

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
King Faisal University
College of Arts
English Department



GRADUATION PROJECT
FINAL DRAFT

**DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING IDIOMATIC
EXPRESSIONS FROM ENGLISH INTO ARABIC
BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT AT KING FAISAL
UNIVERSITY.**

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FIELD OF RESEARCH	TRANSLATION

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► **Abstract:**

Idiomatic expressions exist in every language and make it much more colorful, it is considered to be the spirit of a language. Many English foreign speakers avoid using them due to their complexity sometimes. On the other hand, native speakers always use idioms in daily life. Therefore it can make a foreigner sounds like a native speaker and know how to express feeling or attitude in a way that a normal sentence cannot communicate the occasion. Learning and translating idioms test our idiomatic understanding of things, which propose us to different ways of thinking, speaking, reading and writing in the English language. Furthermore, it may benefit a non-native speaker to be more expert in his/her field whether he/she is a translator, educational, informative or an academic perhaps.

► **Introduction:**

Translation is a way for nations to communicate and interact with each other; it has rapidly grown over the last decade. Therefore it is more complex rather than substituting source language text with target language text, it is more related to many aspects. Some of the aspects include education, communication, science, technology, literature, business, culture, which affects the choices and approaches of the target language context.

This study will discuss the idiomatic expressions translation from English into Arabic. In addition to the challenges involved when English undergraduate students practice translating different idiomatic expressions. In view of the factors causes these challenges and the recommendation can be proposed to overcome this matter. When translating idiomatic expressions between two different languages such as English and Arabic for example, there are great variances between them as well as cultural differences too. This why mistranslating an idiomatic expression will result in misunderstanding the context in target language text which may result in cultural shock or indistinct idiomatic intention certainly.

The idiom is an expression that explains something by using examples and figures of speech. It can't be understood from the knowledge of its element portions. Idioms are expressed and bounded to each culture; consequently exporting them to another language context is a challenging as it is essential to identify their conditional concepts such as feelings and emotions, as well as cultural impression too.

► Literature Review

Many authors use idiomatic expressions and phrases in their literature transcribe to gain a remarkable style, besides allowing them to discuss uncomfortable topics indirectly sometimes. Even though they may use idioms and phrases to produce a character nature and speech patterns in their work of literature. Some authors tend to create new idioms and phrases William Shakespeare for example, has formed many of them which are still in use nowadays as it is stated in Literary Devices website.

In *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, we can find many good examples of idiomatic expressions in literature. The idiom “All that glitters is not gold” is still in use these days, which means not everything cursorily attractive is valuable. Another good example is “Bated breath” which means subdued breathing due to high emotions. The popular idiom “Love is blind” expresses the attitude when you love someone, you cannot see any faults in that person.

Nick Carraway uses the common idiom “I have got my hands full” in dialogue pattern from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. This idiom means I am too busy to accept a job or task. As *Gatsby* offering him a corrupted business deal, Carraway said that idiom to reject his offer indirectly so he does not get involved in such deal in a nice way.

► Significance of Research

This study may show difficulties involved in translating idiomatic expressions by English undergraduate students. Also, represents the significance of using idiomatic expressions in the English language for a non-native speaker. It may give additional information about the topic while investigating the challenges that English undergraduate students face in this kind of translation.

► Research questions

What challenges may encounter English undergraduate students in translating idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic?

What are the main influences cause these challenges in this kind of translation?

What recommendations can be proposed to overcome this matter?

► Research Methodology

In this study fifteen, undergraduate English students were invited to participate in the study's activity, the participants were very willing to accept the invitation and test their idiomatic knowledge and their translation skills. In order to come up with the best results of this study certain tools and methodologies were used in regard to the topic.

Firstly, each participant had to fill out a survey (See Appendix A); the survey includes some questions about common idioms from English prose subject to estimate the idiomatic knowledge of the participants and some other questions to estimate their English language proficiency and practicing. According to the survey's results, the second question of the research questions will be answered in the expected results section.

After that, I handed out oxford dictionary and an exam to each participant, the exam question is about English idiom followed by the country where it is mostly used to address the idiom's culture. The participant's quest is to translate the idiom from English into Arabic (See Appendix B). According to this exam scores, the first question of the research questions will be answered in the expected results section

Lastly, the data was collected based on the survey and the idiomatic expressions exam results, in order to originate an overall evaluation for the study and to come up with the best recommendations which can be purposed to enhance the ability and skills in translating idiomatic expressions by English undergraduate students at King Faisal University.

► Ethical Consideration

In respect to ethical issues, participants will join willingly and are free to stop at any time they want. The participant's personal information was limited and optional in the survey due to privacy concerns. Furthermore, the participants have been asked before filling out the survey if it is possible to share their age, gender, and English language practicing and proficiency level as an overall percentage in the survey results. All of the participants didn't mind to share the outcome of the results in this study as an overall percentage.

► Limitations of the study

The study has three limitations, they are as follow:

1- **Limitation of time:** the project's time frame is short to cover more knowledge in regard to the topic more information could be included as well.

2- **Limitation of place:** this study was applied to King Faisal University undergraduate English students.

3- **Limitation of the subject:** this study was established to investigate the challenges that English language undergraduate students in King Faisal University encounter in translating idiomatic expressions. Results may not be generalized beyond the sample and the survey used in this study.

► Expected results

In this section, the study results will be reviewed in details in order to accomplish the purpose of this study. The participants are undergraduate English students at King Faisal University and have studied literature, translation and linguistics for almost four years which qualify them to have enough knowledge and skills to attend and participate in this study. The expected results are based on the tools and methodologies used in this research as it was mentioned earlier. All of the research questions will be answered and discussed in the following paragraphs of this section.

It was very remarkable to see a variation between participants depending on their skills, knowledge and practicing the English language in daily life. Four of the participant's translations were accurate. Eight of the answers were an educated guessing depending on the student's idiomatic understanding and translation skills which give a close meaning of the source text context. Three students were not able to translate properly to find the hidden meaning of the idiomatic expression. Accordingly, there are several challenging stages encounter English undergraduate students in translating idiomatic expressions, for instance being unfamiliar with idiomatic expressions, some of the participants were unaware of the translating process, moreover the lack of source language cultural interpretation and cultural differences.

There are major influences cause these challenges in this kind of translation; the word for word translation may not give any clue for translating idiomatic expressions as they have a hidden meaning. Not even Google Translate can cope with this kind of translation, as they still belong to the human ability of recognition. Therefore Insufficient knowledge of English culture considered as the first influence cause. About fifty-five percent of the participants have not got a chance to travel abroad to any of the English-speaking countries, in order to explore the English native culture. Approximately seventy-five percent of the participants do not practice the English language in their daily life. Furthermore, insufficient translating skills and techniques were another reason for poor translation.

It is essential that English students expose to English culture, there are many ways to achieve this aim like watching movies, reading magazines or newspapers in English for example. Also, it is recommended for English students to get familiar with idiomatic expressions and try to use them all the time. Idiom connection website would be a very helpful website for English students to become more familiar with idiomatic expressions, it covers so many idioms and phrases, they are well arranged under cultural categories and it contains different types of quizzes for practicing.

When translating an idiom, English students must avoid using literal translation and it would be better for them if they use a good dictionary which contains extra information about the word or the phrase. The student should be aware of social circumstances which the idiom may exist such as feelings and emotions as well as cultural concepts. Muna Al-Shawi and Tengku Mahadi in their study of Strategies for Translating Idioms from Arabic into English and Vice Versa have submitted significant strategies as the keynotes for translating idiomatic expressions, they are as follow:

1- Translating idioms with an equivalent target language idiom, which has the same meaning and effect as the original source language idiom for example:

English idiom – As proud as a peacock	Equivalent idiom in Arabic – أزهى من طاووس
---------------------------------------	--

2- If no equivalent idiom was found, it can be adequate to a similar one for example:

English idiom – Never too old to learn	Similar idiom in Arabic – أطلب العلم من المهد إلى اللحد
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3- Paraphrasing is another strategy of adapting an idiom to the target language for example:

English idiom – First things first	Paraphrasing the idiom in Arabic – أهم الأمور أولها
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4- Using notes: the best way of translation is that allows the translator to use notes as a translation strategy or procedure, it is an essential method to get the benefit from translating the text.

References

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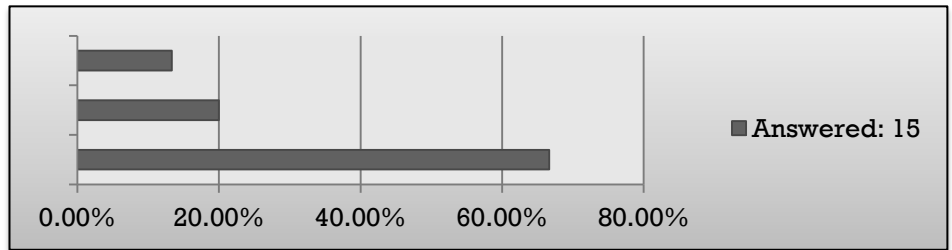
Full article about “*Idiom*”. Retrieved from <http://www.literarydevices.com/idiom/>

► Appendix - A -

Survey available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q8T6S96>

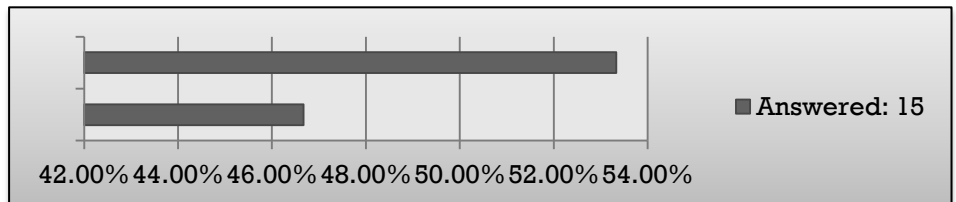
Age (optional):

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 30
- Above 30



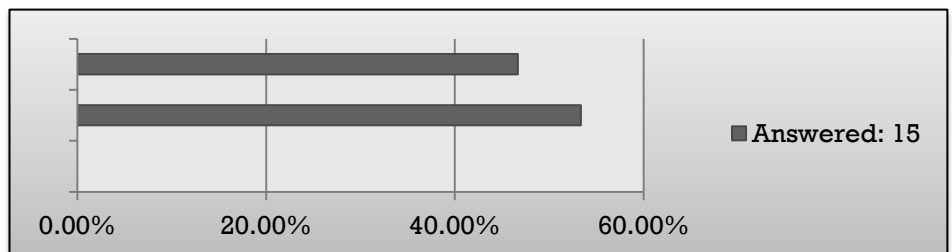
Gender (optional):

- Male
- Female



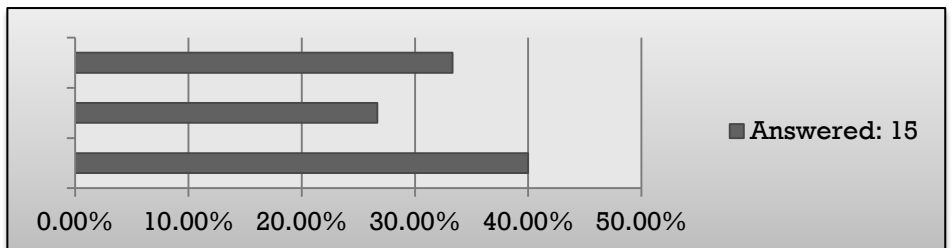
Proficiency level in English:

- Average
- Excellent
- Professional



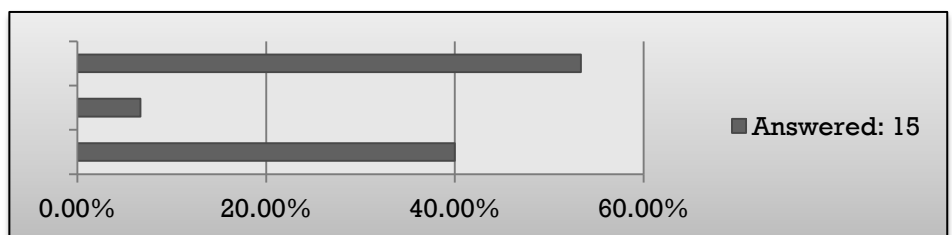
Interested in:

- English Literature
- English Linguistics
- English Translation



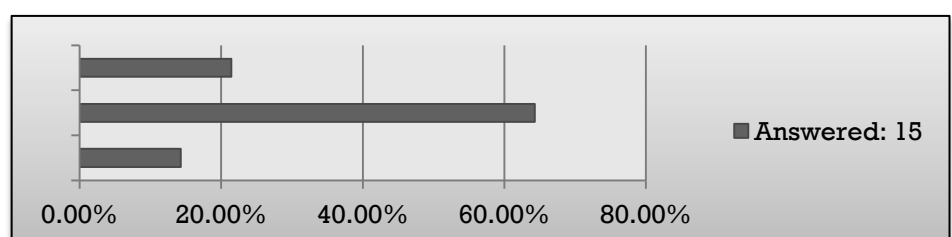
Number of years you have spent in English-speaking countries:

- 0
- 0 to 3
- More than 3



Have you practiced English outside the university?

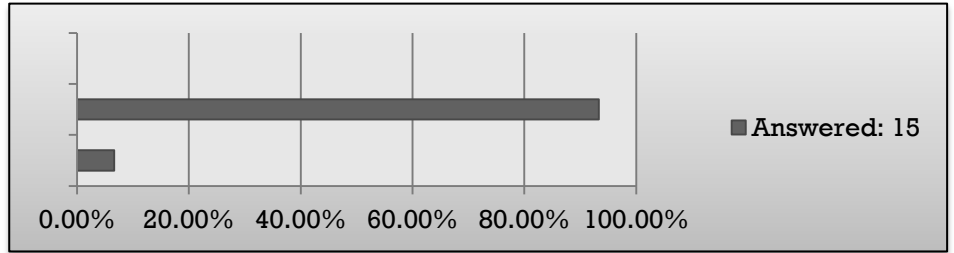
- Always
- Sometimes
- Never



From English prose subject choose the correct answer for the following idioms:

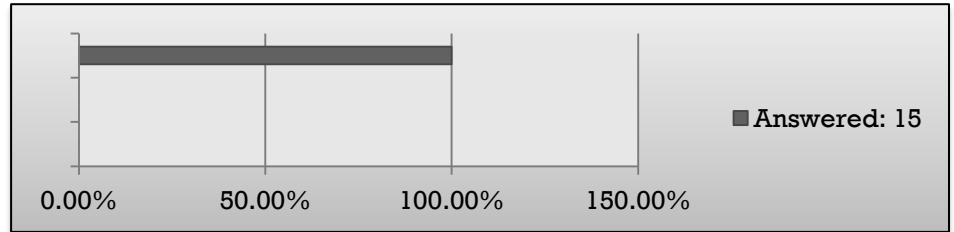
* *It is raining cats and dogs*

- Slowly
- Heavily
- Sparking



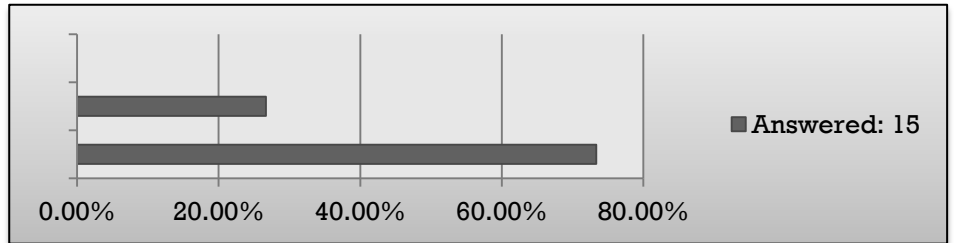
* *Two heads are better than one*

- Teamwork is the best
- We should have two heads
- Heads are better than hands



* *In time of test, family is best*

- Study with your family for the test
- In time of test, think of your family
- In a difficult time, the best place to resort to is your family



► Appendix - B - English into Arabic translation quest cards

Quest card No.1

Translate the following into Arabic Language:

“Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves”

Origin country United kingdom

.....

Quest card No.2

Translate the following into Arabic Language:

“When the robber meets the road”

Origin country United States

.....

Quest card No.3

Translate the following into Arabic language:

“Have a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock”

Origin country – Australia

.....

Quest card No.4

Translate the following into Arabic language:

“An Englishman’s home is his castle”

Origin country United Kingdom

.....

Quest card No.5

Translate the following into Arabic language:

“That makes as much sense as government cheese”

Origin country United States

.....