge that freedom laid between the age of darkness and that of enlightenment.*

Sentence6:

"فهو الجسر الذي سارت عليه قافلة النهضة."

The translation: *he was the bridge on which the renaissance caravan passed.*

The phrase “to pass on the bridge” is not idiomatic and therefore it is better to use “travel across” to give the sentence an idiomatic colour.

The suggested translation: *he was the bridge across which the renaissance caravan travelled.*

Sentence7:

حين بل هي ابتسامة "على وجهه ابتسامة لا كذلك التي سخرت من الزمن منذ الفرح و الشكر."

The translation: *the one he adopted now was beaming with happiness and thankfulness.*

The mistake here is that smiles do not beam. It is people who beam, which means they smile expansively when they are happy. Also the use of the verb adopt does not collocate with smile. The word that collocates is "suffuse"

The suggested translation: *the smile that suffused his face was unlike the one that mocked time some time ago. It was rather the smile of happiness and thankfulness.*

Sentence8:

"شهب تلمع في الفضاء الفسيح ثم تتوارى ليعود الظلام من جديد."

The translation: *meteorites that are too short-lived to hold on for long and soon vanish to give way to darkness.*

The use of vanish is unfortunate, because it means disappearing gradually and there is nothing in the Arabic sentence which expresses graduality. Also the translator did not translate "جديد من" which expresses the meaning of alternation.

The suggested translation: *stars that twinkle in the wide space and then disappear to give way to darkness to reign again.*

Sentence9:

"وكان هذا الشعور يضجره بقدر ما يشرفه و يقويه."

The translation: *this feeling would annoy as much as it would dignify and strengthen him.*

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

The use of “annoy” is not correct because this word means “to fairly make someone angry or impatient.” The right word that has to be used here and which collocates with “feeling” is discomfort.

The suggested translation: *this feeling would discomfort as much as it would honour and strengthen him.*

Sentence10:

"معتذرا بأن أشغاله الكثيرة لا تسمح له بالقيام بأعباء رئاسة المجلة."

The translation: *under the pretext that his multiple preoccupations refrained him from taking the extra charge of directing the review.*

The use of the phrasal verb “refrain from” in this context is wrong and so is the use of the words “preoccupations” and “charge”. The whole sentence is unidiomatic.

The suggested translation: *under the pretext that his many duties would not allow him to assume the responsibility of managing the magazine.*

Sentence11:

"...قطع على عادل حديثه مهاجما ما سماه "نظرية الخلود" لما تكنه من اخطار."

The translation: *...interrupted Ad el, attacking what he called the “theory of eternity” for the threats it harboured.* Two words are not used in their place. First, the word “harbour” which has to be replaced by “inherent” and second the word “threats” which has to be replaced by “risks.”

The suggested translation: ...interrupted Ad el, attacking what he called the "theory of eternity" for its inherent risks.

Sentence12:

"و ضحك بعض الجماعة لكن عبد العزيز تابع كلامه في هدوء."

The translation: some laughed at this, but Abdelazeez proceeded in calm talk.

The translation would have been idiomatic if the translator had used "with". But in this context, the verb "resume" is the idiomatic word that is used for this meaning, as "to resume" means "beginning to speak again after stopping for a short time"

The suggested translation: some laughed at this, but Abdelazeez resumed in calm.

Sentence13:

"و ما رأي ابن نفطة في كل هذا..."

The translation: and what has Nafta's son to say about all this?

This is a mistake resulting from a word for word translation. In English, it is expressed as follows:
And what has the Nefta man to say about all this?

Sentence14:

"و الأهم في نظري هو المال."

The translation: what's of immediate concern to my mind is finance.

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

The sentence is not idiomatic because the word “finance” means the activity of managing money, debt, credit and investment. Therefore the word that has to be used here is “money”. Also there is nothing in SL sentence which means “immediate concern”. So, the expression “in my view” or “according to me” or “to my mind” should be used.

The suggested translation: *to my mind, the most important thing is money.*

Sentence15:

"ثم نعود الى درس هذا الموضوع المعقد باستعدادات جديدة."

The translation: *and resume our conversation with renewed stimuli.*

What is meant here is not discussion but rather topic or issue. The word “stimuli” means things that encourage an activity, whereas here the meaning is predisposition or readiness. Also the word “renewed” is out of place because in the SL sentence we do not have “متجدد” but we the word “جديد” which means “new”.

The suggested translation: *then resume the discussion of this complex issue with new predispositions.*

Sentence16:

"الى أن تحقق النصر."

The translation: *until victory was achieved.*

This is not idiomatic. With “victory” we use the word “win”.

The suggested translation: *until victory was won.*

Sentence 17:

الصدق و "لقد عشنا الى حد الن في جو صاف يسوده الانسجام و الصراحة و الإخلاص."

The translation: *so far we've been living in a serene atmosphere ruled by harmony, frankness, integrity and devotion.*

The use of "ruled" is unlucky for "ruled" has a negative meaning, that is to say the meaning of control; whereas the words that are used here are positive ones (harmony, frankness, integrity and devotion). Therefore the use of "reigned" expresses the meaning in a correct way.

The suggested translation: *we have so far been living in a serene atmosphere reigned by harmony, frankness, integrity and devotion.*

Sentence18:

"نهضت من فراشها ."

The translation: *she left her bed.*

This is not idiomatic. In English we simply say:
She got up from bed.

Sentence19:

"و بينما كنت بصدد اعادة الرصاصة المهيأة للطلق الى المسدس."

The translation: *as I was placing back the bullet ready to be shot to the pistol.*

This is not idiomatic, as in English we use the phrase "put back" instead of "place back".

The suggested translation: *as I was putting back in the pistol the bullet ready to be shot.*

Sentence20:

"و بينما كنت بصدد اعادة الرصاصة المهيأة للطلق الى المسدس."

The translation: *Halima developed more interests in the events of the national resistance against the oppressive colonial forces.*

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

The sentence is not idiomatic. “to develop interest” is not English and the word that collocates with “colonial forces” is “brute”.

The suggested translation: *Halima got more interested in the events of national resistance against the colonial brute forces.*

Sentence21:

"و من اليوم سنكفينا ببعض الأمثال."

The translation: *starting from today, you'll be committed to performing some acts.*

The use of “committed” is not idiomatic and the right expression to express the SL sentence is:

from now on you will be in charge of some tasks.

Sentence22:

"انني أستطيع أن أفيدكم كثيرا."

The translation: *I can benefit you a lot.*

The sentence is not idiomatic because the author adopted a word for word translation. The word “acts” is vague and the word that has to be used here is “tasks”.

The suggested translation: *I can be very useful to you.*

Sentence23:

"و قنعت حليلة بهذا الحل الوسط"

The translation: *Halima was satisfied with this middle way.*

The phrase “satisfied with” means “to be happy” and does not faithfully translate the Arabic phrase “ب قنعت”, which means the willingness to accept. The phrase “middle way” does not convey the meaning of the Arabic one “حل وسط” and the word that best suits the translation is “compromise”.

The suggested translation: *Halima was contented with this compromise.*

Sentence 24:

"لقد أتممت المأمورية و الحمد لله على أفضل وجه."

The translation: *thanks God, I flawlessly accomplished my mission.*

The sentence is not idiomatic because the word "flawlessly" means perfect and without defects. The phrase "in the best way" is the right phrase.

The suggested translation: *thanks God, I accomplished my mission in the best way.*

Sentence25:

"حقا يمكن الاعتماد على حليلة اذا لزم الأمر."

The translation: *Halima can really be relied on when needed.*

The sentence is correct but not idiomatic.

The suggested translation: *indeed, we can rely on Halima if need be.*

Sentence26:

"نفذت حليلة كل التعليمات على أحسن وجه."

The translation: *spotlessly, Halima executed all the instructions.*

The word "spotlessly" , which means perfect and completely clean, is not the right word to translate idiomatically the SL phrase "على أفضل وجه".

The suggested translation: *Halima carried out the instructions in the best way.*

Sentence27:

"ثم أعلمها بأنه سيختفي مدة أسبوع."

The translation: *then, he made it known to her that he would vanish for at least one week.*

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

The use of the word “vanish” is not correct because it means to disappear suddenly or in a way that cannot be explained.

The suggested translation: *then, he told her that he would disappear for at least one week.*

Sentence28:

"و طلب منها الا تنزع لغيابه."

The translation: *and asked her not to be upset due to his absence.*

The sentence is not idiomatic because “to be upset due to his absence” is awkward.

The suggested translation: *and asked her not to feel uneasy about his absence.*

Sentence29:

"اختفى عبد العزيز. و لم يات الى المنزل رغم مضي ثلاثة أيام على اختفائه."

The translation: *Abdelhamid disappeared and did not come to his house although...*

The sentence “did not come to his house” is not idiomatic and therefore should be replaced by “did not go back home”.

The suggested translation: *Abdelhamid disappeared and did not go back home although three days elapsed since he had disappeared.*

Sentence30:

"و في اليوم الرابع اعلنت الصحف أن انفجارا وقع بقطرة "وادي قابس" فحطم القطرة على أحرعأ و عطل حركة المرور."

The translation: *on the fourth day, the newspapers announced that an explosion took place in Gabes 's vally*

archway causing its entire demolition and interrupting traffic.

The word “announce” should be replaced by “The word “archway” is wrong and the word that collocates with traffic to express the SL sentence meaning is “paralysation”.

The suggested translation: *on the fourth day, the newspapers reported the news of an explosion in the bridge of the valley of Gabes, which led to its complete demolition and the paralysation of traffic.*

Table2: the wrong use of idiom

Nature of mistake	TL translation	SL sentence"	Sentence number
the wrong use of idiom	"They had also given time the lie, having grown old before their time was ripe." (p. 13)	"و كذبوا الزمن لأنهم شيوخوا قبل الأوان."	1
the wrong use of idiom	"He put on a smile on his face and joined the others' applause." (p. 13)	"و صفق مع من يصفق و على وجهه ابتسامة."	2
the wrong use of idiom	"The responsibilities laid on our shoulders." (p. 14)	"المسؤوليات الملقاة على عاتقنا."	3

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

the wrong use of idioms	"You' re not coming up with anything new." (p.22)	"لم تأت بجديد."	4
the wrong use of idioms	"At last he made up his mind to clue in the whole of the matter to her." (p. 8)	"أخيرا قرر اعلامها بحقيقة الأمر." ص 86	5

Own table

Sentence1:

"و كذبوا الزمن لأنهم شاخوا قبل الأوان."

The translation: *they had also given time the lie, having grown old before their time was ripe.*

The two mistakes made by the translator are first in the order of the words that make up the idiom and second the use of The translator' s use of the idiom "time was ripe" is out of place because it does not convey the meaning expressed in the TL text. Also there is no need for "before their time was ripe" here as the adverb "prematurely" faithfully conveys the meaning of SL.

The suggested translation: *they had also given the lie to time, having grown prematurely.*

Sentence2:

"و صفق مع من يصفق و على وجهه ابتسامة."

The translation: *he put on a smile on his face and joined the others' applause.*

The mistake made by the translator here is that he used "put on" which expresses artificiality; whereas the smile as can be understood was spontaneous and expressed the feelings of joy and happiness. A smile on his face and not to put a smile on his face, which means making someone happy.

The suggested translation: *he applauded with those who applauded with a smile suffusing his face.*

Sentence3:

"المسؤوليات الملقاة على عاتقنا."

The translation: The responsibilities laid on our shoulders
Here the translator translated word for word, but the outcome was that the sentence is not idiomatic because in English the word "shoulders" is not used in this context. The correct idiomatic expression in English is "to saddle someone with responsibility".

The suggested translation: *the responsibilities placed on us/saddled with us.*

Sentence4:

"لم تلت بجديد."

The translation: *you're not coming up with anything new.*

The correct expression is:

you have not come up with something new.

Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation: the case of ENS Agrégation papers

Sentence5:

"أخيرا قرر اعلامها بحقيقة الأمر."

The translation: *at last he made up his mind to clue in the whole of the matter to her.*

the use of the phrasal verb "to clue in" is not idiomatic because the personal pronoun "her" is not used. the right phrase is "to clue someone in". Also "the whole of the matter" is awkward".

The suggested translation: *at last he made up his mind to tell her about the true state of affairs.*

Table 3: not using the equivalent idiom

Nature of mistake	TL translation	SL sentence ⁱⁱⁱ	Sentence number
Not using the equivalent idiom	"Adel stopped talking." (p. 17)	"سكت عادل."	1
Not using the equivalent idiom	"Yours is an old refrain." (p. 18)	"خرافتك يا عبد العزيز قديمة قدم الزمان."	2
Not using the equivalent idiom	"How about going to the coffee shop, have something to drink." (p. 25)	"ما رأيكم في أن ننزل الى المقهى نطفي بعض الظلم."	3

Not using the equivalent idiom	"In vain did Adel try to escape the new responsibility." (p. 13)	"و عبثا حاول عادل أن يتخلص من المسؤولية الجديدة."	4
Not using the equivalent idiom	Wont you tell me my dear about what happened to you so that I become quiet and get reassured?	ألا تخبرني يا عزيزي ، عما حدث لك حتى أطمئن و يستريح بالي؟ ص 84	5
Not using the equivalent idiom	"She grew therefore eased."	"فانتشرح صدرها." ص 91	6
Not using the equivalent idiom	"This is why he was awaiting her coming back with extreme passion." (p. 11)	"لهذا كان ينتظر عودتها على أحر من الجمر." ص 95	7
Not using the equivalent idiom	"... or else dog my steps wherever I went like El-Hedi's dog." (p. 15)	"... أو يتبعني ككلب الهادي مقتفيا أثره."	8
Not using the equivalent	"Don't set further obstacles." (p.	لا تقم العراقيل."	9

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

idiom	20)		
-------	-----	--	--

Own table

Sentence1:

The translation: *Adel stopped talking.*

The translation is literal and fulfils the meaning, but it is not idiomatic. Therefore the idiom “lapse into silence” lends the text an idiomatic colour.

The suggested translation: *Adel lapsed into silence.*

Sentence2:

"خرافتك يا عبد العزيز قديمة قدم الزمان."

The translation: *Yours is an old refrain.*

The translator is not aware that there is in the TL an idiom that conveys the meaning of old times like the one existing in Arabic. The use of just the adjective “old” does not convey the meaning intended in the Arabic sentence, which is the oldness of time.

The suggested translation: *your fairy tale is as old as the hills.*

Sentence3:

"ما رأيكم في أن ننزل الى المقهى نطفي بعض الظما."

The translation: *how about going to the coffee shop, have something to drink?*

The translator failed to reproduce the idiomatic expression of the SL text as there is an equivalent one in the TL.

The suggested translation: *what about going down to the café to quench some thirst?*

Sentence4:

"و عبثا حاول عادل أن يتخلص من المسؤولية الجديدة."

The translation: *in vain did Adel try to escape the new responsibility.*

The use of "escape" does not really convey the meaning and the idiom "rid oneself of something" fulfils the meaning of the SL verb "تخلص"

The suggested translation: *in vain did Adel try to rid himself of the new responsibility.*

Sentence5:

الا تخبرني يا عزيزي ، عما حدث لك حتى أطمئن و يستريح بالي؟

The translation: *wont you tell me my dear about what happened to you so that I become quiet and get reassured?*

The translator failed to translate correctly "يستريح بالي" which is in English expressed by "to have peace of mind". Therefore the sentence may be translated into:

The suggested translation: *wont you tell me my dear about what happened to you so that I get reassured and have peace of mind.*

Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation: the case of ENS Agrégation papers

Sentence6:

"فانشرح صدرها."

The translation: *she grew therefore eased.*

The expression "grow eased" is not English and does not convey the meaning of the SL text.

The idiomatic expression which is the equivalent of the Arabic one is:

Therefore her heart was gladdened

Sentence7:

"لهذا كان ينتظر عودتها على أحر من الجمر."

The translation: This is why he was awaiting her coming back with extreme passion.

The translator translation is correct but it does not use an idiom like in the Arabic sentence. The expression "to be on tenterhooks" is the expression that has can faithfully translate the meaning.

The suggested translation: *this is why he was on tenterhooks awaiting her coming back.*

Sentence8:

"... أو يتبعني ككلب الهادي مفتتيا أثري."

The translation: *... or else dog my steps wherever I went like El-Hedi's dog.*

... or else like El-Hedi's dog tracking me wherever I went. The use of the verb "to dog" means when problems and injuries are always with us. However, the meaning in SL is following, which can be translated by "tracking"

The suggested translation: ... or else like El-Hedi's dog tracking me wherever I went.

Sentence9:

"لا تقم العراقيل."

The translation: Don't set the obstacles

This is not an idiomatic expression and the right one that can be used to express the meaning is the following:

Don't throw obstacles in our

Discussions

Idiomatic language means using words in a way that sounds natural to native speakers of the native language. In this paper we tried to show how on many occasions, the English used for the translation is not idiomatic or lacks idiomaticity. The examples analysed above clearly show that students' performance in translating literary texts from Arabic into English is not outstanding when it comes to idiomaticity. The analysis also shows that the translators' knowledge of English idioms is very limited as in many cases they failed to suggest the equivalent idioms that can to a large extent express the meaning of the Arabic idioms. Also, the translators made the mistake of

Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation: the case of ENS Agrégation papers

reproducing the Arabic idiom as it is in Arabic. "The responsibilities laid on our shoulders" is a good example. The translators also made the mistake of trying to use idioms but not correctly: "He put on a smile on his face and joined the others' applause." Also, the translators made the mistake of using words not in their right place: "so far we've been living in a serene atmosphere ruled by harmony, frankness, integrity and devotion." In many cases the translators do not even know the idioms that can be used to translate the idioms used in Arabic. "As old as the hills." Is a another example. On another level, in many instances the choice of words and synonyms is unlucky. In the sentence mentioned above, the author uses "annoy" whereas the right word that has to be used is "discomfort". Also, it should be noted that the examples show that the translators are more concerned with a faithful reproduction of the SL text without little concern with idiomaticity.

There are a number of explanations that can be put forward to understand this issue. From my experience as a teacher at an English department, teachers in various subjects ranging from literature to composition to cultural studies do not put much emphasis on idiomaticity. The evaluation of students' linguistic performance focuses mainly on correcting the grammatical, lexical and syntactic mistakes. To the best of my knowledge, there is no clear and consistent plan to to help students write in an idiomatic way. The learning context is unhelpful. Our students no longer have the opportunity to visit England for a training course during which they can live real and natural situations in which they use language with native speakers. Also, the nature of formation and examination at

the graduate level does incite students to read intensively material not directly relevant to their curriculum. Few are those students who read regularly British or American newspapers and watch films and plays in English. The linguistic environment offer rare occasions to be in contact with native speakers of English.

Pedagogical Implications

As a remedy to this deficiency in idiomaticity, a thorough and consistent pedagogical strategy has to be adopted. Teachers teaching translation from Arabic into English at the undergraduate and graduate levels should train students not simply to translate correctly by avoiding grammatical and syntactic mistakes but also to write idiomatically and to expose in translating texts to a variety of translation choices and to make them opt for what looks more idiomatic. The translation course should also provide students with plenty of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, which enrich students' knowledge of English and improve their potential in terms of writing idiomatically. The teachers of the other subjects should also in evaluating their students' linguistic performance when they write their assignments focus on the idiomaticity of the language and show them ways how to express sentences the way native speakers would. Also, there should be cultural activities parallel to courses like writing short stories, poems and articles in school's magazines, theatre clubs which stage plays, watching films, etc, which can enhance students capacity to communicate in English more idiomatically.

Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation: the case of ENS Agrégation papers

BIBLIGRAPHY

المراجع العربية

1978.. *النائب الحديث في الترجمة* مكتبة صانغ دمشق. جماعة من الأساتذة صفاء خلوصي. *فن الترجمة*. الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب. مصر 2000.
محمد العروسي المطوي. *حليمة*. الشركة التونسية للتوزيع. تونس. 1978
محمد المنصوري *الترجمة من العربية الى الانجليزية: مسائل تطبيقية و*
تمارين عامة. المؤسسة الوطنية للبحث العلمي
لونجمان. مصر والشركة المصرية العالمية للنش. *فن الترجمة*. محمد عنابي.
1992.

English references

Ashby, M. *Prosody and idioms in English*. Journal of Pragmatics 38 (2006) 1580–1597.
Ayto, J. *Idioms* 2006 Elsevier Ltd.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com>
Bassnett-McGuire, Susan. *Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. 1992.
Cowman, J.M. Ed. *Arabic-English Dictionary: the Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Third edition. Spoken language Services. 1976.
Dickins, J. *Junction in English and Arabic: Syntactic, discursual and denotative features*. Journal of Pragmatics 42 (2010) 1076–1136.
El-dali, H. M? *Towards an understanding of the distinctive nature of translation studies*. Journal of King Saud University – Languages and Translation (2011) 23, 29–45.

- Espinal, M. and Mateu, J. *On classes of idioms and their interpretation*. Journal of Pragmatics 42 (2010) 1397–1411
- Ginsburgh, V., et al. *The economics of literary translation: Some theory and evidence* Poetics 39 (2011) 228–246. Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
- Grant, L. E. *In a manner of speaking: Assessing frequent spoken figurative idioms to assist ESL/EFL teachers*. System 35 (2007) 169–181.
- Hayakawa, S.I. *The Penguin Guide To Synonyms and related words*. Second edition. Penguin Books. 1996.
- Housseem Eddine Bellalah. *Translation of two chapters from Mohamed laaroussi Al- Matoui's Halima into English*. unpublished memoire d'agrégation. ENS, Tunis. 2013.
- Jacquemet, M. *Transidiomatic practices: Language and power in the age of globalization*. Language & Communication 25 (2005) 257–277.
- Jacquemet, M. *Transidiomatic practices: Language and power in the age of globalization*. Language & Communication 25 (2005) 257–277.
- Karimnia, A. *Undergraduate Translation Training: In Search of a Model*. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences Volume 70(2013) 915–921.
- Kashgary, A. D. *The paradox of translating the untranslatable: Equivalence vs. non-equivalence in translating from Arabic into English* . Journal of King Saud University – Languages and Translation (2011) 23, 47–57.
- Keysar, B. Martin, B. *Bly Swimming against the current: Do idioms reflect conceptual structure?* Journal of Pragmatics 31 (1999) 1559-1578

**Idiomaticity mistakes in English- Arabic translation:
the case of ENS Agrégation papers**

Mowafi, M.I. *A dictionary of English Idioms: English-Arabic*. Lebanon. Librarie du Liban. 1989.

Newmark, P. *A Textbook of translation*. New York and London Prentice Hall. 1988.

Schäffner, C. *Metaphor and translation: some implications of a cognitive approach*. Journal of Pragmatics 36 (2004) 1253–1269

Selma Jiliti. *Arabic into English translation of an excerpt from Mustapha Al-farsi's Al-Munaaraj* unpublished memoire d'agrégation. ENS, Tunis. 2012.

ⁱ Arabic sentences 1 to 16 are selected from Jiliti, Selma . *Arabic into English translation of an excerpt from Mustapha Al-farsi's Al-Munaaraj* unpublished memoire d'agrégation. ENS, Tunis. 2012. The page numbers of the Arabic sentences are not included because the photocopied texts are without page numbers. The page numbers of the translated sentences are included as they appear in the paper. For sentences 17 to 30, I selected them from the original work: *Halima*, as the translator of some excerpts from *Halima* did not include in his paper the Arabic extracts. Therefore the page numbers of the sentences are the numbers that appear in the original book not in the paper.

ⁱⁱ Arabic sentences 1 to 5 are selected from Jiliti, Selma . *Arabic into English translation of an excerpt from Mustapha Al-farsi's Al-Munaaraj* unpublished memoire d'agrégation. ENS, Tunis. 2012. The page numbers of the

Arabic sentences are not included because the photocopied texts are without page numbers. The page numbers of the translated sentences are included as they appear in the paper. For sentences 17 to 30, I selected them from the original work: *Halima*, as the translator of some excerpts from *Halima* did not include in his paper the Arabic extracts. Therefore the page numbers of the sentences are the numbers that appear in the original book not in the paper.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arabic sentences 1 to 6 are selected from Jiliti, Selma . *Arabic into English translation of an excerpt from Mustapha Al-farsi's Al-Munaaraj* unpublished memoire d'agrégation. ENS, Tunis. 2012. The page numbers of the Arabic sentences are not included in the paper. In the tables the page numbers of the translated sentences are included as they appear in the paper.. For sentences 7 and 8 I selected them from the original work: *Halima*, as the translator of some excerpts from *Halima* did not include in his paper the Arabic extracts. Therefore the page numbers of the sentences are the numbers that appear in the original book not in the paper.