Translating Idioms in Political Discourse: Translation Strategies and Semantic Categories

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Abstract: This study examines the Arabic translation of 165 English idiomatic expressions in political interviews in terms of Baker's translation strategies (2018) and investigates the deployment of idiomatic expressions in terms of semantic category based on Fernando (1996) and Kovacs (2016). The corpus of the study consists of 17 political interviews conducted in English by King Abdullah II from 2013 to 2023 and translated officially into Arabic. The results show that the paraphrasing strategy accounts for more than half the data (56.36%), followed by the strategies of 'similar meaning but different form' (23.63%) and 'similar meaning and form' (15.15%), while the omission strategy comes last at (4.84%). The analysis indicates that although the overall quality of the translation is acceptable, there are a few cases where the emotiveness of the idiomatic expressions and the appropriate genericity are underestimated. In terms of semantic category, the results reveal that the degree of opaqueness/transparency is a determining factor for choosing the translation strategy, viz., the paraphrasing strategy accounts for (82.69%) in translating opaque/semi-opaque idiomatic expressions against only (27.69%) in transparent/semi-transparent ones. The study concludes that much attention should be paid to the sensitive nature of the degree of emotiveness in idioms and the relevant generic constraints.

Keywords: idioms, political interviews, semantic category, translation strategy

1. Background of study

Political speech may include many forms ranging from genres of negotiations within formal meetings to briefings, interviews, press conferences, etc. Political speeches are historically and culturally rooted. Each speech has a particular function to fulfill, depending on the ongoing political activity at a given moment (Haider, Ahmad, Yagi and Hammo 2023). Political translation is the interpretation of political messages, speeches, and documents in order to understand their meaning and implications. It is a specialized field that requires effective language and research skills, cultural awareness, and the ability to convey complex concepts in concise, easily understandable terms. Furthermore, political translation by nature is molded by censorship and ideology, which McLaughlin and Muñoz-Basols (2021) argued could not be separated from the translation process and product.

Newmark (1991) views translation as a craft involving an attempt to replace a written and/or oral message in one language with the same written and/or oral message in another language. Similarly, Nida and Taber (1982) view the process of translating as reproducing in the target language (TL) the closest natural equivalent of the SL message in terms of meaning and style. Therefore, the translator's primary goal is to comprehend the content being represented in the source text (ST) and then effectively communicate it to the audience in the target text (TT). To guarantee a better grasp of the text and context and produce a relevant workable equivalent in the TL, the translator needs to assess the ST in terms of structure, semantics, pragmatics, and genre.

The term idiom has basically two meanings. The first meaning refers to "the ability to speak a fluent and appropriate version of a language" (Grant and Bauer, 2004: 39), which is also referred to as "native-like selection" (Pawley and Syder 2014). The second meaning, which is the one of interest here, is reflected by Xalilova and Atoyeva (2023), who described idioms as phrases interlinked with culture that can be understood from their context rather than literal meanings. Idioms can thus add stylistic and cultural colors to speech by providing concise symbolic ways to express complex topics. Other definitions of an idiom reflect the same idea. For example, Larson (1984) defined an idiom as "a string of words whose meaning is different from the meaning conveyed by the individual words." Similarly, Trask (2007: 114) defined it as "an expression whose meaning cannot be worked out from the meanings of its component words" and Crystal (1992: 180) as "a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted so that it functions as a single unit."

Idioms are considered one of the hardest and most interesting parts of the English vocabulary. On the one hand, they are considered one of the most peculiar parts of the language. For instance, Yusifova (2013) argued that since idioms are fixed units, syntactic modifications are limited and interconnected with semantics and context. Additionally, Hubers, Cucchiarini and Strik (2020) described idioms as opaque lexical units that require both linguistic and cultural knowledge to be understood. This non-transparency and cultural specificity complicate their usage and understanding for those unfamiliar with them. On the other hand, they are difficult to translate because of their unpredictable meaning and grammar. As stated by Boymirzayeva, Madaminova and Sheraliyeva (2022), literal translation cannot be applied to idioms since their sense is separate from the meanings of the words that compose them. Moreover, idioms are usually culture-bound, and this may cause even greater problems for the translator. Finding an idiom in the TL with the same form or meaning as in the SL could turn out to be a mark of perfection for the translator. Because each language usually has its own idioms, it can be difficult to find working equivalents for them interlingually.

Idiomatic expressions variously symbolize things, ideas, or phenomena of everyday life that are usually unique to a specific culture (Shhaiber and Haider

2023). They are essential to maintaining the regional and cultural flavor of any language. In this regard, Larson (1984: 142) states that an idiom "carries certain emotive connotations not expressed in the other lexical items." Similarly, Newmark (1988: 28) argues, "In translating idiomatic expressions into idiomatic language, it is particularly difficult to match equivalence of meaning with the equivalence of frequency." He considers that the main problems a translator faces are not grammatical but lexical, i.e., words, collocations, and fixed phrases or idioms.

The present study uses an English-Arabic parallel corpus of King Abdullah II's interviews to examine the strategies employed in translating idiomatic expressions in political discourse from English into Arabic. This study adopts Baker's (2018) classification of translation strategies in rendering idiomatic expressions and invests in the semantic categorization of idioms suggested by Fernando (1996) in the discussion of translation strategies. Therefore, the research problem lies in the fact that rendering idiomatic expressions in general and political idiomatic expressions, in particular, is a rather demanding task that needs a set of translation strategies that may be sensitive to the semantic category of the idiom. Idiomatic expressions in political discourse usually carry emotive and persuasive functions, and the translator needs to be aware of these functions to be able to render the message adequately. The reason behind conducting this piece of research is to emphasize and highlight the importance of translation as a product and to raise the translator's awareness of how to approach idiomatic expressions in political discourse in terms of translation strategy and semantic category.

2. Previous studies

Studies that have looked into the translation of political writings have emphasized the difficulties that translators face and the strategies they use. Munday (2007) examined the connection between ideology and language and how they relate to power. He indicates that the ideological dynamics present in political writings make it difficult to translate other people's political speeches and thoughts. He further adds that sensitive texts or speeches cannot be translated explicitly because political discourse frequently uses a variety of expressions and terms that people from different social and cultural backgrounds may interpret or comprehend in a variety of ways depending on the source of the speech and the audience's origin. The interpretation provided by different translators may also differ. For more information on the translation of political discourse across languages in general, see (Afzali 2013; Sárosi-Márdirosz 2014; SchäffnerTcaciuc and Tesseur 2014; Davaninezhad 2016; Abdi and Satariyan 2020).

Idiomatic expressions are regarded as integral components of all cultures. Akbari (2013) emphasized how closely culture and language are related. Native speakers of any language typically utilize them in everyday communication. Translators should, therefore, consider the cultures of the two languages while rendering them. Every language usually contains a variety of idioms that set it apart from other cultures. In this regard, Nida (1964: 13) argued that "the role of translator is to facilitate the transfer of the message, meaning, and cultural elements

from one language into another and create an equivalent response from the receivers." He also indicated that the cultural setting in which the SL was produced has an impact on and is absorbed into its meaning.

Most relevantly, Baker (2018) introduced strategies to overcome problems in translating idioms. These strategies, which are adopted in this study, are:

- Using an idiom of similar meaning and form: This involves the use of an idiom in the TL that almost has the same meaning and function as the SL idiom.
- Using an idiom of similar meaning but different form: This strategy involves the use of an idiom in the TL that has a similar function as the SL idiom but not a similar form.
- Translation by paraphrase. The translator paraphrases the SL idiom by explaining its meaning independently of idiomaticity.
- Translation by omission of the entire idiom: This strategy involves omitting the entire SL idiom. It is usually used when an equivalent for the SL idiom is not available in the TL, and the idiom cannot be conveyed by other strategies.

There have been several categorizations of idioms because they involve a mixed bag featuring a large variety of expressions. They include "metaphors (e.g., spill the beans), metonymies (e.g., throw up one's hands), pairs of words (e.g., cats and dogs), idioms with *it* (e.g., live it up), similes (e.g., as easy as pie), sayings (e.g., a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush), phrasal verbs (e.g. come up, as in "Christmas is coming up"), grammatical idioms (e.g. let alone), and others" (Kovecses 2010: 231). Most of these classifications are semantically oriented (Fernando and Flavell 1981; Glucksberg and McGlone 2001). The semantic categorization adopted in this study is largely based on Fernando (1996) and Kovacs (2016). The proposed classification divides idioms into four semantic categories: opaque, semi-opaque, transparent, and semi-transparent. The purpose is to examine the deployment of Baker's translation strategies in terms of semantic categories along the axis of opaqueness vs. transparency of meaning.

Several authors talked about the challenges that translators face when they deal with idioms in discourse (Irujo 1986; Newmark 1988; Davies 2004; Baker 2018). Baker (2018: 65) argues that "the main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly and the difficulties in rendering various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language." Further, when translating idioms, naturalness may be compromised by the use of books of idioms and dictionaries, which often fail to match the equivalence of meaning with the equivalence of frequency (Newmark 1988; Kovács 2016).

Case studies have also pointed out the problematic nature of idioms and the challenges encountered in translating them, focusing on the translation strategies that translators often utilize and their frequency of use. Strakšienė (2009) looked at

the difficulties the translator encountered when translating English idioms into Lithuanian. He made general comparisons between English and Lithuanian idioms, underlining the issue of TL equivalency, assessing the translator's selection of translation procedures, and investigating the main translation strategies used. The results showed that translating idioms by paraphrasing was the most used strategy.

Dweik and Suleiman (2013) studied the difficulties sixty MA graduate students from three Jordanian universities encountered when attempting to translate Arabic cultural phrases into English. Based on Newmark's culturally specific language. Proverbs, idioms, and collocations drawn from various legal, theological, and social-cultural sources were among the cultural expressions. In order to gain further insight, they conducted informal, open-ended interviews with some of the students. The findings demonstrated that graduate students encountered a variety of problems when expressing cultural sentiments. The inability to access the TL counterpart, the vagueness of some cultural expressions, and a lack of understanding of translation processes and strategies were among these problems.

Ali and Al-Rushaidi (2017) addressed the challenges faced by sixty Omani undergraduate students majoring in English language and literature when trying to translate English idiomatic expressions into Arabic. A translation test including fourteen sentences was used, along with a brief survey. They also gave the students access to a brief survey that was split into two sections. The participants were asked to list the challenges they had when reproducing the idiomatic expressions and the reasons they turned to certain translation procedures. The results revealed that the students were unable to locate suitable substitutes, misread idiomatic meanings, employed literal translation, and either completely or partially erased the idiom in question.

Banikalef and Abu Naser (2019) examined the problems encountered by undergraduate translation students in Jordan when rendering culture-specific expressions from Arabic fiction into English. The results showed that the students faced different types of difficulties, such as failing to get the equivalent in TL and a lack of knowledge of translation techniques and strategies.

Destaria and Rini (2019) examined the translation strategies used to translate English idioms in the subtitle of "Pitch Perfect 3" into Bahasa Indonesia. Using Baker's (2018) translation strategies, the findings revealed that paraphrasing was employed in rendering 46 out of the 51 items used in the study. Similarly, using Baker's (2018) strategies, Al-Assaf (2019) looked at the translation of English idioms in Agatha Christie's novel Appointment with Death in an Arabic-published translation and found the paraphrasing strategy to be the most frequently employed.

As can be noted, most studies on translating idiomatic expressions, in general, emphasize the problematic nature of idioms and the challenges faced by student translators (both undergraduate and postgraduate) when translating them. These studies also stress the fact that the most common strategy in rendering idiomatic expressions across languages is the paraphrasing strategy due to their being culture-bound in many cases. However, one should not forget the fact that the choice of one translation strategy rather than another when rendering idiomatic expressions is

sensitive to several factors, including text type, context, and the translator's linguistic and cultural competence, among others.

Our study is different from the studies above for two reasons. First, it specifically deals with the translation of idiomatic expressions in political discourse rather than in general, with an eye to exploring how adequate the translation strategies are in terms of political impact and generic constraints. Second, it examines the deployment of translation strategies in terms of the semantic category of an idiom (i.e., transparent vs. opaque), a question that is yet to be addressed in the existing literature. This study, therefore, seeks to answer the two research questions below:

1. What translation strategies are employed to render English idiomatic expressions in political discourse into Arabic?
2. How are such expressions rendered in terms of the semantic category of an idiom?

3. Research method

3.1 Data collection and corpus size

A parallel corpus of English interviews was compiled manually; it covers 17 interviews over the last decade (2013-2023) conducted in English and have Arabic Translations. The corpus consists of texts taken from interviews retrieved from His Majesty's official website, http://www.kingabdullah.jo/, which provides a plethora of data on both Jordan and King Abdullah II. Specialists working for the Royal Hashemite Court (RHC) have translated the interviews (Al-Khalafat and Haider 2022). The compiled data is divided into two primary sub-corpora, an English sub-corpus and its Arabic counterpart. The English sub-corpus contains the texts that were spoken or written in English (English as an SL), whereas the Arabic sub-corpus contains the Arabic renditions. The interviews are downloaded and stored as.txt files and Excel sheets in order to be used by the corpus linguistics software.

3.2 Data analysis

The corpus of English idiomatic expressions extracted from the 17 interviews consists of 165 items. Each instance of idiomatic expressions is searched using the Sketchengine corpus manager to check its parallel concordance. The parallel concordance shows how an expression is rendered in all its occurrences, which enhances the data analysis. On the one hand, the quantitative analysis of the data displays the frequency and percentage of rendering idiomatic expressions in terms of translation strategy and semantic category. On the other hand, the qualitative analysis assesses the Arabic renderings in terms of the choice of translation strategy and deployment of translation categories in light of an idiom's semantic category.

3.3 Research procedures

The research procedures are as follows: **Step 1:** Selecting interviews and extracting English and Arabic data from the official website.
Step 2: Compiling a parallel corpus of idioms and Using SketchEngine to process the data and conduct a parallel concordance analysis.
Step 3: Juxtaposing idiomatic expressions to Arabic counterparts in a Word document.
Step 4: Noting frequency and percentage of translation strategies.
Step 5: Discussing the choice of translation strategy in the corpus.
Step 6: Noting frequency and percentage of translation strategies in terms of semantic categories.
Step 7: Discussing deployment of translation strategies in terms of semantic categories.

4. Discussion and results

4.1 Frequency and percentage of translation strategies

Table (1) below shows the frequency and percentage of the translation strategies in the corpus.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of translation strategies

Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Paraphrase	93	56.36
Similar Meaning and Different Form	39	23.63
Similar Meaning and Form	25	15.15
Omission	8	4.84

4.1.1 Translation by paraphrase

This strategy can be used when a match of an idiomatic expression cannot be found in the TL or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the TT because of differences in stylistic preferences of the SL and TL (Baker, 2018, pp. 71-77). Translation by paraphrase turns out to be the most common strategy in rendering idiomatic expressions in the corpus. This strategy is appropriate as long as the translation in the TL captures the intended meaning of the idiomatic expression in the SL. Observe the following examples in Table 2.

Table 2. Translation of idioms by paraphrase

No.	Idiom
1	Opening Pandora’s box.
2	Give --- the benefit of the doubt.
3	Take something with a pinch of salt.
4	to cherry-pick
5	What keeps me up at night

In example (1), *opening Pandora’s box* is an idiomatic expression that means beginning to encounter serious unforeseen trouble. Pandora was the first mortal

lady in Greek mythology, and according to one myth, she was sent to Earth with a box or jar of evils. She let all the evils out of the container to infect the Earth. The translator here paraphrased this idiomatic expression into سيفتح بابا لا ينتهي من الشرور '(it) will open an endless door of evils,' which is a workable rendering insofar as the communicative message is concerned. That is, the idea embodied in the idiomatic expression is relayed by what Farghal (1994) calls "ideational equivalence." This able. Although the paraphrasing strategy is a workable option here and may sometimes be the only option found, it usually lacks the degree of emotiveness communicated by the SL idiomatic expression. In the case of Arabic, there is a familiar idiomatic expression of similar meaning but in a different form, viz.سيفتح أبواب جهنم 'open Hell's doors,' which effectively relays the emotiveness of the English idiomatic expression "opening Pandora's box." Though workable, the paraphrasing strategy is not the best option here.

The idiomatic expression in (2) has occurred five times in the corpus. The idiomatic expression *give --- the benefit of the doubt* has been appropriately paraphrased roughly into (يعطي الفرصة (وحسن الظن 'give the chance (and good faith)' four times and omitted in one. The translator has done well by unpacking the communicative meaning in the English idiomatic expression because there is no corresponding Arabic idiomatic expression. In cases like this, the paraphrasing strategy becomes inevitable. As for the omission of this idiomatic expression, viz. 'whatever comments are made on the campaign trail I tend to put aside and give people the benefit of the doubt' لا بد أن نتجاوز التصريحات التي تصدر أثناء الحملة الانتخابية, it may not be justified although the general meaning is conveyed. To explain, adding a paraphrase like ونحسن الظن بهم ونمنحهم الفرصة or would strengthen the message, viz. لا بد أن نتجاوز التصريحات التي تصدر أثناء الحملة الانتخابية ونحسن الظن بهم/ونمنحهم الفرصة.

In example 3, *if you take something with a pinch/grain of salt*, you do not believe that it is completely accurate or true. This example is considered an opaque idiomatic expression, and it was used twice in the interviews. For lack of a metaphorical idiomatic expression in Arabic, the translator has successfully paraphrased this idiomatic expression into the collocations لا يأخذ شيئا على محمل الجد 'does not take something seriously' and لا يعتد بشيء ما 'does not rely on something.' Both paraphrases relay the communicative sense apart from metaphorical idiomaticity.

Example (4) is a good instance of inevitable paraphrase for lack of an Arabic idiomatic expression, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Example of translation by paraphrase

SL	TL
that is a small percentage that we're up against that **cherry-pick** the Qur'an to sort of say it's okay to blow yourself up and kill innocent people.	نحن ضد هؤلاء الخوارج فهؤلاء **يجتزؤون** نصوص القرآن لتبرير عملياتهم الانتحارية وقتل الأبرياء

To cherry pick is to choose very carefully and select the best of what is available or being offered. *Cherry picking* within this context of the interview is more about the fallacy of incomplete evidence; in other words, it is the act of pointing to individual cases or data that seem to confirm a particular position while ignoring a significant portion of related and similar cases or data that may contradict that position. *Cherry picking* may be committed intentionally or unintentionally. However, it may be said that the word يجتزئون is highly formal and may not fit the conversational style here. More appropriate conversational paraphrases may include things like يأخذون ما يحلو لهم 'take what is sweet (good) for them' or ينتقون ما يعجبهم 'select what they like'.

There may be some cases where a paraphrase is employed because the corresponding TL idiomatic expression does not fit the conversational genre in political interviews. Example 5 *what keeps me up at night*, in Table 2, is a case in point. This idiomatic expression occurs three times, as shown in Table 4, and is uniformly paraphrased into ما يؤرقني 'what keeps me so worried' rather than the formal/literary Arabic idiomatic expression ما يقض مضجعي 'what disturbs my sleep.' One may speculate that the translator has avoided the Arabic idiomatic expression because it is too formal/literary for rendering the English informal idiomatic expression *what keeps me up at night*. One may even argue that ما يؤرقني is a bit too formal for the conversational style, and a rendering like ما يقلقني 'what worries me' better fits the genre here.

Table 4. Translation of the idiomatic expression "keep ... up at night"

SL	TL
So, as I keep saying, it does ***keep me up at night***, because we do want a better life for Jordan.	وكما قلت سابقا، إنه أمر ***يؤرقني***، وأنا أريد حياة أفضل للأردنيين
If anything ***keeps me up at night***, it is giving the younger generation an opportunity at life.	ما ***يؤرقني*** هو تأمين فرص الحياة الكريمة لجيل الشباب.
Again, I think what ***keeps me up at night***, and I have said this on so many occasions, is not the political situation.	لقد قلت سابقا، وفي مناسبات عديدة، إن ما ***يؤرقني*** ليس الوضع السياسي أو العسكري،

Apparently, the paraphrasing strategy of idiomatic expressions is the most employed in political discourse, as reported in this study, just like its use for rendering idiomatic expressions in other genres of discourse. Mostly, this strategy seems inevitable in cases where there are no corresponding idiomatic expressions in the TL or where the available idiomatic expression in the TL does not fit the genre.

4.1.2 Idioms of similar meaning and form

Based on the findings, there are 25 out of 165 idiomatic expressions (15.15% of the corpus) that were translated using a similar meaning and form. It is sometimes

possible to find an idiomatic expression in the TL which has a similar meaning as well as a similar form to that of the SL idiomatic expression, yet such instances are rare due to the cultural specificity of idioms. Often, when an idiom can be found in both languages, it is a result of linguistic and cultural contact and transfer. These constitute what may be called 'happy incidents' representing optimal translatability through which form and function are relayed. In such cases, the borrowed form has become familiar and, in turn, understandable to the target audience. Some illustrative examples are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Translation of idioms by idioms of similar meaning and form

No.	Idiom
6	To look at the glass half full.
7	To look at the larger/bigger picture.
8	play cards
9	Red lines

Larson (1984, pp. 48-49) states that "a literal word-for-word translation of the idioms into another language will not make sense. The form cannot be kept, but the receptor language word or phrase which has the equivalent meaning will be the correct one to use in translation". However, there must be some room for well-established calques through which literal translation may be the best option between SL and TL. Familiar examples like 'to break the ice' يكسر الجليد, 'white revolution' ثورة بيضاء, and 'the cold war' الحرب الباردة are a case in point in translation between English and Arabic. Example (6), which occurs six times in the corpus, calls for literal translation where both form and meaning are kept, viz. ينظر إلى النصف الممتلئ من الكأس 'to look at (the) half full (from the) glass'. In this case, the Arabic idiomatic expression reproduces both form and function alongside the emotiveness embodied in the SL idiomatic expression.

In some cases, the idiomatic expression is relayed formally and meaningfully with some TL variation in the modification of the key metaphorical item in the expression. The example in (7) is illustrative. While the key metaphorical item, i.e., the picture الصورة in (7), is literally maintained in all the renderings in the corpus, the modification has varied, viz. ينظر إلى الصورة بشكل أوسع 'to look at the picture in a larger way', نبقيها في إطار الصورة الكاملة 'to keep it within the framework of the whole picture,' ينظر إلى الصورة الأكبر 'to look at the bigger picture', ينظر إلى الصورة الأكبر للمشهد 'to look at the bigger picture of the scene', and وعيا أكبر بالصورة الكلية 'more awareness of the holistic picture'. Two renderings, namely ينظر إلى الصورة الأكبر deliver the intended meaning by literally translating the metaphorical key item (picture).

Example (8) shows that English and Arabic converge on using the phrase *play cards* both literally and idiomatically. That is why when translating political discourse, the translator can embed and remold the metaphorical use of this phrase the way required by connected discourse, viz. عند النظر إلى الإيرانيين فإن لديهم عدة أوراق

يلعبون بها 'When you look at the Iranians, they have several cards they play with'. The translator, as it can be noted, has succeeded in investing in this matching metaphorical potential between the two languages, thus preserving the meaning and emotiveness of the intended message, which appropriately fits the political genre. Paraphrasing the message into something like عند النظر إلى الإيرانيين فإن لديهم عدة قدرات يمكنهم استخدامها 'When you look at the Iranians, they have several abilities they can use' would weaken the message emotively and generically.

The English idiomatic expression in (9), which may literally translate into several languages, presents a perfect match between English and Arabic, viz. '*but we have certain red lines. And if people want to push those red lines then we will deal with that*' is rendered as *وفي المقابل، لدينا خطوط حمراء، وإذا ما أراد أحد تجاوز هذه الخطوط الحمراء، فسنتعامل مع ذلك 'On the other hand, we have red lines and if anyone wants to jump over these red lines, we'll deal with that'*. Once again, paraphrasing this idiomatic expression into Arabic would negatively affect the message emotively and generically. Therefore, the translator of political discourse needs to be aware of 'happy incidents' in which the two languages match on idiomaticity that preserves emotiveness and genericity.

4.1.3 Idioms of similar meaning but different form

The fact that different languages may dissect the world differently produces, among other things, idiomatic expressions that match in function apart from form. Thus, the translator may come across some idiomatic expressions in the SL that call for domesticating them in the TL (Venuti, 1993) because they do not lend themselves to literal translation for one thing and paraphrasing them would mitigate the force of the message both emotively and generically, for another. Examples in Table 6 are illustrative.

Table 6. Translation of idioms by idioms of similar meaning but different form

No.	Idiom
10	Nip something in the bud.
11	at the end of the day
12	Standing by in the wings

The English idiomatic expression *nip it in the bud* and the Arabic expression *يئده في مهده* 'to bury it in its cradle' perform the same function in the two languages although they are worded differently in terms of the image employed. Paraphrasing it into something like يقضي عليه من بدايته 'destroy it from the beginning' would seriously affect the force of the message. Therefore, in cases where literal translation is not workable, the translator needs to seek this option before resorting to the paraphrasing strategy, in order to maintain the SL emotiveness and genericity. The translator has succeeded in domesticating 'nip it.. in the bud' as وأد هذا المخطط في مهده 'burying this plan in its cradle'. However, he has failed to do so in two instances as he resorted to paraphrase at the expense of emotiveness and genericity.

Another example is the idiomatic expression *at the end of the day*, which has been used 18 times in the interviews. The literal translation of *at the end of the day* is *في نهاية اليوم 'in the end of the day'*, which is unacceptable as a functionally corresponding idiomatic expression in Arabic. The translator is well aware of that, thus avoided literal translation. There are two Arabic idiomatic expressions that are worded differently but they perform the same function, viz. في نهاية المطاف 'in the end of wandering' and في المحصلة النهائية 'in the final outcome'. The translator has unjustifiably omitted it in 4 instances. The remaining four instances go for the non-idiomatic use of بالمحصلة/في المحصلة 'in the outcome' (two instances), بالنهاية 'in the end' (one instance), and lastly the rendition وبالتالي "consequently" (one instance). Note that the translator has fallen short of accessing the functionally corresponding idiomatic expression في المحصلة الأخيرة 'in the final outcome' in 2 instances. One should also note that King Abdullah II has repeatedly employed the idiomatic expression 'at the end of the day' to emphasize his points. Therefore, the omissions, as well as the non-idiomatic uses, have negatively affected the force of the king's discourse.

Finally, in some cases, the translator may call up an idiomatic expression in the TL that does not exactly match the SL idiomatic expression. Table 7 shows that the example in (12) above is a case in point.

Table 7. Translation of the idiomatic expression "standing by in the wings"

SL	TL
So we're **standing by in the wings**, seeing how we can help.	لذا فنحن **ننتظر ونراقب عن كثب** لنرى كيف يمكننا أن نساعد

The translator offers the Arabic idiomatic expression *يراقب عن كثب 'to watch closely'* as a functional equivalent to the idiomatic expression 'to stand by in the wings'. While it fits well within the context, it does not exactly reflect the meaning of the SL expression, which functionally corresponds to the idiomatic expression يقف على أهبة الاستعداد 'be at a high degree of readiness'. Therefore, the translator needs to be sensitive to choosing the most appropriate functional equivalent when considering the option of finding an idiomatic expression of similar meaning but of a different form. In fact, 'watching closely,' which may not require taking action, is less strong than "standing ready," which requires taking action if things worsen and reflects the intended meaning.

4.1.4 Omission of idiom

According to Baker (2018), translation by Omission is used when the meaning of an idiom in the SL has no close match in the TL, and its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased (Baker, 2018, pp. 71-77). We have already reported four instances of omitting the idiomatic expression "at the end of the day" above, despite the fact that

there are two perfectly matching idiomatic expressions in Arabic, in a clear violation of Baker's statement.

Table 8. Translation of idioms by omission

No.	Idiom
13	Frightens the heck out of us
14	Standing on a soapbox

There may be cases in which omission/partial omission becomes necessary for lack of equivalence in the TL. The omission of the expletive *the heck out of* in (13) testifies to this. Forced by the strategy of omission, the translator here has reduced this idiomatic expression to *مرعب لنا جميعا (لأن حل الدولة الواحدة)* *'(because the one-state solution) frightens all of us'*. Apart from the unavailability of an Arabic match for "*the heck*", its omission is a welcome move for the conservative Arab-Muslim culture.

Finally, let us examine an unjustified omission case in (14). This idiomatic expression occurs in the utterance: 'I think the problem is standing on a soapbox and taking strong positions at this stage is not helpful' and is rendered as وأعتقد أن اتخاذ مواقف متصلبة في هذه المرحلة ليس مفيدا لأحد 'and I believe that taking rigid positions in this stage is not useful for anyone'. As can be seen, the translator has unjustifiably omitted the idiom "standing on a soapbox", which emotively emphasizes the sensitivity of the situation. In fact, this omission seriously mitigates the force of the king's point. The translator should have explored the strategy of finding an idiom of similar meaning but of a different form, which is, in fact, available. As a functional equivalent for this idiom, Arabic offers يحمل السلم بالعرض, viz. وأعتقد أن حمل السلم بالعرض واتخاذ مواقف متصلبة في هذه المرحلة ليس مفيدا لأحد 'and I believe that carrying the ladder width-wise and taking rigid positions at this stage is not useful for anyone'. A more down-to-earth option that captures the emphasis apart from emotiveness is paraphrasing the idiomatic expression, viz. وأعتقد أن التعنت واتخاذ مواقف متصلبة في هذه المرحلة ليس مفيدا لأحد 'and I think that stubbornness and taking rigid positions at this stage is not useful for anyone'.

4.2 Translation strategies in terms of semantic categories

Based on Fernando and Flavell (1981) categorization, the classification of idioms in the corpus is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9. Frequency and percentage of idioms based on semantic categories

Semantic Categories Excluding Omissions (157 Idioms)	Frequency	Percentage
Opaque	63	40.12
Semi-opaque	29	18.47
Transparent	43	27.38
Semi–transparent	22	14.01

4.2.1 Opaque idiomatic expressions

As can be observed in Table 9, opaque idiomatic expressions come first accounting for 40.12%, which indicates the importance of this category. In terms of translation strategy, the results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10. Deployment of opaque idiomatic expressions in terms of translation strategy

	Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Opaque Idiomatic Expressions (63 out of 157)	Paraphrasing	55	87.30
	Similar Meaning but different Form	8	12.69
	Similar meaning and form	ZERO	00.00

Due to their opaqueness, as expected, such idiomatic expressions would most likely lend themselves to paraphrase, which is exactly the case as Table 10 shows insofar as the translator options go, viz. the paraphrasing strategy for opaque idiomatic expressions accounts for 87.30%. Table 11 includes some illustrative examples.

Table 11. Examples of translating opaque idiomatic expressions

No.	Idiomatic Expression	Arabic Translation	Literal Translation
15	We have put our foot down	يدفعنا أن نكون حازمين ومتمسكين بموقفنا	It pushes us to be firm and stick to our position
16	having to fill very big shoes	سعيت أن أسير على نهج هذا القائد العظيم	I sought to follow in the footsteps of this great leader
17	To chew gum and walk at the same time	نسعى إلى تحقيق هدفين في آن واحد	We seek to achieve two goals at once
18	Get a tiger by the tail	جنت على نفسها	She destroyed herself
19	We're in dire straits	نحن في وضع لا نحسد عليه	We are in an unenviable position

As can be observed in (15-17), the translator has followed the paraphrasing strategy in rendering the opaque idiomatic expressions. While the translator did the right thing in (15) and (16) because the images in them are culture-specific, he could have explored the option for an idiom of similar meaning but of a different form for (17) above, viz. نسعى إلى ضرب عصفورين بحجر واحد ... "to seek killing two birds with one stone", which would maintain the emotive and metaphorical use in ST.

Regarding the other two strategies (similar meaning but different form and similar meaning and form), the former received a low percentage (12.69%) while the latter received a zero percentage. The zero percentage may be justified by the

fact that opaque idiomatic expressions are mostly culture-specific which rarely correspond in form between two languages, especially between remote languages like English and Arabic. If correspondence were to exist, it would be in function rather than in form. Examples 18 and 19 are illustrative of opaque idiomatic expressions that have similar meaning but different form.

In both (18) and (19), the translator has succeeded in calling up Arabic idiomatic expressions that functionally, but not formally, correspond to the idiomatic expressions in the ST. In (18), he fell short of citing the full Arabic proverb جنت على نفسها براقش "*Baraaqish* (a female dog which caused destruction to herself and her people due to her uncalled barking) destroyed herself)," which is a familiar proverb with a clear, pragmatic meaning. The citing of the full proverb would have been more emotive and effective in the TT. As for (19), the Arabic phraseology translates into "We're in a situation that does not call for jealousy of us (i.e., we're in a very bad situation)," which exactly mirrors the function of the English idiomatic expression.

4.2.2 Semi-opaque idiomatic expressions

Semi-opaque idiomatic expressions differ from their opaque counterparts by the fact that they include lexical clues that may lead the receiver to figure out what they mean. Table 12 below shows the distribution in terms of translation strategy.

Table 12. Distribution of semi-opaque idioms in terms of translation strategy

	Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Semi-opaque Idioms (29 out of 157)	Paraphrasing	21	72.41
	Similar Meaning and Form	ZERO	00.00
	Similar Meaning but Different Form	8	27.58

As can be seen in Table 12, the paraphrasing strategy takes the lion's share (72.41%) when translating semi-opaque idiomatic expressions. The examples, in Table 13, are illustrative:

Table 13. Examples of translating semi-opaque idiomatic expressions

No.	Idiomatic Expression	Arabic Translation	Literal Translation
20	to be very light on our feet	أن نكون سريعي الاستجابة والتأقلم	To be quick in respond and adapting
21	To do the heavy lifting	تتحمل العبء وحدها	bear the burden alone
22	not something that happens overnight	العسكرية ليس شيئا يتم إنجازه بين عشية وضحاها	Military is not something that can be accomplished between an evening and its morning

23	Mother Nature gave us a big kick up the backside	فها هي الطبيعة تلقننا جميعا درسا قاسيا	Here is nature teaching us all a harsh lesson

As can be noted, the wording of the idiomatic expressions in (20) and (21) gives clues to what they mean, so they have been successfully paraphrased into Arabic. However, just like opaque expressions, the data shows a zero percentage of semi-opaque idiomatic expressions translated using similar meaning and form. By contrast, some semi-opaque idiomatic expressions have lent themselves to 'similar meaning but different form' (27.58%), as can be noted in (22) and (23) above. The Arabic renditions translate respectively into "between a night and its morning" and "teach us a harsh lesson", which reflect the meaning of their English counterparts by employing different forms.

4.2.3 Transparent idiomatic expressions

Table 14 below displays the distribution of transparent idiomatic expressions in terms of translation strategy.

Table 14. Deployment of transparent idioms in terms of translation strategy

	Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Transparent Idiomatic Expressions (43 out of 157)	Similar Meaning and Form	19	44.18
	Similar Meaning but Different Form	16	37.20
	Paraphrasing	8	18.60

As can be observed, the transparency of idiomatic expressions makes it more possible for translating them into 'similar meaning and form' than into 'paraphrase', as they are not culture-specific like opaque idiomatic expressions, viz. 44.18% go for the former, while only 18.60% go for the latter. There is also the possibility of employing 'similar meaning but different form', which accounts for 37.20%. The examples in Table 15 below are illustrative of the three strategies, respectively:

Table 15. Examples of the translation of transparent idiomatic expressions

No.	Idiomatic Expression	Arabic Translation	Literal Translation
24	Drums of war	دق طبول الحرب	to beat the drums of war
25	a wait-and-see	نوع من الانتظار والترقب	a kind of waiting and watching
26	a brother in arms	رفيق سلاح	an arms comrade

As can be noted, the English and the Arabic idioms in (24) converge in terms of meaning and form. In (25), the English idiomatic expression has been

paraphrased into Arabic. Finally, the English and the Arabic idioms in (26) converge in meaning but they diverge in form.

4.2.4 Semi-transparent idiomatic expressions

Semi-transparent idiomatic expressions can be more challenging in translation than their transparent counterparts due to the lesser degree of transparency in them. They are expected to require paraphrasing more than transparent ones. Moon (1998: 21) states that semi-transparent idioms are "Idioms that usually have metaphorical meaning, and their constituent parts have a little role in comprehending the whole meaning of the expression." Table 16 below shows the distribution of semi-transparent idioms in terms of translation strategy:

Table 16. Distribution of semi-transparent idioms in terms of translation strategy

	Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Semi-transparent Idiomatic Expressions (22 out of 157)	Paraphrasing	10	45.45%
	Similar Meaning but Different Form	8	36.36%
	Similar Meaning and Form	4	18.18%

As Table 16 shows, the highest percentage (45.45%) goes for the paraphrasing strategy, which is much higher than the percentage of paraphrasing in transparent idioms (18.60%). Apparently, the paraphrasing strategy correlates positively with the degree of transparency, i.e., the less transparent the idiom, the higher the possibility of employing paraphrase. Next comes the strategy of 'similar meaning but different form', which accounts for (36.36%), which is similar to the percentage of transparent idioms (37.20%). As for the percentage of 'similar meaning and form', it is much higher for transparent idioms (44.18%) than for semi-transparent ones (18.18%), which again points to the impact of the degree of transparency. Table 17 includes some illustrative examples of the three strategies, respectively:

Table 17. Examples of translating semi-transparent idiomatic expressions

No.	Idiomatic Expression	Arabic Translation	Literal Translation
27	Sitting there trying to take the high moral ground	يجلسون مرتاحين ويزاودون علينا	to sit comfortably and belittle us
28	finger pointing	توجيه أصابع الاتهام	to direct fingers of accusation
29	to bridge the gap	ردم الهوة	to demolish the pit

The semi-transparent idiomatic expression in (27) is successfully paraphrased into Arabic, while that in (28) is rendered into a corresponding Arabic

idiom that matches in both meaning and form. As for the idiom in (29), it is translated into an Arabic idiom that has a similar meaning but a different form; thus, instead of the unfamiliar تجسير الفجوة, the translator has successfully accessed the natural ردم الهوة.

4.3 Combining semantic categories

To get a fuller picture of the distribution of semantic categories in terms of translation strategy, the categories of opaque and semi-opaque expressions on the one hand and the transparent and semi-transparent ones on the other are combined, as can be seen in Tables 18 and 19 below:

Table 18. Frequency and percentage of combined opaque and semi-opaque idiomatic expressions in terms of translation strategy

Opaque & Semi-Opaque Idiomatic Expressions Combined (92 out of 158) 58.59%	Translation Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
	Paraphrasing	76	82.60
	Similar Meaning but Different Form	16	17.39
	Similar Meaning and Form	0	00.00

Table 19. Frequency and percentage of combined transparent and semi-transparent idiomatic expressions in terms of translation strategy

Transparent & Semi-Transparent Idiomatic Expressions Combined (65 out of 158) 41.40%	Translation Strategy Employed	Frequency	Percentage
	Paraphrasing	18	27.69
	Similar Meaning but Different Form	24	36.92
	Similar Meaning and Form	23	35.38

A quick look at Tables 18 and 19 clearly shows that the degree of opaqueness or transparency is a decisive factor for employing the paraphrasing strategy in translating an idiomatic expression, viz. this strategy accounts for 82.60 percent for opaque and semi-opaque expressions, while the percentage is reduced to only 27.69 percent for transparent and semi-transparent ones. This finding is explained by the fact that the former are mostly culture-specific in the SL; they do not lend themselves to functional equivalents in the TL, which makes the paraphrasing strategy inevitable as a practical solution that relays the communicative meaning apart from form and idiomaticity.

By contrast, transparent and semi-transparent idiomatic expressions are more open to formal and functional idiomaticity in the TL; they may lend themselves to TL idiomatic expressions that converge with SL ones in both form and meaning,

viz. they account for 35.38 percent for transparent/semi-transparent expressions against a zero percentage for opaque/semi-opaque ones. The zero percentage for the latter clearly points to the fact that idiomatic expressions that are based on unique cultural images may not lend themselves to workable formal equivalence between English and Arabic.

However, both opaque/semi-opaque and transparent/semi-transparent expressions may idiomatically/functionally converge in some cases apart from form, albeit, in favor of the latter, viz. transparent/semi-transparent expressions account for 36.92% against 17.39% for opaque/semi-opaque ones. This option derives from the fact that languages may express the same propositions similarly, although they employ different images, a possibility that produces idiomatic expressions that are lexicalized differently but perform the same function in the language pair.

5 Conclusion

Two main questions were raised in this study, namely, "What translation strategies are employed to render English idiomatic expressions in political discourse into Arabic?" and "How are such expressions rendered in terms of the semantic category of an idiom?"

In response to the first question, the analysis of (165) idiomatic expressions in the corpus shows that the paraphrasing strategy is the most commonly used, accounting for (56.36%), followed by the strategy of using similar meaning and different form and that of using similar meaning and form (23.63% vs. 15.15%), respectively. As for the omission strategy, it accounts for only (4.84%) in the corpus. The noticeable common use of the paraphrasing strategy concurs with the findings of other researchers in translating idiomatic expressions in other genres of discourse (Al-assaf, 2019; Destaria and Rini, 2019).

The discussion has shown that, due to the emotiveness of political interviews, the paraphrasing strategy should be employed only when the strategies of using 'similar meaning and form' and 'similar meaning and different form" are exhausted. However, there may be some cases where a corresponding idiomatic expression in the TL is avoided due to generic constraints, e.g., formality, which is incongruent with the conversational style in political interviews. As for the omission strategy, it should be used only when the omission of the idiomatic expression is inevitable in terms of lack of correspondence and when it does not affect the conveyed message. Overall, the translator(s) of King Abdullah II's political interviews has/have done well in appropriately deploying the translation strategies in rendering idiomatic expressions. This should come as no surprise because such translations are closely monitored by experts in the political authorities, being representative of the king, the head of state in Jordan.

With regard to the second research question, the results show that the degree of opaqueness/transparency of the idiomatic expression is the most influential factor in choosing the type of translation strategy. This is clearly reflected in the percentage of using the paraphrasing strategy (82.60%) in opaque/semi-opaque

idiomatic expressions against only (27.69%) in transparent/semi-transparent ones. Apparently, most culture-specific idiomatic expressions lack equivalents and are only paraphraseable in the TL. According to results in this regard, only 17.39% of opaque/semi-opaque idiomatic expressions may lend themselves to the strategy 'similar meaning but different form' and a zero percentage to that of 'similar meaning and form'. By contrast, transparent/semi-transparent idiomatic expressions seem to be flexible through the possibility of lending themselves to both strategies, viz. 'similar meaning and different form' accounts for (36.92%) and 'similar meaning and form' for (35.56%).

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