



STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING IDIOMS IN
The Murder on the Links INTO ARABIC

By

AL HARBI EMAD OBAID H

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

June 2022

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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Idiom is the most difficult parts in semantic area for both English and Arabic. Idioms are difficult to translate because of their unpredictable meaning and grammar. This study focuses on the strategies of translating idioms in Christie's novel '*The Murder on the Links*' into Arabic. Three objectives are pursued through this study. First, to identify the types of idioms in Christie's novel '*The Murder on the Links*'. Second, to investigate the strategies used by the translator when translating idioms into Arabic. Third, to examine the implications of using these strategies when deducing the meanings of idioms translated into Arabic. The theoretical part is based on Fernando (1996) and Baker (2011). In this study, a qualitative-analytical approach is adopted to identify the types of idioms and the strategies used to translate idioms. The analytical part is based on the novel '*The Murder on the Links*' by Christie and the Arabic translation by Elbaradei. The data of the study consists of 90 idioms extracted from the novel '*The Murder on the Links*'. The process of extracting the data for the study was based on the thematic analysis approach. The results of the study showed that there are three types of idioms; literal idioms, pure idioms, and semi-idioms. In translating idioms from English into Arabic, the translator employed four strategies, namely, using an idiom with an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, an idiom with an idiom of similar meaning and form, paraphrasing, and omission. Although previous studies have demonstrated that paraphrasing was the most common strategy, this study showed that the strategy of translating an idiom with an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form was the most commonly used strategy when translating idioms from English into Arabic. The results also showed that when deducing the meaning of the idioms translated into Arabic, most of the idioms were explicitly rendered. In terms of themes, especially in this detective novel, the results revealed that most of the idioms related to describing people were translated using the strategy of translating an idiom with idioms of similar meaning and form. On the other hand, the strategy of translating an idiom with idioms of similar meaning but dissimilar form was used in translating idioms related to the description of persons, events, and actions. The strategy of paraphrasing was used in translating idioms

related to time, beliefs, politeness, and disagreement, while the strategy of omission was used in translating idioms related to beliefs and describing events.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**STRATEGI PENTERJEMAHAN IDIOM DALAM
The Murder on the Links KEPADA BAHASA ARAB**

Oleh

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Idiom merupakan bahagian bahagian yang paling sukar dalam ranah semantik bagi bahasa Inggeris dan Arab. Penterjemahan idiom adalah sukar disebabkan oleh makna dan tatabahasanya yang tidak dapat diramalkan. Kajian ini memberikan tumpuan pada strategi penterjemahan idiom dalam novel oleh Christie berjudul '*The Murder on the Links*' kepada bahasa Arab. Kajian ini menyasarkan tiga objektif. Pertama, untuk mengenal pasti jenis-jenis idiom dalam novel oleh Christie berjudul '*The Murder on the Links*'. Kedua, untuk meneliti strategi yang digunakan oleh penterjemah apabila menterjemahkan idiom kepada bahasa Arab. Ketiga, untuk mengkaji implikasi penggunaan strategi ini apabila menyimpulkan makna idiom yang diterjemahkan kepada bahasa Arab. Perspektif teoretikal dibuat berdasarkan Fernando (1996) dan Baker (2011). Dalam kajian ini, pendekatan kualitatif-analitis digunakan untuk mengenal pasti jenis-jenis idiom dan strategi yang digunakan untuk menterjemahkan idiom. Manakala perspektif analitis dibuat berdasarkan novel oleh Christie berjudul '*The Murder on The Links*' dan terjemahannya dalam bahasa Arab oleh Elbaradei. Data kajian ini mengandungi sebanyak 90 idiom yang dipetik daripada novel '*The Murder on The Links*'. Proses pemetikan data untuk kajian dilaksanakan berdasarkan pendekatan analisis tematik. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan kewujudan tiga jenis idiom, iaitu idiom literal, idiom tulen dan idiom separa. Dalam menterjemahkan idiom daripada bahasa Arab kepada bahasa Inggeris, penterjemah menggunakan empat strategi. Strategi tersebut ialah penterjemahan idiom dengan suatu idiom yang sama maknanya tetapi berbeza bentuknya, penterjemahan idiom dengan idiom yang sama makna dan bentuknya, parafrasa, dan peninggalan (*omission*). Meskipun kajian-kajian sebelum membuktikan bahawa parafrasa merupakan strategi yang paling lazim, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa strategi penterjemahan idiom menggunakan idiom yang sama maknanya tetapi berbeza bentuknya merupakan strategi yang paling lazim ketika penterjemahan idiom daripada bahasa Inggeris kepada bahasa Arab. Hasil dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa ketika menyimpulkan makna idiom yang diterjemahkan kepada bahasa Arab, kebanyakan idiom diterjemahkan secara eksplisit. Berkaitan dengan tema, khususnya dalam novel penyiasatan ini, hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa sebahagian

besar daripada idiom berkaitan dengan pemerihalan orang ramai diterjemahkan dengan menggunakan strategi penterjemahan idiom dengan idiom yang sama makna dan bentuknya. Sebaliknya, strategi penterjemahan idiom dengan idiom yang sama maknanya tetapi berbeza bentuknya digunakan dalam menterjemahkan idiom yang berkaitan dengan pemerihalan orang ramai, peristiwa dan tindakan. Strategi parafrasa pula digunakan dalam menterjemahkan idiom yang berkaitan dengan masa, kepercayaan, kesantunan, dan ketaksetujuan, manakala strategi peninggalan digunakan dalam penterjemahan idiom yang berkaitan dengan kepercayaan dan pemerihalan peristiwa.



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- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
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TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC ALPHABETS

Consonant

Arabic	Symbol	Arabic	Symbol
ء	'	ض	D
ب	b	ط	T
ت	t	ظ	Z
ث	th	ع	'
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	h	ف	f
خ	k	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	S	ي	y

Vowels

Arabic Long Vowels	Symbol	Arabic Short Vowels	Symbol
َ	A	ا	a
ُ	U	و	u
ِ	I	ي	i

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Translation refers to a process by which a written language is converted into another language by rendering textual elements (Baker, 1992). The process is important as it helps readers to understand the meaning and message that the original language wants to convey. However, translation can only be successful when the translator understands the cultural significance of the original language. This is because a language always carries a cultural and regional significance and each culture has its uniqueness when it comes to writing (Lihua, 2014).

If a translator does not have the cultural or background knowledge of the original language then the translation would not be able to reflect the intended message. Consequently, the original language loses its uniqueness and individuality and it would seem like the writer has merely portrayed his intentions. This is the reason why translators have the difficult job to understand, interpret and convert idioms. Idioms are difficult to understand and translate because these are the core of any language. Only people of native origin can understand their idioms. According to Baker (2011), idioms are the language pattern that carries the cultural meaning that cannot be separated from the language of origin.

1.2 Background of the Study

One of the most difficult tasks in translation is the translation of books and novels, as the languages are mostly influenced by cultural, social and regional differences. The books and novels carry the charm of their culture presented in the form of texts, and readers must be aware of this, otherwise it becomes difficult to understand the context. Not to mention that the novels include a lot of grammatical components, such as metaphors, hyperboles, similes, personifications and idioms, which are sometimes difficult to interpret. The most difficult part is undoubtedly the idioms. As mentioned earlier, they carry a cultural meaning and sense that cannot be changed and is untranslatable. Idioms are most complicated when someone tries to understand just the meaning of a word. Therefore, it is important to understand the context before interpreting the phrase or expression. According to Strakšiene (2009), one of the difficulties that translators face while translating text is the lack of equivalence in the target language.

1.3 *The Murder on the Links*

The Murder on the Links is one of the masterpieces of Christie. It is detective fiction that takes place in northern France. The author's linguistic style of using words and phrases has captivated the attention of readers. This novel is highly appropriate for this study as it is a murder mystery that includes different psychological clues linked to different expressions of idioms. This novel of 274 pages includes a lot of manipulating words and different idioms associated with it that make the work enriching and meaningful. However, there is another reason for this novel. This is the only version that is fully translated into Arabic and it has received critical acclaim, deeply engaging a wide range of readers. The translation is refined enough to convey the same meaning in the Arabic version as it does in English (Ajyal 2006).

Translation of the novel was carried out in two stages. It was first translated into Arabic by Elbaradei and subsequently it was revised by another translator, Ramzi Haddon in order to correct grammatical errors that appeared. Both stages were carried out by professional translators. The events of the novel revolve around a distress call made by a French millionaire to the detective Poirot in order to save him. Arriving late, Poirot found the millionaire's body in an open tomb without care. Poirot begins to solve this heinous crime, only to discover that the killer's identity is linked to a twenty-year-old-crime.

1.4 **Elbaradei**

Elbaradei was born in Syria in 1955 and is one of the most famous Middle Eastern translators. He completed his high school studies in Syria and went on to obtain his degree in English in 1973 from Baghdad University. In 1981, he obtained his Master's degree in English Literature from Baghdad University. As a student of famous translation professors such as Abdul-Qadir Bitar, Abdul-Qadir Lu'lu, and Chomsky, Elbaradei was exposed to different languages and the arts of translation. Eventually, Elbaradei founded "Linguist House Translation & Linguistic Services" which became his translation office, and worked diligently to become a famous name in the world of UAE translators. He has translated 50 works including Johann Burckhardt's *Travels in Arabia*.

1.5 **Problem Statement**

Idioms are incredibly difficult to translate when it comes to written languages because they contain individual meanings and a literal translation would not make sense. The expressions of idioms originate from and are shaped by the behaviours of native speakers from their childhood. Unpredictable grammar and cultural instances make them a bigger problem for translators. Moreover, both English and Arabic are rich in idioms, which makes it even more difficult for translators.

A number of researchers have studied the phenomenon of idioms in terms of their characteristics, forms and translation strategies. They collect data from various sources such as novels, films, news reports and plays.

For example, Žabčić (2016) focused on strategies for translating idioms from English into Croatian. The results of the study showed that 49.3% of idioms were translated using the strategy of paraphrasing. The researcher noted that this strategy is mostly used by translators to facilitate translation but failed to criticise some incorrect translations or suggest equivalent idioms in the TL. Arezi's (2016) study, which focused on the translation of idioms from English into Persian in the movies 'Bring It On & Mean Girls', also showed that the translator translated 57% of idioms using the omission strategy. Given this high percentage, which is more than half, it is clear that the translator failed to translate these idioms and omitted them in the target text. In addition, Alazzawie (2019) discussed strategies for translating idioms in the play *Romeo and Juliet* from English into Arabic. The analysis revealed that Baker's translation strategies for idioms were used by the translator. It was also found that the source text meaning of the identified idioms was conveyed in most cases. However, in some cases, the translator failed to translate some idioms into Arabic. The researcher only mentioned that the translator failed to render the idiomatic expression without suggesting a corresponding idiom in Arabic. Meanwhile, Wahyuningsih's (2020) study on idiom translation strategies from English to Malay showed that most idioms were translated using paraphrasing and omission strategies. However, the researcher did not criticise the frequent use of these strategies by the translators in her study nor did she suggest equivalent idioms. Agoes' (2016) study which focused on idiom translation strategies in Conan's novel revealed that paraphrasing strategy was the most frequently used by translators. This study attempted to divide the quality of translation into three types: Accurate, Acceptable and Readable. Nevertheless, the study did not address solutions for better translation.

In reviewing the previous studies, the researcher found that the studies were limited to determining the types of strategies used in translating idioms from one language to another and failed to criticise or suggest equivalent idioms, especially since most of the results of these studies showed that the most commonly used strategies were paraphrasing and omission. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap by suggesting better translations and equivalent idioms in Arabic to improve the quality of translating idioms.

Although there are several studies dealing with idiom translation strategies from many languages, Arabic still needs more research. The Arabic is rich in idioms and is one of the oldest languages in the world. In the literature review, the researcher found that the studies were mainly limited to defining only the translation strategies without focusing on the effects of using them on the translated language. Therefore, in this study, the researcher attempts to investigate the effects of the use of these strategies when deducing the meanings of the idioms translated into Arabic. In this way, the researcher tries to fill this gap in finding strategies for translating idioms from English into Arabic. Christie is considered one of the greatest crime writer with one billion copies sold in English and

another billion copies sold in other languages (2007). However, Christie's novels have not been studied further (Zhang, 2001). Therefore, the following research considers this gap, as the novel '*The Murder on the Links*' has not yet been analysed.

1.6 Research Questions

The following questions will be answered in this study:

1. What are the idioms found in the novel '*The Murder on The Links*' by Christie?
2. What are the main translation strategies used in the translation of idioms in Christie's novel '*The Murder on The Links*'?
3. How are those strategies used in the novel when deducing the meanings of the idioms into Arabic?

1.7 Research Objectives

1. To identify the idioms in the novel '*The Murder on the Links*' by Christie.
2. To investigate the strategies used by the translator in translating idioms into Arabic.
3. To examine the implications of using those strategies when deducing the meanings of the idioms translated into Arabic.

1.8 Limitations

This study focuses only on the analysis of translation of idioms from the novel by Christie entitled '*The Murder on the Links*' and its Arabic translation by Elbaradei. The collected data is only limited to the main types of idioms and translation strategies used in the novel.

In addition, the researcher also limits this study to textual data only, namely the source text (ST) and its translation – the target text (TT). In sum, this study presents textual analysis only and does not involve other items such as the translator of the novel or other considerations.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The study will serve as a guide, and reliable foundation, and a source of learning for other researchers to work on, in translation works or similar subjects. It will also enable translators to understand the significance of strategies used for translations. Instead of using literal translation, they will be more aware of more effective translation strategies. More importantly, this study will become a source of knowledge for other researchers who seek to understand idioms and the strategies used to translate them into other languages, especially English into Arabic, and the problems translators may encounter during the process.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

The study makes use of several definitions. Some key terms are given special emphasis as follows:

Literary translation

Literary translations imply the translation of any type of literary texts such as prose, novel, poetry, plays, short stories, etc (Floranti, 2020).

Translation strategy

Translation strategy is a technique that helps translators to solve various translating problems especially while dealing with a particular section of text (Krings, 1986).

Idiom

An idiom is a cluster of words or phrase that has no literal meaning. This form of phrase has been accepted for common use. The symbolic sense and meanings of idioms are different from the literal definition of the phrase. The significance of idioms exists in all languages as it is a linguistic term with cultural importance.

Equivalence

Equivalence refers to the process of replication of the original situation while completely changing the words. When equivalence is implemented with the translation process, the stylistic influence of source language can be maintained in the text of the target language.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter gave a general introduction to the topic of this thesis. It included the background, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, significance and limitations of the study and operational definitions. As highlighted in the chapter, this study will examine the strategies used by the translator in translating '*The Murder on the Links*' by Christie into Arabic. The problem statement indicates that idioms are incredibly difficult to translate because they contain individual meanings and literal translation does not make sense. The research objectives have been formulated in accordance with the research questions. In the limitations section, the researcher has stated that only idioms in '*The Murder on the Links*' will be studied. The significance of the study shows how it can benefit other studies in a similar field. The following chapter focuses on the literature review of this study.

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