

Strategies Used in Arabic-English Translation of Idioms in Samiha Kraiss's Novel *Al Qurmiya*

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Abstract

This article aims at exploring the translation strategies adopted in translating from Arabic into English the idiomatic expressions found in *Al Qurmiya*, a historical novel by the Jordanian writer Samiha Kraiss (1998/2011). Fifty-five idioms in the Arabic text have been selected and compared with their counterparts in the English text with the aim of finding out how they have been translated. Applying Mona Baker's (2018) idioms translation model, the researcher examines the translation strategies employed in the translated version *The Tree Stump* by Nesreen Akhtarkhavari (2019) and analyzes the extent of their effective transference of the meanings of the selected idioms from the source language into the target language. Results show that the strategies applied in the translation are similar to those in Baker's model and that paraphrasing is the most frequently used strategy followed by the strategy of "using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form".

Keywords: Kraiss, Tree Stump, Baker, Idiom

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the suitability of the translation strategies arguably employed in rendering into English a select sample of Arabic idioms extracted from *The Tree Stump*, the translated version by Akhtarkhavari (2019) of the Arabic novel *Al Qurmiya* by the Jordanian writer Samiha Kraiss (1998/2011). Baker's (2018) idiom translation model has been adopted as the primary theoretical backdrop for the discussion of the translation strategies employed by the translator. Fifty-five idioms have been conveniently selected for discussion.

2. Literature Review

The present article is built upon the previous research in the realm of idiom translation, taking within its purview idiom definition, categorization, and multitudinous papers employing Baker's (2018) idiom translation strategies. Its main contribution lies in its investigation of the translation of a literary work that has not yet been done. Several studies from different parts of the world have dealt with the translation of idioms across language pairs. Strakšiene (2009) analyzes the translation of English idioms into Lithuanian and concludes that the translated text employs four basic translation strategies. Rasul (2018) investigates the translation of idioms across a set of five languages, arguing that "more often than not translation scholars and researchers incorporate proverbs in the study of idiom translation". Neshkovska (2018) Examines the process of translating a random selection of idiomatic expressions used in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* from English into Macedonian.

A good number of articles have been written on the translation of idioms. To give a few examples, Ghazala (2003) investigates some problems encountered in translating idioms and the extent to which idiomaticity is retained therein. Abu-Ssaydeh (2004) examines the definition of "idiom" and the strategies frequently employed by Arab translators when translating English idioms. Balfaqeeh (2009) explores which translation strategies are most acceptable to Arab readers when translating idioms. Al-Shawi & Mahadi (2012) focus on the role of social and religious factors in English and Arabic cultures in the translation of idioms across the two languages. Abdelaal & Alazzawie (2019) explore idiom translation strategies adopted in the translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into Arabic and the extent the ST meaning of the identified idioms is appropriately conveyed in the TT.

Other studies have dealt with the translation of idioms in some Arabic literary texts into English. Elnoty (2020) addresses the issues of translating Arabic idioms in three of Najib Mahfuz's works by conducting a descriptive statistical analysis. Adopting Baker's (2018) and Newmark's (1988) translation models, Zayed, Sulong, Husain, & Yahya (2021) examine the strategies used in the translation of idiomatic expressions in Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*. They find that the strategy of "paraphrasing" is the most frequently used. Alabdali (2020) discusses the rendering of pragmatic meanings of idiomatic expressions extracted from an Arabic novel, stressing the role of pragmatics in idiom translation.

3. Discussion

Idiom definition has always been a thorny issue in the translation of idioms. Dictionary definitions are divergent and diverse. *Oxford*

English Dictionary (1989) loosely identifies idiom as “a form of expression, grammatical construction, phrase, etc., peculiar to a language; a peculiarity of phraseology approved by the usage of a language, and often having a significance other than its grammatical or logical one”. *Webster’s New World Dictionary* (1991) elaborately defines idiom as “a phrase, construction or expression that is recognized as a unit in the usage of a given language and either differs from the usual syntactic patterns or has a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of its parts taken together”. *The Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* (1992) pithily describes idioms as “expressions that are metaphorical rather than literal, invariable or fixed in form”. *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms* (1997) defines idiom as “a group of words which have a different meaning when used together from the one it would have if the meaning of each word were taken individually”. *Cambridge Dictionary* (1999) succinctly identifies idiom as “a group of words in a fixed order that has a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own”. *McGraw-Hill’s Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal verbs* (2005) reserves the term idiom for “phrases that cannot be understood literally and, therefore, cannot be used with confidence. They are opaque or unpredictable because they don’t have expected, literal meaning”.

Idioms have also been grouped in different paradigms by different dictionaries. *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* (1983) classifies idioms into four main types: 1. pure idioms: full, perfect idioms that are established through constant use; 2. figurative idioms: often invariable and purely figurative; 3. semi-idioms: usually two-word combinations, with one having a figurative sense, and the other conveying a literal sense; and 4. open collocations: normal and flexible combinations of words rather than fixed idioms of invariable form and sense. *A Dictionary of American Idioms* (1984) categorizes idioms into six divisions, including well-established proverbs as well as sayings and set phrases. By contrast, *Longman’s Dictionary of English Idioms* (1992) divides idioms into twelve types including: traditional idioms, allusions, sayings, similes, etc.

Several linguists have offered different definitions and typologies of idioms. Bell (1991) marks four characteristic features of idiom: not always grammatical; conventionalized; unusually not following word order; and often metaphorical. Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow (1994) list the following features for “a prototypical idiom” status: conventionality; inflexibility; figuration; proverbiality; informality; and affect. Fernando, (1996) broadly defines idiom as “indivisible units whose components cannot be varied or vary only within definable limits”. Wright (2002) characterizes idiom as an expression that is “fixed and is recognized by native speakers. You cannot make your own! And it uses language in a non-literal metaphorical way”. Dickins, Hervey, & Higgins (2017) define idiom as “a fixed expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from the denotative meanings of the words that constitute it”.

Linguists have also proposed several categorizations of idioms that often differ from one another, a characteristic feature underscored by many scholars in the field (Palmer, 1976; Cowie, 1998; Moon, 1998). Carter (1987) distinguishes three types of idioms: 1. irreversible compound idioms; 2. full idioms; 3. Semi-idioms. Fernando (1996) proposes three sub-classes of idioms: 1. pure Idioms: opaque, conventionalized, non-literal multiword expressions often with little variation; 2. semi-idioms: having one or more literal constituents and one with non-literal sense; 3. literal idioms: transparent and semantically less complicated than pure and semi-idioms. In contrast, Moon (1998) classifies idioms according to their degrees of transparency: 1. transparent metaphors where the institutionalized idioms can be understood based on one’s real-world knowledge; 2. semi-transparent metaphors which need some special knowledge to understand them; 3. opaque metaphors or pure idioms which require knowledge of the origins of the expression. McCarthy & O’Dell (2017) group idioms into eight types depending on their linguistic form: 1. verb + complement; 2. prepositional phrase; 3. compound; 4. simile; 5. binomial; 6. trinomial; 7. whole clause or sentence.

Furthermore, translation theorists have provided useful insights for idiom translation. Most of them warn against literal or word-for-word translation since the result will usually be nonsense in the receptor language (Bassnett 1980/2002; Newmark 1988; Larson 1998). Newmark “lists three main strategies of translating idioms: finding another metaphor, reducing to sense (which results in the loss of the emotive coloring of the text) and literal, word-for-word translation” (qtd. in Horvathova & Tabackova, 2018). Baker (2018) distinguishes idioms as “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and ... often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components”.

Thus, many different forms of idiom definition, classification, and translation exist, but there are no generally agreed principles in use. However, there is a sort of consensus on a few common characteristics: 1. idioms are language/culture bound; 2. their meaning is not predictable from the individual words that constitute them; 3. they are generally fixed with limited variation; and 4. they should not be translated “literally”.

All English idioms listed in this discussion have been double-checked against *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms* (1998) and/or *Cambridge Dictionary* (1999) to verify accuracy. The meanings of Arabic idioms have been referenced in online *Al Maany Arabic Dictionary* (n.d.). Below are brief accounts of each of Baker’s proposed translation strategies together with an analysis of the way each strategy has been applied in the translation process.

3.1 Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning and Form

In this strategy, an idiom in the SL is rendered by an equivalent or identical idiom in the TL. The TL idiom conveys nearly the same message and consists of similar lexical items as the SL one (Baker, 2018). Ideally, translators would give priority in idiom translation to this strategy. Though it may be considered the most appropriate one for achieving the target of semantic, lexical, and stylistic equivalence, this strategy can only occasionally be employed, especially when dealing with languages that have different cultures and linguistic origins such as Arabic and English. The following examples illustrate how this strategy has been employed.

Table 1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

Page	Arabic Idiom	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	English Equivalent	Page
17	1. وتمت الصفقة	a deal was completed	come to an agreement through negotiation	a deal was made	8
19	2. صدق أو لا تصدق	believe or disbelieve	surprising but true	believe it or not	9
51	3. اليوم يومك	today is your day	today is the right day for doing something	today is your day	28
195	4. نقتل الوقت	we kill time	doing something to keep one busy while awaiting something to happen	(we) kill time	113
236	5. يا حيف	Oh shame	what a pity!	what a shame!	136

In Table 1, we find in the translation of the SL idiom “ وتمت الصفقة ” (no. 1) into “a deal was made” an instance of using an idiom in the TL of similar meaning and form as that in the SL. Each of them consists of roughly the same lexical content and has the same or similar meaning: successfully achieve an agreement. In terms of grammatical equivalence, both use the simple past though they do not have the same voice. While the Arabic expression uses the active voice, the English one employs the passive form, with the possible intention of giving the impression of objectivity, a highly esteemed value in English culture. Similarly, the Arabic idiom “ صدق أو لا تصدق ” (no.2) bears great resemblance to its English counterpart “believe it or not” in terms of their grammatical, formal, and semantic features.

In Table 1, the Arabic idiom “اليوم يومك” (no. 3) and the English one “today is your day” match semantically and formally, with slight variation on the informal English idiom “today’s the day”. Each of them means: things will be in one’s favor today. In example no. 4, the two idioms “ نقتل الوقت ” and “(we) kill time” are also alike both in their grammatical structure and semantic content and have identical metaphorical connotations: to spend time doing something while waiting. Moreover, the spoken English idiom “what a shame!” and the Arabic Bedouin/vernacular idiom “ يا حيف ” (no. 5) are virtually identical: syntactically, lexically, and semantically. Both of them have the same grammatical structure and exclamatory style and meaning: arousing pitying contempt by a mean action. Contextually, this idiom was said when the speaker was dissatisfied with the Bedouin’s premature collection of spoils and reflects the speaker’s mentality and cultural standpoint.

Such instances of similarity between idioms show that there are commonalities between Arabic and English despite their inherent differences in terms of their grammatical elements such as time, number, gender, person, voice and so on, which actually affect decisions in the course of translation, making less likely the possibility of achieving full equivalence. Indeed, differences in the grammatical structures of the source and target languages often result in making some change in the information content of the conveyed message during the translation process.

3.2 Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form

This strategy involves using an idiom in the TL which has a meaning similar to that of the SL idiom but consists of different lexical items (Baker, 2018). Although it is less acceptable than that which uses an expression of similar form and content, this strategy may be considered more feasible since many idioms of this type would be available in most languages. This is one of the most frequently used translation strategies and usually second only to “paraphrase”. Examples are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

Page	Arabic Idiom	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	English Equivalent	Page
9	1. لا يرف له جفن	he does not bat an eyelid	showing no surprise or worry when something unexpected happens	without batting an eye	3
16	2. تلقى مصيرها	meet its destiny	to die	leaving (it) to its fate	7
47	3. في كر وفر	in (a state of) attack and retreat	moving first in one direction and then in the opposite one	back and forth	26
95	4. هذا كوم وهذا كوم	this is one pile and this is another pile	a separate topic or idea	that is a different matter	55

146	5. لا ناقة لنا بيها ولا جمل	we have neither a female camel nor a male camel in it	have no vested interest or a personal stake in something.	we have nothing to do with (it)	84
192	6. فقد أعصابه	lost his nerves	becomes very angry	lost his temper	110
239	7. يا سواد الوجه	be black faced	be ashamed	shame on (us)	113
268	8. حبة العين	the eyeball	to indicate endearment and love	(the) heart's desire	154
284	9. اعير على الموجة	I cross on the wave	getting advantage when others have a strong attitude about something	ride the wave	164

English idioms do not always completely match Arabic idiomatic expressions. In Table 2, the idioms "that is a different matter" (no. 4); "we have nothing to do with (it)" (no. 5); "shame on (us)" (no.7); "heart's desire" (no.8); and "ride the wave" (no.9) do not formally match the corresponding colloquial Arabic ones: "اعير على الموجة"; "حبة العين"; "يا سواد الوجه"; "لاناقة لنا بيها ولا جمل"; "هذا كوم وهذا كوم"; "لا ناقة لنا بيها ولا جمل" (no.1); "تلقى مصيرها" (no. 2); "في كروفر" (no.3) and "فقد أعصابه" (no. 6) matched respectively by "without batting an eye"; "leaving (it) to its fate"; "back and forth"; and "lost his temper", which have similar meanings but different wording. In these examples, the analogous English expressions represent similar meanings, but they minimize the stylistic flavour and syntactic structure of their Arabic counterparts.

The reason behind this discrepancy can be attributed to the idioms' cultural origination. For example, the idiomatic saying "لا ناقة لي" traces its origin to a famous story in the Arabic tradition where a wise man who refused to join his tribe in its raid on another one over the killing of a camel is reported to have said those words which later became an idiomatic expression. The same principle is applicable to the English idioms, which also show a close link between the idioms and the cultural background in which they were first generated. As idioms are culturally-specific, they may express meanings that do not occur in the TL.

Like colloquial idioms, formal Arabic idiomatic expressions may also pose the same problem in their rendition due mainly to their being culture bound expressions. For example, the Arabic idiom "في كروفر" (no.2) is used in Arab culture in connection with the tactics of assault and retreat in classical warfare. Its English equivalent "back and forth" may represent a similar meaning, but it does not capture the subtleties of the original where the associative contextual meaning depicts the extraordinary commotion and turbulence generated by the newborn miraculous foal, thus minimizing the effect of this trait on the target reader. While the English idiom indicates moving from one direction and then in the opposite one in a regular manner, the Arabic counterpart suggests the irregular hit-and-run tactics of warfare. Likewise, the idiom "فقد أعصابه" (lose control) (no. 5), is matched by "lost his temper" (suddenly become angry) which has a similar syntactic structure (Verb, Pronoun, Object) but a different form (nerves vs temper) and slightly different meaning. The receivers may get the denotative meaning, but they will not get the nuance of the idiomatic language of the ST.

Though idioms are often characterized by their structural and semantic stability, they can be varied in some contexts. Idiomatic variants have the same meaning, but their semantic contents and grammatical structures differ only slightly from the original idioms. As Liu (2012) observes, although some idioms are fixed, "there are a large number of idioms which can be modified in various ways". This variation, he adds, would perform a pragmatic function "by conveying extra meaning". However, for *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms* (2005) this variation "makes them hard to use and even harder to find in a dictionary". Accordingly, some Arabic and English idioms can occur as variants of certain idioms. Thus, the idiomatic expressions "حبة العين" (no. 5) and "اعير على الموجة" (no. 6) may take the shape of the formal ones "قرة العين" and "يركب الموجة". Similarly, the English idioms "that is a different matter" (no. 2); "ride the wave" (no. 7); and "heart's desire" (no. 6) can come in similar forms: "be another matter"; "ride (on) the wave"; and "apple of one's eye" respectively.

3.3 Borrowing the Source Language Idiom

Borrowing the SL idiom is a translation strategy resorted to when there is no idiom in the TL that matches the SL. As "borrowing" involves using the same SL terms in the TT, it implies a literal translation strategy, especially when the transposed words do not already exist in it as an idiom. Baker (2018) does not speak of "literal translation", a strategy that is often overlooked in most studies adopting Baker's model. This is perhaps because literal translation is ordinarily deemed inapplicable in translating opaque idioms though it may be occasionally useful in translating transparent idiomatic expressions. Borrowing the source language idiom strategy is exemplified below.

Table 3. Borrowing the source language idiom

Page	Arabic idiom	Literal meaning	Figurative Meaning	English Equivalent	Page
104	1. عنتر وعبلة	Antarah and Abla	Arabic love story of two romantic lovers in the vein of Romeo and Juliet	Antarah and Abla	6
36	2. غزال! شر وزال	A deer! Evil disappeared	adverse events soon disappear	a deer! Evil will disappear	20
124	3. يمسك بالعصا من الوسط	holds the stick from the middle	following a course of action/policy that avoids prejudice to one side	hold the stick in the middle	72
124	4. الشمس ما تتغطى بغربال	the sun can't be covered by a sieve	try to hide a mistake with a lame excuse.	the sun can't be covered by a sieve	72
132	5. أقرب من حبل الوريد	closer than the jugular vein	Indicating the closeness of the targeted place	closer than life's vein	76

In Table 3, the expression “عنتر وعبلة” (no. 1) represents an example of a literary allusion translated with “borrowing the source language idiom”. Apparently aware of the allusion’s “foreignness” to the TT reader, the translator has added an elaborate endnote explaining the story of the two reputable Arab romantic lovers whose tale had been handed down from the pre-Islamic period. Though the translator could have used a substitute allusion to “Romeo and Juliet”, a love story well known to the English reader, she opted for borrowing the Arabic expression and clarified it by an extratextual gloss.

This strategy includes idioms that had been translated literally from a foreign language and have actually established themselves as part of the TL lexis. Those idioms that are translated literally, but are not commonly used in the TL, are considered “literal” translations. Thus, the Arabic idiomatic expressions “غزال! شر وزال” (no. 3); “يمسك بالعصا من الوسط” (no. 4); and the metaphorical proverb “الشمس ما تتغطى بغربال” (no. 4) are translated literally, apparently because they are deemed to have no direct equivalents in the TL. However, their counterparts “a deer! Evil will disappear”; “hold the stick in the middle”; and “the sun can't be covered by a sieve” can hardly make sense in their present contexts, and so they remain “foreign” to the English receptor despite their syntactic and lexical similarity to the Arabic originals.

Example no. 5 “أقرب من حبل الوريد” seems to pose a greater difficulty than the above others. This idiom is culture-specific as it has its origin in a verse in the *Qur'an*: “We are closer to him [man] than his jugular vein” (Ali, Surah Qaf, verse 16), connoting the closeness of God to man. Unless the receptor knows this Qur'anic verse, he/she would not be able to figure out its metaphorical meaning though its denotative meaning can be understood from the co-text: “closer than life's vein was the city of Aqaba”. Such instances demonstrate the important role of culture in any translation process generally and in idiom translation particularly.

Broadly, equivalence can be semantic, formal, grammatical, pragmatic, textual, etc. The above literal translations do not reflect the exact meanings behind the original contexts despite their formal and syntactic correctness. The fact is that the meaning of an idiom is closely connected with background information such as social setting and culture which can be utilized in reestablishing the original environment and context in the TL. A good idiom translation would, therefore, try to convey the contextual rather than the literal meaning of idioms. This entails analyzing the contextual meaning in the SL and trying to replace it appropriately in the TL. As an idiom is more than its literal meaning, pragmatic equivalence, which deals with what is implied more than what is said, becomes of paramount importance for the translator.

Contextually, the idiomatic expressions in Table 3 have pragmatic meanings associated with the settings in which they occur. The allusion in “عنتر وعبلة” (no. 1) has both literal and non-literal meanings. The speaker does not mean a couple named Antarah and Abla but the presence of a special romantic relationship between the two lovers in the story alongside the famous love story in the Arabian Peninsula. The expression “غزال! شر وزال” (no.2) refers contextually to the sudden appearance of a doe and its fawn amid the difficult circumstances that some of the characters are facing. It is also employed non-literally to indicate that every difficult/sad situation has a more optimistic side, with the deer serving as a symbol of hope and optimism in Arab culture. Likewise, the situation in which the third idiom “يمسك بالعصا من الوسط” (no.3) occurs refers to the shrewdness of a character in the tale who knows how to choose sides and whose use of this idiomatic expression fits his age, experience and social status. The Arabic proverb “الشمس ما تتغطى بغربال” (no. 4) has, besides its literal sense, a pragmatic meaning referring to the discreet good deeds of a certain character in the story who is keen on keeping them unknown or unseen by others. These instances confirm the view that context contributes to the idiom's specific meaning and that idioms can create certain stylistic effects which need be preserved in the translation process.

In rendering the above-mentioned examples, the translator has opted for borrowing the SL idiom instead of adopting an idiom-to-idiom

translation, thus downplaying the aesthetic, syntactic, and connotative value of the ST idioms in the TT. Besides the potential substitution of the allusion to “Romeo and Juliet” for “Antarah and Ablā” (no. 1), the Arabic idiom “a deer! Evil will disappear” (no.2) would be substituted by the English idiom “every cloud has a silver lining” even though it still does not capture its specific structural, formal, and semantic details. Similarly, an alternative to “hold the stick in the middle” (no. 3) could be “middle-of-the-road (policy)”, an acceptable idiom in English that communicates the intended message of the ST.

3.4 Translation by Paraphrase

A paraphrase can be a useful translation technique as it usually gives an interpretation of the paraphrased text in the TL and reduces the ambiguity of idioms. Baker (2018) notes that translation by paraphrase is “by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages”. As translation by paraphrase depends on using the translator’s own words to convey the intended message as closely as possible, the paraphrase may or may not be accurate depending on the translator’s skills (Munday, 2009). The main disadvantage of paraphrasing is that it tends to disparage the creativity of the SL text by failing to provide an exact equivalent, which results in the loss of rhetorical, structural, and stylistic effects associated with idioms. Of the relatively large number of cases of translation by paraphrase occurring throughout *The Tree Stump*, the following examples have been selected for discussion.

Table 4. Translation by paraphrase

Page	Arabic Idiom	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	English Equivalent	Page
14	1.معممة مخولة	has paternal and maternal uncles	a female horse’s purebred descent	(purebred) from both sides	6
16	2.طار صوابه	his mind flew	to go mad	looked curiously	8
17	3.جاييك بالسالفة	I am coming to you with the tidings	progressing towards a particular goal	(I am) getting there	8
22	4.حديد يلاقي الحديد	iron meeting iron	to reflect a fight between rival strong opponents	metal meeting metal	8
23	5.لا يشق له غبار	whose dust cannot be pierced	a peerless warrior	feared	11
103	6.مثل المحبس بالإصبع	like a ring in the finger	to have control or influence over someone	like a ring on his finger	59
124	7.ما عليها رباط	no binder on it/her	changeful; unreliable	not binding	72
144	8.برحابة صدر	with largeness of chest	magnanimity; tolerance	full-heartedly	83
146	9.علا لراس من فوق	high over the head	with due respect; gladly	(we) greatly respect	84
147	10.يطعمون الخشم لأجل تستحي العين	feed the mouth so that the eye is shy	using bribery to achieve one’s objectives by making others turn a blind eye to wrongdoing	feed the mouth so that the eye ignores what it sees	85
150	11.نخلع الشوك بأيدينا	we pull out the thorns by our hands	not delegating tasks to others	pull out our thorns by ourselves	87
159	12.من كل حدب وصوب	from every hummock and direction	from all directions	from everywhere	91
172	13.على مرمى العصا	at a stick’s throw	pointing to the closeness of the distance between two objects	getting close to	99
179	14.الغريب الأطوار	whose phases are strange	given to unpredictable changes of mood	the strange (man)	104

191	15. بأعصاب باردة	with cold nerves	not easily excited	calmly	111
193	16. يخرب الطابق من أوله لتاليه	ruin the storey from its beginning to its end	complete destruction of a whole plan	will ruin everything	111
200	17. ضاقت صدورهم	their chests tightened	describes people's impatience when constrained	felt suffocated	115
219	18. يشتد عودك	until your branch hardens	to become strong	your bones grow strong	127
247	19. كسرنا بوجههم عود	we broke a dry branch in their face	signifies success and good luck by scoring victory over one's enemy	we defeated them	142
248	20. (إن) ركبوا رأسهم	If they rode their head	refers to someone who is obstinate	(if) they insist	143
251	21. ما تنجرت	has not been fixed by a carpenter	indicates someone who has not been refined/civilized	never refined by culture	144
281	22. تلفظ أنفاسها	throw out her breath	to die	took her last breath	162
294	23. شخب طفح لا بايدي ولا بالقدح	the milk overflowed, neither by my hand nor by the receptacle	refers to something that has gone in vain	his rash spread	170

Most of the SL idiomatic expressions in Table 4 are either spoken or colloquial. Because these are inherently culture-bound, their translation by paraphrase has virtually dispensed with their informal form, syntactic brevity, and connotative/figurative meanings while trying to preserve their denotative meanings. Each of them provides a good example of a close approximation between a colloquial idiomatic expression and a formal paraphrasing of its meaning. In these examples, the paraphrase uses a different phraseology and structure from that of the ST, with some words not found in the ST occasionally added to the TT to disambiguate their opaque meanings. For instance, the Bedouin idiomatic phrase "معمة مخولة" (no.1) is rendered into "(purebred) from both sides" where the word "purebred" is added to clarify the literal sense of the colloquial expression. The idiom "طار عقله" (no.2) is translated into "looked curiously", a phrase that explains the denotative meaning without reflecting the rhetorical impact or the syntactic structure of the original. The idiomatic phrase "ما تنجرت" (no. 21), translated into "never refined by culture", reflects the intended meaning of the idiom. This idiom has a literal meaning indicating someone who has not been "smoothed by a carpenter's skillful hands" which the translator, as a matter of course, has avoided, and a non-literal meaning to refer to someone who has not been civilized. The paraphrase has unavoidably played down the presence of a pun in the word "تنجرت" (i.e. the contrast between the literal and the figurative meanings).

An obvious discrepancy occasionally occurs between the meaning and syntactic structure of the SL idiom and that of its paraphrase. The briefly-structured Arabic expression "معمة مخولة" (no.1) refers to the extraordinary mare that was part of the caravan coming from Egypt to southern Jordan. The idiom identifies a mare purebred from both its father's and mother's sides, a description which can be easily inferred by an Arab reader but not so by an English-speaking reader to whom the expression would remain vague. Besides, the stylistic, formal, and rhetorical savor of the Arabic idiom would be missing in the TT.

Whereas the idiom "برحابة صدر" (no. 9) symbolizes the ideals of magnanimity or tolerance, its equivalent paraphrase "full-heartedly" shows a heart full of sincerity or determination. The paraphrase of the Arabic idiom "على مرمى العصا" (no. 13) as "getting close to" widely diverges in its wording and structural pattern from the original. Likewise, the interpretation of the classical Arabic idiomatic expression "ضاقت صدورهم" (no. 17) as "felt suffocated", does not accurately reflect the original message embedded in the SL idiom nor the active voice it uses. Whereas the paraphrase refers to a state of being unable to breathe, the original idiom signifies a feeling of impatience or anger. The interpretation of the Arabic idiom "كسرنا بوجههم عود" (no. 19) as "we defeated them" signifies an already accomplished mission while the Bedouin idiom indicates just the beginning of a feat to be achieved. These examples demonstrate the importance of the cultural context in idiom translation as idioms are firmly ingrained in their cultural backgrounds.

This problem figures more prominently in the paraphrasing of the Bedouin idiom "شخب طفح لا بايدي ولا بالقدح" which seems to be wide off the mark. Literally, it means: the milk overflowed; the cause was neither my hand nor the receptacle. Contextually, it indicates the lovesickness of one of the characters whose impassioned emotional condition arises from being physically separated from his beloved wife. On their way back home from Damascus, this lover's two companions notice that he is lagging behind on his horse. In a typically Arabic humour, one of the two companions observes in jest: "شخب طفح لا بايدي ولا بالقدح", with the intention of referring to this slow-moving companion who, he hints, is passionately affected by love. Here, we notice the occurrence of an idiom being unrecognized or misinterpreted where the translator was unaware of the presence of an idiom and thus translated it mistakenly by paraphrase. The interpretative equivalent "his rash spread" which refers to small red spots spreading on the skin diverges from the ST, without reflecting the

denotative as well as the non-literal and symbolic nuances of the original. Such discrepancy can be attributed to the cultural gap between the two different cultural backgrounds of the source and target languages.

However, some renditions by paraphrase in Table 4 seem to be befittingly reflecting the denotative meaning of the SL idiom and occasionally close to its syntactic structure. For instance, the phrase “(I am) coming to you soon” (no.3) aptly captures the Bedouin idiomatic expression “جاييك بالسالفة” semantically and nearly syntactically. The paraphrase “not binding” (no. 7) adequately expresses the meaning of the Arabic idiom “ما عليها رباط” even though it disregards its idiomaticity and its lexical and grammatical structure. The same applies to the paraphrasing of the idiom “يشند عودك” (no. 18) as “your bones grow strong” and to that of “زكبو راسهم” (no. 18) as “they insist”, where the intended meaning in both cases is accurately transferred despite the loss of their syntactic brevity and colloquial style.

As Bedouin and colloquial idiomatic expressions seem to often have no direct match in English because of their cultural peculiarity, so too do formal Arabic idioms. For instance, the multi-word idiom “لا يشق له غبار” (no. 5) is rendered by the one-word paraphrase “feared” which lacks the symbolic nuance and syntactic structure of the SL idiom. The paraphrasing of the classical Arabic idiom “من كل حدب وصوب” (no.12) as “from everywhere” conveys the meaning of the original but without reflecting its rhythmical quality. Similarly, the expression “الغريب الأطوار” (no. 14), which contextually describes the turbulent state of a character in the Arabic text, is transferred by the monomial “strange”, without conveying the connotations and syntactic structure of the SL idiom. Likewise, the expression “بأعصاب باردة” (no. 15), interpreted by the one-word equivalent “calmly”, imparts a similar meaning but is devoid of any figuration or structural complexity.

Nonetheless, we sometimes notice in several of the paraphrases in Table 4 the use of figurative language and syntactic structures similar to those in the ST. The paraphrase “metal meeting metal” (no. 4) is rooted in a metaphor and has a structural pattern that conjointly make it look as lively as the original. The similarly-structured expression “like a ring on his finger” (no. 6) is worded through the use of a simile that compares the close relationship of two people to that between the finger and the ring. The expression “the eye ignores what it sees” (no. 10) also represents a clear example of personification where an object is given the characteristics of humans.

Although the translator appears to have opted for translating many of the idioms by using the “paraphrase” strategy, several of them have close counterparts in the TL. The Arabic idiom “مثل المحبس بالإصبع” (no. 6) has a similar idiomatic expression, viz., “to have somebody in the palm of your hand” which means: to have control or influence over someone. A more idiomatic equivalent for the Arabic idiom “يطعمون الخشم لأجل تستحي العين” (no. 10) than the paraphrase is the Biblical quote, “a bribe works miracles”, a semi-idiom whose meaning roughly matches that of the SL idiom. For the paraphrase “pull out our thorns by ourselves” (no. 11), the English proverb/saying “if you want something done well, do it yourself” might be an appropriate substitute. An alternative to “getting close to” (no. 13) is the idiom “a stone’s throw (away)” which is semantically, syntactically, and culturally pretty equivalent to the Arabic idiom. A synonymous idiom to “we defeated them” (no. 18) could be “break a leg”, which has similar connotations to those of the SL idiom “كسرنا بوجههم عود” (no. 20): wishing someone good luck. The paraphrase “took her last breath” (no. 21) can be replaced by the idiom “breathed her last”, whose meaning and syntactic structure bear obvious resemblance to the Arabic idiom “تلفظ أنفاسها”: to die.

A further problem crops up when translating literally or paraphrasing from Arabic into English where the passive voice is often used to give the impression of objectivity, which is not necessarily the function of the passive in Arabic. This problem occurs in the paraphrasing of the Arabic idioms using the active voice by rendering them in the passive form. In contrast with their Arabic counterpart idioms “ضاقت صدورهم” and “ما تتجرت”, the English paraphrases “felt suffocated” (no. 17) and “never fully refined by culture” (no. 21) are reproduced in the passive, thus leaving a different impact on the receptor.

3.5 Translation by Omission

This strategy includes two types: (A) “translation by omission of a play on idiom”, and (B) “translation by omission of entire idiom”.

3.5.1 Translation by Omission of a Play on Idiom

According to Baker (2018), “translation by omission of a play on idiom” “involves rendering only the literal meaning of an idiom in a context that allows for a concrete reading of an otherwise playful use of language”. Thus, a ST may play on the figurative meaning of an idiomatic expression as well as its denotative meaning, but this play on idiom is very difficult to reproduce in the TT and is consequently omitted. The following examples illustrate this strategy.

Table 5. A. Translation by omission of a play on idiom

Page	Arabic idiom	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	English Equivalent	Page
63	1. ووضع الندى في موضع السيف بالعلل مضر كوضع السيف في موضع الندى	Placing the dew in the place of the sword is harmful to grandeur just as placing the sword in the place of the dew	Acting with generosity where the sword should be used is as harmful as using the sword where generosity should be applied	Placing a dewdrop in the mighty place of the sword is harmful, just like placing a sword in the place of a dewdrop	41
229	2. غدت الخطا	fed the steps	begin moving faster	rushed	132
235	3. ع الكل ماضي	sharp on all	executed equitably against all	is sharp	135

Earlier on, it was mentioned that several standard references classify metaphorical proverbs as idioms. Makkai (1972) and Sinclair (1991) also classify proverbs alongside idioms. Farghal (2019) explains that they function differently, with idioms operating as culture-bound language units and proverbs performing as verbal transmitters of human wisdom.

Example no. 1 above represents a metaphorical proverb/saying expressed in a verse by the renowned Abbasid-era Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi, many of whose verses have gone down in Arab culture as proverbs/sayings. The keyword “الندى” in this line has a metaphorical meaning “السخاء” (generosity/graciousness) in addition to its literal meaning (dewdrop). Its translation into “Placing a dewdrop in the mighty place of the sword is harmful, just like placing a sword in the place of a dewdrop” reflects a literal interpretation of “الندى” (dewdrop), ignoring the presence of wordplay on this term, resulting in the loss of the figurative meaning and aesthetic value of the pun in the TT. Similarly, in example no. 2, the word “غذ” also has two meanings based on the pun: 1. to reduce, and 2. to speed up. The translation of “غذ الخطأ” into “rushed” has dropped the wordplay in the SL idiom, preserving only its denotative meaning. In example no. 3, the word “ماضي” in the vernacular/Bedouin idiomatic expression “ع الكل ماضي” has two meanings: first, sharp/incisive and second, executed equitably on all. The translation provides the literal meaning but does not represent the metaphorical/hidden meaning. Such discrepancies between the ST and the TT can be attributed to the intrinsic differences between the linguistic potentials (syntax, semantics, rhetoric, and pragmatics) of the two languages and cannot, therefore, be easily resolved in any literary translation.

3.5.2 Translation by Omission of Entire Idiom

The second type of “translation by omission” includes the deletion of an entire idiom in the TT. This can be done when an idiom in the source language “has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons” (Baker, 2018). This strategy can be the last resort, especially when the SL idiom may sound too problematic to be rendered across widely different cultures. As this deletion entails an inevitable loss in the translation, it is advisable to use this strategy “when the advantages of producing a smooth, readable translation clearly outweigh the value of rendering a particular meaning accurately in a given context” (ibid.). The examples below represent this subtype of “translation by omission”.

Table 5. B. Translation by omission of entire idiom

Page	Arabic Idiom	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	English Equivalent	Page
19	1. وصدق وإلا ما تصدق	and believe or disbelieve	believe it or not	(No equivalent provided)	9
94	2. العقبة وما أدراك ما العقبة	Al Aqaba and what will make you know what is Al Aqaba?	to refer to the difficulties involved in freeing Aqaba city	-----	55
122	3. صلب الموضوع	the middle part of the subject	the crux/heart of the matter	-----	71
125	4. بلع ريقه	swallowed his saliva	accept something without expressing disagreement	-----	113
255	5. بين مد وجزر	between flow and ebb	between ebb and flow	-----	147

In Table 5, B, the counter equivalent of the Arabic idiom “وصدق وإلا ما تصدق” (no.1) is dropped in the TT though it can be rendered through the English idiom “believe it or not”. Although the omission does not substantially affect the illocutionary effect of the communicative act, it falls short of reproducing in the TT a SL cultural feature that uses a fixed expression closely related to a certain pragmatic context to reinforce the normal flow of conversational interaction between the speaker and the interlocutor.

The quote “وما أدراك ما العقبة” (no. 2) alludes to the *Holy Qur'an, Sura AL Balad*, verse 12. It includes a play on the word “العقبة” whose ostensible denotative meaning signifies the difficulties involved in breaking through the steep pass in order to follow the right path leading to “celestial” heights. Contextually, its hidden and intended pragmatic meaning points to the Jordanian port city of Aqaba and the obstacles faced in freeing it from Ottoman control. This idiomatic expression has been omitted, apparently because it is not easy to reproduce it in the TL with both its literal and non-literal meanings inherent in the pun. Likewise, the Arabic idiom “صلب الموضوع” (no. 3) has been deleted. While the literal meaning of this idiom refers to “the middle part of the subject”, its non-literal meaning signifies the most important part of a communicative act. A suggested nearly corresponding English idiom is: “to the point”. The omission might be for “stylistic reasons” as the repetition of the idiom may sound tautological in its linguistic environment in the TT.

Likewise, the idiom “بلع ريقه” (no. 4) is dropped in the TT. The idiom’s denotative meaning is: to cause saliva to move from the mouth into the stomach, while its figurative meaning indicates a state of rest/ satisfaction following a feeling of anxiety/dissatisfaction about something one does not like but finally accepts. In English, this expression occurs only in its denotative form to refer to a medical state which happens when one is unable to swallow saliva or any other liquid. The wide gap between its divergent uses in this language pair makes it difficult for

any translator to render or even recognize its use as an idiom due to its cultural specificity. In the same way, the idiomatic expression “بين ومد وجزر” (no. 5) is not accounted for. Contextually, the idiom refers to the rapid changes in the mood of a principal character in the novel. The reason behind the omission of this idiom is apparently for avoiding a repetition of some reiterative phrases occurring naturally in the Arabic text or perhaps because it is deemed not important enough to sacrifice the “naturalness” of the TT for the sake of “accuracy”. In Arabic, tautological expressions are frequently used as a means of pragmatic reinforcement and textual coherence compared to English where tautology is considered a matter of superfluous repetition.

3.6 Translation by Compensation

The sixth and final idiom translation strategy employed in *The Tree Stump* is “translation by compensation”, a strategy whose occurrence is something of a rarity. This strategy involves using an idiom in some other place in the text “to make up for any loss of meaning, emotional force, or stylistic effect which may not be possible to reproduce directly at a given point in the target text” (Baker, 1918). Because this strategy cannot be adequately represented through the same tabular format used for the other five strategies, selected illustrative examples are analyzed below without a table.

An instance of “translation by compensation” is the rendering of the Arabic non-idiomatic phrase “يخرج إلى الفلاة” (Krais, 14) into the English idiom (be out “in the open” (Akhtarkhavari, 7), both of which refer to a situation in which the Sage in the ST daringly leaves his hiding in the cave. Another one is the translation of the ordinary Arabic phrase “تمكن من استجماع أنفاسه” (14-15) by using the English idiom “(managed to) catch his breath” (Akhtarkhavari, 7). Literally, the idiom means to pause for a short while until one can breathe regularly again. Such later introduction of an idiom would make up for the omission of an idiom which was not possible to produce at a specific point in the text.

A third example of this strategy is the use of the idiom “let go” (Akhtarkhavari, 17) where there is no Arabic counterpart idiom (Krais, 32). This idiom metaphorically connotes stopping holding something and contextually refers to one of the women’s attempt to get rid of her fears of incurring the wrath of God for failing to perform the Muslim pilgrimage. A fourth instance is the non-idiomatically used Arabic phrase “لا تضيع المطلوب” (33) translated by using the English idiomatic expression “(make her wish) come true” (18). Similarly, the translator adds a new idiom “who cares?” (112) at a point where there is no directly-stated counterpart in the corresponding ST. In informal conversation, it is used literally to rudely stress that one does not think a certain thing is important. Non-literally, it indicates that one is not interested in something. Introducing these idioms at certain junctures could function as a way of compensating for a previously omitted idiom/s somewhere in the TT.

3.7 Comparing the Applied Strategies

Having explored the application of Baker’s suggested translation strategies to *The Tree Stump*, it is worthwhile conducting a brief comparative analysis of their effectiveness and impact on the TT. Once an expression is recognized as an idiom, the translator opts for any of the several above mentioned strategies, depending on the closeness of the source and target texts, the translator’s actual experience and knowledge of both languages, and the nature of the idiom in question. Ideally, a translator will give priority in idiom translation to those that are identical in the source and target languages and then move down the scale to select an appropriate strategy.

The strategy of “using an idiom of similar meaning and form” was utilized to translate SL idiom with an identical TL equivalent. The effect of this strategy is to retain a similar impact on the receiver by preserving the lexical constituency, the semantic content, and the syntactic structure of the SL idiom. This strategy and the “strategy of “using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form” appear to have been used when the translator knew that the TT reader will be fairly familiar with the cultural background reflected in the TT. As the first strategy is not always effective for translating culture-bound expressions in these two widely divergent cultures and languages, the translator has availed herself of the second strategy which gives a larger scope of freedom. However, a thorny issue facing the translator is the relative rigidity of the grammatical structure, semantic fixity, and lexical form of idioms, further aggravated by the need to find an equivalent idiom in the TL.

“Borrowing the source language idiom” strategy was utilized when dealing with culture-specific idioms that have no direct equivalents in the TL. Here, the translator has frequently provided literal translation of the lexical components of the idioms, going to great lengths to ensure that the rendered meaning is accurate. Besides, the translator has occasionally provided paratextual explanations or endnotes to convey the cultural significance of the idioms concerned, especially in regard to cultural/religious allusions and proverbs. By applying this strategy, she has risked losing the stylistic impact of the idiom as well as its syntactic and formal structures. Conversely, it can be said that such literal translations which at present may appear unacceptable in the English canon may ultimately end up as well-established idioms.

“Translation by paraphrase” amounts to using the translator’s own words and interpretations to provide the meaning of an idiom in the TL. This strategy was employed when the idioms under translation seemed to be difficult to be understood or cannot be expressed directly in the TT. However, the result is that these paraphrases often do not produce identical equivalents and consequently a substantial part of the cultural and linguistic dimension of the idiom, its impact on the receptor, its syntactic structure, contextual significance, and appealing brevity have been lost. These paraphrases may even affect the accuracy and the reception of the text or its interpretation by the reader. The high frequency of examples of paraphrasing strategy indicates that the idiomatic systems of Arabic and English are markedly different, due mainly to the different linguistic genealogy and cultural backgrounds of the two languages.

In “translation by omission”, the translator seems to have occasionally taken some liberties with the original text, overlooking some slight

chunks of the text for fairly good reasons. One likely explanation is that deleting an idiom happens because of certain reasons: it would not semantically affect the target text; it is typically redundant in the TT; the failure of the translator to recognize a certain lexical unit as an idiom; it is culturally unacceptable or incomprehensible for the target audience. In such cases, the translator has not departed far from Baker's aforementioned advice that omission should be used as the last resort.

Finally, "translation by compensation" was employed in several examples to make up for any possible deletion or loss of idioms during the translation process. Translation loss can happen when the translator seeks to omit or play down some features of the idiom at certain point/s in the ST and present them somewhere else in the TT to make up for such unavoidable loss. In its broadest sense, this strategy involves the translator's endeavour to ensure that the TL text should not be less colourful than the original SL text. In the examples discussed under this strategy, the translator took advantage of this technique to make up for an inevitable loss in places where there were no equivalent idioms in the TL. These instances and similar others are apparently utilized to maintain a sense of coherence for the whole target text including its lexical, grammatical, syntactic, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic aspects.

4. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be deduced from the preceding discussion. First, whether consciously or unconsciously, with or without any prior knowledge of Baker's model, the six idiom translation strategies proposed in Baker's model are aptly applied throughout *The Tree Stump*. Roughly speaking, the strategy of "translation by paraphrase" is doubtlessly the most frequently employed, followed by the strategy of "using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form". The remaining four strategies follow almost equally with the strategy of "omission of a play on idiom" coming last. Second, as Arabic allows limited use of idioms in formal written texts, most of the occurring idioms derive from the characters' colloquial and culture-bound speeches and are, therefore, problematic, particularly when translated literally. Third, translating idioms depends mostly on the cultural and linguistic contexts in which they occur.

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