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**Translation Strategies and Challenges of Colour Idioms in English and Saudi Arabic**

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of MA in Translating Arabic/English

2013/2014

# Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my MA supervisor, Doctor Orieb Masadeh-Tate, for her wise counselling, understanding nature, and, most importantly, her friendly character and willingness to stand by me throughout the year. She willingly accepted the task of acting as my supervisor despite having to fulfil her other academic duties. Her ability to make wise decisions and offer insightful feedback on various aspects of the research was invaluable.

I would like also to thank my husband Saad who has truly been a great supporter and whose constant love has given me a lot of strength throughout my studies. His belief in me and my reasoning has never faded even when I wanted to dig a hole and disappear into it due to lack of self-belief.

I particularly want to thank my parents and sisters. My hard-working family have sacrificed so much in their lives for me and have given me their limitless love and support; all that I have achieved, I owe it to them.

I also would like to express my appreciation to my friend Hanouf. She is a great friend who has stood by me throughout the year. I cherish her sense of positivity, which was clearly visible from her actions and the cheerful nature she displayed at all times.

I also take this time to pass my gratitude to Aïcha. This friend assisted me with understanding the main concept of my research and even went ahead to proofread it. She was always ready to offer advice and suggestions on my research or anything pertaining to it.

To conclude, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family (parents and sisters), my husband (Saad) and, finally, my children (Mohammed and Leen) whom I truly love for their continuous support and never-ending love.

I love you all so much!

# Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the similarities as well as the differences between some English and Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions and their equivalents and to determine the extent to which colour idiomatic expressions are distorted in translation. Thus, the researcher adopts a comparative/contrastive approach in order to identify the similarities and differences between the colour idiomatic expressions in the two languages as well as to highlight the cultural differences reflected by them. In addition, this research aims to examine different translation strategies applied in translating colour idiomatic expressions.

For the purpose of the study, a number of Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions along with their equivalents in English were gathered mainly from two books: *اللغة و اللون* andالعبارات الاصطلاحية في اللغة الانجليزية*.* These examples were analysed and the results revealed that the following strategies were preferred for translating colour idiomatic expressions: (a) translating idioms with non-idiomatic expressions; (b) using an idiom of similar meaning and form; (c) using an idiom which has the same meaning but a different form; (d) translating the source language (SL) colour idiomatic expressions using a literal translation strategy; and (e) translating by paraphrase.

Moreover, the results of the research showed that the best translation strategy of translating a colour idiomatic expression by using another colour idiom in the target language (TL) may be impossible to use in some cases. Conversely, employing a word-for-word translation without bearing in mind its limitations may lead to an incomprehensible translation. In addition, the strategy of translating idioms with non-idiomatic expressions may be the best solution when there is no equivalent colour idiomatic expression in the TL.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

Idiomatically, languages use colours to express how people think and feel. Every language has an abundance of idiomatic expressions in which colours play an important role. History has also played a significant role in the origin of colour idiomatic expressions although, in general, their origins cannot be traced back to any specific date. Idiomatic expressions were in use in various societies and can be found in ancient stories from the Quran and the Bible. However, some individual idiomatic expressions can be traced back to particular times, for example, the ancient English colour idiomatic expression ‘in the limelight’, which means at the centre of attention. From the 1840s, the lighting in theatres was provided by a beam created by heating lime, a form of calcium oxide. A piece of lime was heated in a flame burning oxygen and hydrogen. A strong lens then directed this bright white light onto a solo performer on stage.

The figurative use of the expression to describe someone or something being at the centre of attention outside the world of theatre began to be used around the turn of the 20th century (“Idiom Origins,” 2014).

Thus, translating idiomatic expressions, particularly colour idioms, can be one of the most difficult tasks a translator is likely to encounter because, in most cases, there is no equivalent in other languages; furthermore, if they are translated literally, the meaning may be lost as idiomatic expressions are normally used beyond their original meaning. Moreover, colour idiomatic expressions are closely related to their cultures, which may cause greater problems for the translator.

It is observed that translators should opt for the most suitable strategies when translating colour idiomatic expressions. First, it is necessary that they understand what is meant by the colour idiom before translating it, as the ability to recognise colour idiomatic expressions is essential because their meanings may not be understood literally. This was confirmed by Larson (1984) who asserted that translators have to be certain of the meaning carried by the idiomatic expression of the source language (SL) before they start the process of translation. Second, the ability to differentiate between the original meaning and the literal meaning of the idiomatic expression is considered the most important step. This is why determining and being able to use colour idioms properly requires an excellent understanding of the SL. There are some difficulties which are hard to overcome when translating idioms in general, especially colour idiomatic expressions. Colour idiomatic expressions show the originality of the language and culture in which they originate. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the task of translating colour idiomatic expressions is challenging, especially if the translator is unable to understand the cultural differences of the SL and the target languages (TL). It may also be difficult to maintain the form while translating, but it is appropriate to employ the receptor language or phrase that has the same meaning. In other words, in translation, idioms are regarded as problematical and challenging because of language fixity.

To examine colour idiomatic expressions in more detail, consider the idiom “blue-blooded.” It means “aristocratic” in English, but it means “evil” and “danger” in Saudi Arabic. In English, for example, the colour “green” might be suggestive of envy as in “green with envy,” whereas in Arabic, “green” has only positive connotations, such as “good luck” and “growth.” Such examples present serious difficulties for translators unless they are aware of the differences that each colour connotes. The use of colours in idiomatic expressions is not random; colours reflect, as mentioned before, the state of mood and feeling, and each colour has its uniqueness. Although colour connotations are understood differently by different cultures and peoples, human beings in general seem to experience colour idiomatic expressions with slight differences among different peoples. Simply, everyone sees colours in his or her own way, and each colour produces an impression on the mind that simultaneously addresses the eye and one’s feelings.

## 1.2 Research Questions, Aims and Objective

This research aims to compare and contrast some colour idiomatic expressions and their equivalents in both English and Saudi Arabic. The research has one objective—to investigate whether the chosen translation strategies can be applied to translate colour idiomatic expressions. Thus, the research question seeks to assess the extent to which it is possible to translate colour idiomatic terms in English-Saudi Arabic and Saudi Arabic-English expressions. Finally, this study aims to ascertain whether the chosen strategies can be applied to translating colour idiomatic expressions and to determine whether there are any differences or similarities between colour idiomatic expressions in the two cultures. It is worth mentioning that, with the help of monolingual dictionaries, a variety of colour idiomatic expressions together with their counterparts were collected from the English and Arabic languages. Subsequently, bilingual dictionaries were employed to discover their equivalents.

As previously mentioned, while undertaking this research, it was noticed that the issue of idiomatic expressions is widely discussed whenever the matter of translation is tackled. An important function in the basis as well as the understanding of all languages is that of idioms. With regard to their form, the patterns of idioms are predetermined and their patterns tell their meaning. This can be further elaborated using an idiom as an example. If the purpose is to explain that something suddenly and unexpectedly occurs, the English idiom “out of the blue”"حدث فجأة" is used. The word “blue” is not relevant to the meaning. Similarly, in Arabic, the idiom "موت أحمر" “red death” describes any hardship one might encounter. "موت"meaning “death” or"أحمر" meaning “red” is not related to the entire meaning.

Therefore, it is noticed that it would make no sense to provide literal translations into English and Arabic when translating the previous idioms. These two idioms may be culturally alike but are different lexically. It is also possible to state these idioms in English and Arabic in different words; hence, with such idioms, languages flourish.

# Chapter Two

## 2.1 Literature Review

## 2.1.1 **Preliminaries**

This chapter is divided into eight main sections: (1) definition of idioms; (2) definition of translation; (3) translation of idioms; (4) culture-specific idioms; (5) colour idiomatic expressions; (6) translation problems; (7) Baker, Nida and Taber, and Newmark taxonomies; and (8) literal translation of idioms.

## 2.2 **What is an idiom?**

An idiom, as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, is “a peculiarity of phraseology approved by the usage of the language and often having a signification other than its grammatical or logical one.” Hitherto, it can be deduced that it is difficult to understand an idiom grammatically, that is, from the meaning carried by its elements.

Hence, the task of determining the features of an idiom is very difficult, as this became apparent during a contemplation of idioms from a theoretical viewpoint. It is of the utmost importance in this research to arrive at an exact determination of the features of expressions that can be regarded as idioms. Thus, in this research, an idiom is considered a compound of two or more words; the idioms must be well-established and conventionally fixed, and their meaning must be figurative.

Culture plays a significant role in the progression of the interpretation of an idiom. The translator is able to understand the implied meaning of an idiom only if they have a good knowledge of the culture of the TL. In this respect, it is necessary to increase cross-cultural consciousness as well as open-minded understanding of the culture of the second language from different aspects. Furthermore, the SL culture and the TL culture can be a real challenge to the process of translating. In addition, it is perhaps worth mentioning that social and religious cultures are regarded as problematic factors in translation. Therefore, as previously mentioned, the main aim of this research is to focus on the problem of translating colour idiomatic expressions in social cultures from Arabic into English and vice versa and to determine the extent to which it is possible to translate them idiomatically between the two languages. In addition, this helps to identify the translation strategies adopted by the translator. In other words, this study seeks to explain the methods used to gather and categorise English and Arabic colour idiomatic expressions. It explains how the corpus has been prepared for investigation. The strategies that might contribute to solving the difficulties facing a translator in this subject are mentioned and explained in the methodology of the research.

## 2.3 **Translation**

Translation is a complex task; Newmark (1988) defines the act of translation as “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text.”(p. 5)

Accordingly, Jiraphatralikhit, Kaewjan, Klinpoon, and Visitwanit (2005) state that “translation is strongly related to the process of reading” (p. 7). They also hint that translation is a task that compromises the meaning between the writers and readers of the text. In addition, they define translation as a method of conveying spoken and written discourses from written to spoken procedures or from one language to another.

Nevertheless, the definition of translation is debatable. The simplest definition of translation that more or less everyone knows is that provided by El Shiekh (1991): “translation is the mere replacement of words in one language with equivalent words in another language” (p. 15). Thus, it is observed that even scholars propose numerous different definitions of translation. However, translation is concerned with the meaning rather than the literal or syntactic equivalents, as noted by Halliday, Macintosh, and Strevens (1965). The previous statement concludes that translation is a matter of translating the whole text rather than a literal translation. Catford (1965) agrees that the task of translation means “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another (TL)” (p. 20).

Hence, the translation procedure can be regarded as a process of making decisions and a task of solving problems. Moreover, it appears that translation is a complex procedure in which the translator faces various problematic issues that require appropriate solutions. Thus, the ways in which the translator tackles these problems are called strategies*.* Finding a suitable strategy for solving translation problems occurs in the process of making decisions.

## 2.4 **Translation of idioms**

In the formal use of language, people adhere to the grammar and the syntactic rules. However, when people use language informally, they tend to include specific language phrases embedded in their cultures. Idioms are one of the most popular language phrases that are mostly used in informal speech.

Accordingly, an idiom can be defined as a series of words whose connotation is different from the connotation carried by the single words (Larson, 1984). Larson further points out that idiomatic translation is a translation that gives the same meaning of the SL naturally in the TL.

In this respect, Weinreich (1969) explains that an idiom is a phraseology of any unit containing at least two double meaning components. Weinreich applies the term “phraseological units” to idioms and characterises idioms by their potential ambiguity arising from the fact that they are multiword expressions. In addition to Weinreich, Fraser (1970) defines idioms as follows: “I shall regard an idiom as a constituent or a series of constituents for which the semantic interpretation is not a compositional function of the formatives of which it is composed” (p. 22).

For example, when translating the English idiom “to be caught red-handed,” which means "قبض عليه متلبسا", a non-native speaker of the language will be unable to predict the meaning of this idiom if he or she is not aware of the language and its culture. Idioms are very useful tools for communicating a great deal of meaning and to make our observations, judgements, and explanations lively and interesting. Furthermore, it is noted that idioms are considered a great source of enrichment for any language and culture.

## 2.5 **Culture-specific idioms**

### **2.5.1** **Definition of culture**

Culture is widely accepted as the most valid indicator of the values that express its customs and social institutions, which are not fully understood by outsiders. In the process of rendering such values into a different language and looking for adequate equivalents, cultural substitution is likely to take place. Thus, the word “culture” is commonly used by people around the world, but the meaning of culture is a broad one. Various studies have given many definitions of what a culture truly is and what it may include within the boundaries of its meaning. One definition is given by Li and Karakosky (2001):

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (pp. 501-517)

According to Li and Karakosky (2001), it is understood that culture bears many aspects of life, shared and performed by a group of people. Furthermore, Newmark (1988), mentions that culture is the style of life that is unique to a community that uses a certain language as a medium full of expressions, points out that culture is something that is specific and shared by a particular community rather than any other community.

### **2.5.2 Translation of culture**

The diversity of different cultures from all parts of the world is evident and present in how people act or simply live their lives. Moreover, unveiling the features and essences of these cultures is a means of comprehending what other cultures have to offer. The process of understanding and interpreting these aspects of culture among other cultures must occur, then, through a medium of translation. However, the translation of culture has posed a challenge to many translators, and this has entailed a wide area of study in this field. Thus, a cultural text is recognised by translators opting for the cultural approach in that it contains “elements which are derived from its culture...and that every text is anchored in a specific culture” (Koller, 1979/1992, pp.59–60, as cited in Cowie and Shuttleworth, 1997, p.35). Accordingly, in his previous definition, Koller identifies that cultural items are specific to one culture and vary linguistically from another culture. In addition, cultural translation is a “translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and/or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicit to the original.” (Nida & Taber, 1969, p.199, as cited in Cowie and Shuttleworth, 1997, p.36). Thus, it is observed that cultural texts are dealt with in a careful manner, and it seems that only experienced translators are able to convey the message of a cultural text in a satisfying way, or in an almost equivalent manner. Hence, it is not sufficient in this case to be a bilingual translator, because translation of a cultural text or colour idiomatic expression is a translation of sense rather than words; however, a bilingual translator is needed to clarify and transfer the proper meanings intended in the cultural text or colour idiomatic expression. Having said that, a number of translation scholars have offered various procedures and strategies for overcoming the problem of cultural translation, specifically idioms, and for achieving a near equivalence to the source text.

Accordingly, in her book, *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment*, House (1977) adopts the semantics- and pragmatics-oriented approach and stresses that the translator should deal with the text not as two different languages but as two different cultures, which is an integral part of translating colour idiomatic expression.

### **2.5.3 Colours in English and Arabic nations**

The English and Arabic languages are highly affected by their corresponding social factors. It seems that the manner in which both of these cultures perceive social experiences depends on the social factors in all aspects of life, such as traditions, ethics, feelings, emotions, convictions, interpersonal affiliations, family, marriage, and economics. In addition, social factors have affected colours. There is a varied response to colours from people belonging to diverse cultures. Thus, being a very strong communication tool, colours have the strange characteristic of expressing contrasting meanings not only culturally but also when they are used in different idioms.

It is generally accepted that positive connections or negative implications are linked with colours and symbols. Translators may anticipate conveying a positive meaning through a colour or symbol, but the reader is quite likely to understand it otherwise. This is because colours are comprehended differently in diverse cultures. A good example is the Arabic use of the colour blue when describing something bad, such as " “أزرق زي النيلة which literally means “as blue as indigo.” The colour blue in the Arab culture is a bad omen in general, whereas in Western culture, it is usually a good omen. For example, “blue ribbon” is a symbol for high quality (Omar, 1997, pp.78–79).

To take another example, in Arabic nations, the concept of the colour white is one of purity, innocence, inoffensiveness, and pleasant attitude (Omar, 1997); in contrast, in some Western regions, white represents mourning or death and Halloween (with orange). Hence, when white is used in an idiom in these two nations, people will assign different meanings to it. Diverse terms are employed by different cultures to theorise idioms; therefore, these differences must be considered during translation. In particular, in colour idiomatic expressions, colour terms are employed as significant terms in English as well as in Arabic. As a result, users will be able to grasp meaningful knowledge and also differentiate their meanings if colours are employed suitably in translation. Therefore, misinterpretation and incorrect knowledge is likely to be imparted if colours are disregarded culturally.

### **2.5.4 Colours in Saudi Arabic culture**

Specifically, Saudi culture has many colour idiomatic expressions that are considered to be cultural expressions that have special and different connotations. For example, Saudi Arabia, as a desert country, affects its people and their choice of words in some Saudi colour idiomatic expressions. In their colour idiomatic expressions, one can notice the use of the colour red to refer to the strong heat of the sun at noon, as in ".حمراء الظهيرة"

Culture is the product of people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. As a result, all cultures of the human race are identical in that they are able to provide solutions to human problems that are universal.

## 2.6 Colour idiomatic expressions

Generally speaking, it appears that cultures use colours to express the state they are in and how they are feeling. Therefore, it can be assumed that all languages use idiomatic expressions in which colours appear. However, almost every culture has its own colour idiomatic expressions that have no equivalents in other cultures. Thus, translating colour idiomatic expressions literally may sometimes produce an incorrect translation. For example, the English colour idiomatic expression “in the black,” which is used in financial affairs, has no equivalent in the Arabic language, whereas in Arabic, the colour black has a bad connotation and usually refers to pessimism (Omar, 1997).

It can be argued that colour idiomatic expressions are full of various implied meanings which can only be understood when they are used in contexts or conversations. This has motivated researchers from many fields to look for the implied meanings that colour idiomatic expressions carry in different cultures. Many researchers, such as Adams and Osgood (1973), have studied the implied structure of the English colour words black, white, grey, red, yellow, green, and blue and their equivalent colour words in twenty different languages. The study is based on the Semantic Differential Technique. They discovered that the colour white is classified more positively than the colour black by young people in 23 cultures in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. In addition, they found that the meaning carried by the colour red is vague; in other words, its features can only be determined .This also applies to the colour yellow. Adams and Osgood (1973) discovered that the colour yellow has a positive connotation in many cultures; however, in Hong Kong Cantonese, yellow is associated with pornography. It was concluded by Adams and Osgood (1973) that blue and green are more highly regarded than red and yellow. Accordingly, Osgood et al. (1975) divided colours into four categories as mentioned by Chan and Courtney (2001): (1) concrete identification—names of things having a given colour (e.g., blue sea, red pepper); (2) concrete associations—names of things culturally related to a colour (e.g., white gown); (3) abstract association—metaphorical, (e.g., black eye, green hands, blue film); and (4) abstract symbolism—concepts that gain their significance culturally and are not clearly metaphorical (e.g., the Red Cross). Although some colour connotations, such as red for warmth and passion and white for cleanliness, are common beliefs, cultural differences in regard to colours still exist (Jacobs, Keown, Worthley, & Ghymn, 1991). For example, fire is yellow in English but red in Arabic. Blue has connotations of calm and serenity for Arabs but connotes sadness and loneliness for English people, whereas yellow implies fear for Americans but means happiness and optimism for Arabs.

Because colour names have great potential to refer metonymically to real-world objects and phenomena, many metonymically-motivated meanings might be associated with colour words, such as credits being notated in black ink and debts in red (Philip 2006, pp. 61–80). Accordingly, while examining the use of colour idiomatic expressions in English and Arabic, the book entitled*اللغة واللون* pays full attention to how colours take on connotative meanings and to the similarities and differences in the two languages. The author considers that because the colours chosen in idiomatic expressions are determined by the patterns of the language, rather than being chosen actively by the speaker, these language habits consequently affect the speaker and the culture’s perception of colour. For example, Saito (1996) and Hemphill (1996) discovered that bright colours (e.g., white, pink, red, yellow, blue, purple, and green) tend to produce positive responses, including happiness, excitement, relaxation, and optimism, whereas dark colours (e.g., black and grey) tend to produce negative responses, such as anxiety, boredom, sadness, and pessimism.

Thus, for the above-mentioned reasons, translation of idioms poses major problems for translators. Some of these problems are discussed in the following section.

## 2.7 Translation problems

Dr. Miremadi (1991) mentions that lexical problems are one of the most common translation problems. When Miremadi analysed lexical problems, he pointed out that a word in one language may not stand for the same abstraction in another language, even though words are entities that refer to abstractions.

In this respect, Miremadi (1991) divides lexical problems into the following:

* Straight meaning—Straight meaning indicates words of the SL that carry the same meaning and features as those of the TL, such as sister, brother, son, daughter, etc.
* Lexical meaning—this indicates words or phrases that appear to be equivalent. However, the translator should be aware of the intent beyond the words in order to convey the writer’s message correctly.
* Metaphorical expression—Metaphorical expression refers to the problems the translator may face while translating idioms.

Furthermore, Broeik (1981, quoted by Dr. Miremadi, 1991) suggests the following for translating idiomatic expressions:

* Differentiating between normal expressions and metaphors
* Dealing with the resources for translating each metaphor
* Realising the differences between contexts and their restrictions on the use of metaphors
* Understanding the restrictions of the translation, and conveying the message.
  + Semantic voids

Semantic void includes those words/expressions that represent abstractions which do not exist in other cultures. Thus, although there is no exact equivalent, close equivalents may be found.

* Proper names

Although proper names indicate individuals and may be the same in all languages, sometimes the meaning that the names carry may be lost because they do not exist in the target culture. Consider, for example, the Arabic name “نور الهدى’ which literally means “the light of right path.”

## 2.8 Baker, Nida & Taber, and Newmark taxonomies

According to Baker, idioms are fixed structures of language which allow little change in style, and their meaning often cannot be guessed from their single parts (Baker, 1992). Baker (1992) further explains that the speaker or writer cannot change the order of the words in an idiom, delete or add a word from or to it, replace its words with others, and change its grammatical structure.

Thus, Baker (1992, pp. 26–42) suggests many approaches to the translation of idioms together with fixed expressions, as listed below:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

Baker elaborates that this strategy involves using an idiom in the TL which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items (Baker, 1992).

1. Using an idiom with the same meaning but a different form

There are certain idioms or frozen expressions in the TL that, although having diverse lexical points, simultaneously pose meanings that are parallel to the source idiom or expression (Baker, 1992).

1. Translating by paraphrase

This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the TL or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in the stylistic preferences of the SL and TL (Baker, 1992).

Moreover, a natural TL idiom that has a similar meaning to the original SL idiom is suggested as the best translation approach. Nida and Taber (1969, p.106) suggest three translation strategies for idioms, although this study focuses only on the first strategy for translating colour idiomatic expressions:

1. Translating idioms with non-idiomatic expressions
2. Translating idiomatic expressions with idiomatic expressions.
3. Translating non-idiomatic expressions with idiomatic expressions.

The authors declare that the translation of idioms often takes place using non-idiomatic expressions of the TL. Meanwhile, Newmark (1988) believes that word-for-word translation is an approach in which the grammatical structure in the SL is changed to its closest TL equivalent; words, however, have to be translated individually, out of context. Newmark (1991) further states that “literal translation of L2 idioms may also be useful as a pathway to comprehension and memorization” (p. 61).

## 2.9 **Why the literal translation?**

As Newmark (1988,) stated, “Literal translation is a strategy in which the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context” (p. 81).

Hence, it has been observed that there are many advantages of literal translation. First, through literal translation, the learner is able to increase his or her vocabulary when translating and comparing every word in the text being translated. Second, literal translation highlights the contrast between the literal meaning expression and its idiomatic connotation. Third, literal translation enables the learner to comprehend the moral values and the thought processes of native speakers. In addition, some translation theorists, such as Nida, have stated that figurative expressions, including idioms, can rarely be translated literally; however, for the sake of cultural transfer and informativeness, literal translation can be applied in the condition that effectiveness is achieved to a certain degree. Thus, through literal translation, the cultural factors of the native speakers can be understood, for example, that which they deem influential, humorous, or sacred. With regard to this study, it is important to note that literal translation of some Arabic texts is impossible because the words do not exist in English.

**Chapter Three**

# 3.1Methodology and Methods

In this section, the researcher discusses the design as well as the methodology of the research and the reasons for choosing a qualitative method in the form of collecting data about colour idiomatic expressions as the main part of this research analysing colour idiomatic expressions.

In his book *The Arabic Idioms*, Maxos mentions that, unlike Arabic proverbs, where there is an existing public interest, such as books and dictionaries, there is a lack of resources for collecting idioms (Maxos, H, 1995). Thus, it took several years to collect thousands of colour idiomatic expressions, mainly from written sources. Good examples are the two books *“العبارات الاصطلاحية في اللغة الانجليزية”* and *"اللغة و اللون"* in which the authors identify the cultural differences between Arabic and English colour idiomatic expressions while translating them into both English and Arabic. In this respect, this case study concerns Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions that are specifically related to the Saudi culture.

## 3.2 **Research methodology**

This exploratory research has relied on a literature review and academic data as well as a qualitative approach, which has been considered the main method for use in this research. Thus, according to Punch (2005, as cited in Bell, 2010) “Qualitative research not only uses non-numerical and unstructured data but also, typically, has research questions and methods which are more general at the start, and become more focused as the study progresses” (p. 28).

In addition, Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011) describe qualitative research as a broad umbrella term that covers a wide range of techniques and philosophies, thus it is not easy to define. In broad terms, qualitative research is an approach that allows you to examine people’s experiences in detail, by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, visual methods, life histories or biographies and content analysis.

The data have been collected using the most suitable strategies for translating colour idiomatic expressions.

Therefore, specific translation strategies have been identified and applied on the collected data as well as to the case study in order to deliver the most reliable results.

Hammersley (2000), Shaw (2003a), and Green and Thorogood (2004) summarise some of the main advantages of qualitative research. The first is the argument that the parts which can be reached by qualitative methods, cannot be reached by other quantitative methods (Green and Thorogood, 2004), particularly in research looking at links between processes and outcomes (Shaw, 2003a). Therefore, qualitative methods can be used in any type of research as they help the researcher identify and analyse features of social life because they generally produce words, rather than numbers, for data analysis. Having said that, it can be argued that the use of a qualitative method in translation may help the researcher generate strategies that can be tested by quantitative methods. For example, if translators had no idea what kind of factors were acting as barriers to translating colour idiomatic expressions, it would be difficult to conduct an investigation to uncover the main factors. However, once these issues have been identified, such as colours, then a qualitative method can be used to determine the extent to which these colours are similar or different across the world. In addition,the research framework can be quickly revised as new information arises. Data are usually collected from a few cases or individuals; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population.

## 3.3 The chosen translation strategies to translate English and Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions

As for the theoretical structure, the data of this study are assessed according to the translation strategies used by Nida and Taber (1969), Baker (1992), and Newmark (1991). These strategies are chosen because they solve the problematic issues resulted from cultural differences:

The chosen strategies used by Mona Baker (1992, p. 71) are as follows:

* Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

This strategy involves using an idiom in the TL which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items (Baker, 1992, p. 72).

* Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

There are certain idioms or fixed expressions in the TL that, although having diverse lexical points, simultaneously possess meanings that are parallel to the source idiom or expression (Baker, 1992, p. 74).

* Translation by paraphrase

This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the TL or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the SL and TL (Baker, 1992, p.74).

The chosen strategy used by Nida and Taber (1969, p.106) are as follows:

* Translating by using a non-idiomatic colour expression

This strategy is suggested by Nida and Taber (1969). A non-idiomatic TL expression is used in this approach. This approach is used to translate most of the chosen colour idiomatic expressions.

The chosen strategy used by Newmark (1991) is as follows:

* Translating SL Colour Idiomatic Expressions using a literal translation strategy

Newmark (1988) believes that word-for-word translation is a strategy in which the SL grammatical structure is adapted to its nearest TL equivalent; words, however, have to be translated separately, out of context.

## 3.4 **Case-Study methodology**

A case-study method can be described as an appropriate method for individual researchers who seek to study the aspects of a problem in some depth (Bell, 2010). In other words, Stake (1998) described the case-study as the interest in the individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used. On this basis, (Yin 1994, & Merriam 1994 & Stake, 1995, 1998 & Miles & Heberman 1994 & Gillham 2001) might agree on, it would be something along the following lines:

The case study should have a “case” which is the object of the study. The “case” should

* be a complex functioning unit,
* be investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods, and
* be contemporary

The subject of this case study is Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions, whose features and complexity fit well within the above criteria. A study of their culture-related features as culture-specific colour idiomatic expressions is suited to this role.

## 3.5 Saudi Arabic culture

Culture plays a significant role in the progression of interpreting an idiom. The translator can understand the implied meaning of an idiom only if he/she has a good knowledge of the culture of the TL. Thus, it is necessary to increase cross-cultural consciousness as well as an open-minded understanding of the culture of the second language from different aspects. Furthermore, the difference between the SL culture and the TL culture is a real challenge to the process of translating. Besides, words that have different implications in one language may not wield similarly emotive associations in another. Because of the variations in cultural roots, different languages usually reflect different implications and emotive associations. In addition, social and religious cultures are regarded as problematic factors involved in translation. Therefore, the process of translating is a particularly problematic task especially because of the variation between the SL and the TL as well as the culture differences.

With regard to the above facts, it is imperative that the translator be knowledgeable about the concepts of different cultures; that is, the expressions used in English and Arabic are highly affected by the immense variations between the two cultures. To achieve a wider comprehension of these, it is imperative to understand the social culture, which has been mentioned in detail in the literature review.

## 3.6 Methods

## 3.6.1 **Introduction**

The main aim of this research is to focus on the problem of translating colour idiomatic expressions in social culture from Arabic into English and vice versa and to determine the extent to which it is possible to translate them idiomatically between the two languages. In addition, it will identify the translation strategies adopted by the translator. In other words, this study will explain the methods used in gathering and categorising English as well as Arabic colour idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, it will mention how the corpus has been prepared for investigation. The strategies that might contribute to solving the difficulties facing a translator in this subject are mentioned and explained in the methodology of the research.

## 3.6.2 **Methods used to examine colour idiomatic expressions**

Colour idiomatic expressions is examined using a qualitative method, as previously mentioned.

The improvement of quality measures and comparative quality reports as well as quality development efforts can be achieved by the use of qualitative research methods.

Accordingly, a comparative and contrastive method is applied in this research in order to classify the similarities and dissimilarities between colour idioms in English and Saudi Arabic and to focus on how culture affects them. Furthermore, it is mentioned how the corpus has been prepared for investigation.

In addition, it will emphasise how to analyse the collected data. At the beginning, an outline of the chosen translation strategies is provided. Then, the results are described in more detail by examining the English and Saudi Arabic examples.

## 3.6.3 Colours in English and Arabic

Translating colour idiomatic expressions can be a difficult task. Some of their meanings differ from one culture to another. Some of their symbolic significations are widespread, such as the colour black, which is a common symbol of mourning. However, some cases are peculiar to certain cultures. Thus, the awareness of colour idiomatic expressions is usually dependent on the culture in question. One colour might be translated in one way in Arabic and in an entirely different way in English. Moreover, the meaning of colours might be a matter of context. In other words, the meaning of colour idiomatic expressions is determined by the text in which they are used, which is why colour idiomatic expressions may have additional meanings other than their dictionary meanings. According to Xing (2009), every colour has three kinds of meaning: original meaning, extended meaning, and abstract meaning. The original meaning is the etymological connotation of the colour, whereas the extended meaning is the connotation extended from the original meaning through cognitive meanings, such as metaphors. Finally, the abstract meaning relates to the connotation that has been further extracted from the extended meaning. The extended meaning of the colour gold, for example, indicates that it has a positive connotation, and the abstract meaning indicates that it has a negative function, such as “yellow smile” (cruel).

## 3.7 Data

### **3.7.1 Selection of data**

Various books together with monolingual dictionaries were employed to collect the data for this study. English monolingual dictionaries helped to gather many English colour-based idioms, including the (“*The* *Free Dictionary”)*.

It was noted that there was no exclusive bilingual dictionary that could facilitate the translation of various colour-based idioms. Hence, many dictionaries were used as sources of examples. In addition, two books mainly provided the data on English and Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions: *"اللغة و اللون"* and*” العبارات الاصطلاحية في اللغة الانجليزية ".* Furthermore, the researcher made use of the (“empower-yourself-with-color-psychology,’ 2014) to find more about the meanings of colours in English cultures as well as bilingual dictionaries to find English as well as Arabic translations, including the *Oxford English Dictionary* and (“*The Free Dictionary”)*; these dictionaries also yielded their equivalents together with translation approaches. The main goal is to explain the gathered examples and draw conclusions according to the results. Moreover, an explanation of the outcomes are provided as well as the details of the translation strategies implemented by the researcher. Before presenting the figures and statistics derived from the implemented strategies, different instances of equivalents from the data are analysed.

### **3.7.2 Classification of colour idiomatic expressions**

The colour idiomatic expressions are arranged and classified according to the strategy used to translate them. First, Arabic colour idiomatic expressions are examined and translated into English, followed by their back translations and then the English equivalents. Next, English colour idiomatic expressions are examined and translated into Arabic. The data are examined according to the differences between the two cultures and, thus, the meaning of the colours in each idiomatic expression. Then, it is determined whether the colour has the same meaning in both cultures. If not, the difference is mentioned and how it will be handled.

Moreover, in the analysis, an example from each language of the use of a colour idiomatic expression is provided in order to contextualise its use and make it much easier for the reader to understand. These examples, however, have nothing to do with this research; they will be mentioned for the benefit of the reader, as not every Arabic or English speaker necessarily understands the culture-specific meaning of the colour idiomatic expression.

# Chapter Four

# 4. Analysis of the Data

**4.1** Categorising English and Saudi Arabic colour idioms into the chosen translation strategies

The gathered examples are based on colours; together with their equivalents, they were extracted from the two books اللغة *و اللون* and *العبارات الاصطلاحية في اللغة الانجليزية* (English as well as Arabic). The examples of their equivalents were mainly from (“*The Free Dictionary”)* before the colour idiomatic expressions were grouped into various categories based on their translation approaches in the equivalents of English data. The research applied the five chosen translation strategies previously mentioned in the research methodology. The strategies, along with examples, are as follows:

### **4.1.1 Translating idioms with non-idiomatic expressions**

This approach is suggested by Nida and Taber (1969). A non-idiomatic TL expression is used in this approach. This approach is used to translate most of the chosen colour idiomatic expressions. Some examples from this category are as follows:

**1. Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** نهار أحمر

**Back translation:** Red day

**English equivalent:** It is a scorcher, or a torrid, hot day.

**Arabic Example:** اليوم النهار أحمر! الحرارة فيه لا تطاق.

**English Example:** Today is a scorcher! The heat is irresistible.

It should be mentioned that Saudi Arabia is one of the hottest countries in the world. Therefore, Saudi people describe a hot day in summer with the expression نهار أحمر" " “red day,” which means “scorcher” and “torrid, hot day.” This indicates people’s negative perception of the colour red. However, both cultures associate red with anger, adventure, or strong desire. The colour red can signify bravery, danger, impulsiveness, and enthusiasm, as well as aggressiveness. It is a symbol of action, courage, and evil.

In the above example, the translator translated the colour idiom into the non-idiomatic expression “torrid, hot day.” The translator felt the need to use this strategy because the English culture is not usually affected by hot weather conditions to the same extent as the Saudi culture. This shows, as mentioned at the outset, the importance of the context as far as meaning is concerned. Thus, in this example, the translator conveyed the meaning of the SL without distorting the general meaning. While maintaining the meaning in the TL, the colour “red” was deleted in the translation. However, by employing one of its connotations, “heat,” the SL portrays the meaning of the colour.

**2. Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** ضحكة صفراء

**Back translation:** Yellow laugh

**English equivalent:** Fake smile

**Arabic Example:** حاولت أنسّي أحمد همومه،و ذكرت له موقف طريف لكن للأسف قابلني بضحكة صفراء

**English Example:** I told Ahmad a funny story to entertain him, but he wore a fake smile.

In the above example, the SL colour idiomatic expression"ضحكة صفراء" which means “yellow smile” is translated into a TL non-idiomatic expression “fake smile.” The colour yellow has similar meanings in both the English and Arabic cultures. It is usually the colour of sunshine. It symbolises joy, cheerfulness, ingenuity, and energy. However, yellow has other negative meanings in both cultures; it is connected with cowardice, instability, and depression.

People usually put on a yellow smile when they wish to hide their feelings and put on a brave face in times of difficulty. When a person puts on a yellow smile, the effect is felt not only by that individual but also by those who surround him or her; this is because the generated anxiety can cause agitation for the receiver. The colour yellow is non-emotional because it originates from the head rather than the heart. It simply means that someone is having trouble coping with all the changes at a particular moment, and yellow, in this case, connotes stress. Thus, in this example, the translator resorts to this strategy because there is no equivalent to the SL colour idiomatic expression in the TL language. However, the colour yellow in the idiom “ضحكة صفراء” has been translated into “fake,” in this case, the word “fake” carries the same meaning as the colour.

**3. Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** بيض الله وجهك

**Back translation:** May Allah whiten your face.

**English equivalent:** Many thanks!

**Arabic Example:** "بيّض الله وجهك يا أحمد.فعلاَ ما قصرت معي و كنت لي خير معين"

**English Example:** Many thanks, Ahmad! You were such a support.

In the example above, the SL colour idiomatic expression"بيّض الله وجهك" “May Allah whiten your face” is translated into a TL non-idiomatic expression “Many thanks!,” which could be used as a conventional expression in Saudi Arabic to thank someone who has helped others to solve a difficult problem. White, which is a symbol of grief or tragedy in Eastern Asia, is perceived positively in Arabic and English cultures as the colour associated with light. It is a symbol of purity, innocence, goodness, and holiness. However, the SL colour idiomatic expression is converted into a non-idiomatic expression. While maintaining the meaning in the TL, the colour white was deleted in the translation. However, by employing one of the positive connotations of the colour white (i.e. “thanking”), the SL portrays the meaning of the colour.

**4. English colour idiomatic expression:** A golden key opens every door.

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** المال فتاح الأبواب

**Back translation:** Money opens every door.

**English Example:** Jill: I’m amazed that Sally got into a good university; her grades were so poor. Jane: Well, she comes from a wealthy family, and a golden key can open every door.

**Arabic Example:** أحمد: أنا مستغرب كيف سارة انقبلت في جامعة جيدة! درجاتها ضعيفة مرة!..

محمد: انقبلت لأنها من أسرة غنية و المال فتاح الأبواب

Gold in both cultures is a precious metal, and most of the positive implications are obtained from the colour terms. The colour gold is connected with status, extravagance, and material means; hence, it hints that a good or service is costly and special. Psychologically, the colour gold is viewed as the colour of internal wisdom, quality, and prosperity. Gold medals are awarded to champions; hence, it is the colour of success. Furthermore, gold is applicable to money; therefore, in the Arabic idiom, its translation is “money,” implying that things come with the acquisition of money. Although the English equivalent is a non-idiomatic expression, it carries the same meaning as the Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression. However, by maintaining the meaning of the SL idiomatic expression, there is a translation loss in the TL non-idiomatic expression for the colour gold.

**5. English colour idiomatic expression:** out of the blue / out of a clear blue sky

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** فجأة/ بدون سابق إنذار

**Back translation:** All of a sudden/without warning

**English Example 1:** One day, completely out of the blue, I had a letter from her.

**Arabic Example 1:** وصلتني رسالة منها في أحد الأيام بدون سابق إنذار

**English Example 2:** The invasion came out of a clear blue sky and caught everyone off guard.

**Arabic Example 2:** صار الغزو فجأة و مسكوا الجميع فجأة و على حين غرة

The first colour idiomatic expression “out of the blue” exists in British, American, and Australian contexts and speeches. Another colour idiomatic expression that is similar in meaning to the aforementioned is “out of a clear (blue) sky,” which is popular in America as well as Australia.

When something happens out of the blue, it happens all at once and without warning and no one is expecting it.

In the above two English examples, the SL colour idiomatic expression “out of the blue” is translated into a TL non-idiomatic expression “فجأة أو بدون سابق إنذار”. As was pointed out, blue is the colour of the sky, and it is generally related to values such as quietness and calmness. Here, "بدون سابق إنذار" “without warning” is a symbol of calmness. The translator has kept both the meaning and the form of the SL idiom and has found an exact equivalent, albeit not a colour idiomatic expression. Consequently, the sense is not lost at all. As can be seen, the Arabic example above carries more or less the same meaning as the English idiom. In addition, the Arabic equivalent is still well-established and widely used in Arabic, although it is a non-idiomatic expression. Nida and Taber (1969) point out that “idioms are subjected to substantial modification because of semantic adjustments during translation” (p. 106). This is because it is rare for a similar nature of a special expression to contain the same meaning within the TL language. However, through the above example, one can safely assume that this strategy can be used to translate various colour idiomatic expressions that have no equivalent idioms in the TL with the same meaning in English.

### **4.1.2 Using an idiom of similar meaning and form**

This strategy involves using an idiom in the TL which conveys the same meaning as that of the source language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items (Baker, 1992, P.72). Some examples of this category are as follows:

**1. Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** يده خضراء

**Back translation:** His hand is green.

**English equivalent:** He has green fingers or a green thumb.

**English Example:** I’m afraid I don’t have green fingers. I’ve killed every plant I’ve ever owned. I was just admiring your beautiful plants, Helen. You must have a green thumb.

**Arabic Example:** للأسف إن يدي مو خضراء لأن نباتاتي كلها ماتت. و لكن نباتاتك يا هيلين كلها جميلة! أكيد إن يدك خضراء.

The initial colour idiomatic expression “green fingers” is used in Britain and Australia. In addition, a colour idiomatic expression that means the same as “green thumb” is used widely in America.

In the example above, the Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression "يده خضراء" and the English equivalent “green thumb” or “green fingers” seem to be positively used in Arabic culture to describe a successful gardener; everything he/she plants grows well. The relationship between the colour green and nature is also used in English and is present in the colour idiomatic expression “green fingers”(Philip 2006: 83). Green is peaceful; it is the colour of a spring meadow, freshness, and survival. It also symbolises fertility as well as growth. Furthermore, the colour green symbolises healing and instils a feeling of fulfilment. It is associated with growing, healing, beauty, and good luck.

The translator used this strategy because there is an equivalent colour idiomatic expression from the TL to the SL, as both cultures have the same meaning of the colour green. However, the English idiomatic expressions use the terms “fingers” and “thumb,” whereas it is “hand” in the Arabic idiomatic expression.

**2. English colour idiomatic expression:** Black sheep

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** بنت البطة السوداء

**Back translation:** The black duck’s daughter.

**English Example:** I have always been the black sheep in my family, I have a completely different personality to all of them, and we don’t even look the same!

**Arabic Example:** دايماً أُعتبر بنت البطة السوداء في عيلتي لأن شخصيتي مختلفة عنهم و ملامحي بعد

As a derogatory colloquialism in the English language, black sheep is taken to mean an outsider or someone who is different because others do not approve of him/her or they find him strange. This person either opts to be an outsider through his actions and the targets that alienate him from others, or he is someone who has been rejected by others (Stevens J. 2006).

As well as the Arabic equivalent, which means a person with a bad reputation among his friends, the colour black in this idiom gives the meaning of disrespect and rejection in both languages.

Therefore, the translator conveyed the meaning of the SL colour idiomatic expression by the strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning and form.

**3. English colour idiomatic expression:** sees red/beet red

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** فلان محمِّر

**Back translation:** He is red.

**English Example 1:** I could see my son up on the stage, his little face was beet red!

**Arabic Example 1:** أقدر أشوف ولدي و هو على المنصة و المسكين وجهه محمّر

**English Example 2:** John saw red when he heard someone shouting at his mother.

**Arabic Example 2:** احمرّ وجه جون لما سمع أحد يصرخ على أمه

The colour idiomatic expression “beet red” is used to describe dark red, usually the colour of a face (derives from beetroot), and the colour idiomatic expression “see red” is used to react with uncontrollable rage against someone or something.

In the above two examples, while the colour red in the colour idiomatic expression “see red” connotes anger and violence, it connotes embarrassment in the colour idiomatic expression “beet red.” The given equivalent in the Arabic language for the two English colour idiomatic expressions is a colour idiomatic expression with the same image as the SL idiom "فلان محمر".

Thus, if the SL colour idiomatic expression is "فلان محمر", the translator has to understand the whole context to be able to translate the Arabic colour idiom properly. The translator in this example has resorted to translating the two colour idiomatic expressions in the SL into an idiom of similar meaning and form in the TL. Ingo (1990) believes that idiomatic expressions should be translated into other idiomatic expressions in the TL that have similar semantic and stylistic features (p. 246). Bassnett-McGuire (1980) adds that the SL idiomatic expression should be substituted by a TL idiomatic expression that has the same meaning and purpose as the original one (p. 24).

In Arabic, when we say “فلان ﻣﺤﻤﺮ” “someone is red,” it is a warning that this person may react with uncontrollable rage against someone. The given equivalent in Arabic “فلان محْمَرّ” means that a person appears fairly red, thus implying exactly the same image represented by the English colour idiomatic expression, and both are applied when describing angry people.

In some instances in Arabic and English cultures, the colour red symbolises extremism. It is easily noticed and attracts attention quickly, thus influencing people to make decisions impulsively; this explains why fire trucks and fire extinguishers are painted red. Additionally, stop signs and traffic lights use the colour red to caution people about the possible dangers arising from an intersection.

**4. English colour idiomatic expression:** To be given something on a “silver plate/platter”

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** على طبق من ذهب

**Back translation:** I gave it to him on a gold plate.

**English Example:** The Internet provides huge quantities of information on a silver platter, but you don’t know if it’s accurate or true.

**Arabic Example:** الانترنت يعطينا معلومات كثيرة على طبق من ذهب بس محد يدري إذا كانت هالمعلومات دقيقة أو حتى صحيحة.  
In the example above, the Saudi colour idiomatic expression "طبق من ذهب", which means without work or effort, is translated into another colour idiom, “on a silver platter.” This colour idiomatic expression tends to be applied negatively in the two cultures to mean providing someone with an expensive item or reward that they do not deserve.

It is worth noting that silver and gold platters are not the only key aspects in the two colour idiomatic expressions, as their application means the nature of wealth as well as lifestyle, which may entail a domestic worker. Therefore, these colour idiomatic expressions may simply mean that someone has always received wealth from others without working for it.

Notably, from the aforementioned colour idiomatic expressions, it can be inferred that silver and gold are symbols of affluence, wealth, and an easy life. They play a huge role in the purification of mental, physical, and emotional issues and limitations because they create new avenues as well as lighting the future path. Silver and gold are symbols of prestige as well as wealth. They are associated with glamour, prosperity, and modernity. These colours are filled with versatility, brightness, and modernity, thus making someone attractive, glittering and trendy. Although the Arabic word "ذهب" “gold” has been translated into “silver,” the meaning of both colour idiomatic expressions is still the same.

### **4.1.3 Using an idiom which has same meaning but a different form**

There are certain idioms or frozen expressions in the TL that, although having diverse lexical points, simultaneously possess meanings that are parallel to the source idiom or expression. (Baker, 1992, p.74) Some examples of this category are as follows:

**1. Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** قلبه أسود/ أو دمه أزرق

**Back translation:** His heart is black / his blood is blue

**English equivalent:** black-hearted

According to Eiseman (2009), the colour black symbolises weight as well as strength; it adds a solid feel to objects (p. 1). However, it contains a negative meaning in both cultures, such as wrath, sadness, fear, and evil.For example, in the aforementioned Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression, "قلب أسود"means “black hearted,” a person who is filled with hatred.

Conversely, the SL colour idiomatic expression "دمه أزرق" “his blood is blue” may also be translated into the TL colour idiomatic expression “black-hearted.” The colour blue may be portrayed as a colour of positivity in English. However, in the Arabic culture, the colour is not favourable because it contains negative meanings. For instance, in Arabic, "دمه أزرق" “blue-blooded” in SL contexts is equal to the colour idiomatic expression “black-hearted.”

However, in the SL Arabic colour idiomatic expression "دمه أزرق" “blue blooded,” it would be imperative to understand its context in order to produce a correct translation. Similarly, having a contextual understanding enables the translator to choose a reliable approach. For instance, if in the SL it means "دم أزرق" “black-hearted,” it would be erroneous to translate the idiom using a literal translation strategy as “blue-blooded” because the colour idiomatic expression “blue-blooded” means "أرستقراطي" “aristocratic.” The SL colour idiomatic expression “blue-blooded” symbolises someone who has a noble background or is from the aristocracy. This colour idiomatic expression is based on the blue colour of the veins and fair complexion rather than of darkened skin. Notably, the translator uses the strategy of translating by paraphrase when translating the colour idiomatic expression “blue-blooded” as "أرستقراطي".

**2. English colour idiomatic expression:** A hedge between keeps friendship green.

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** زر غباً تزدد حبا

**Back translation:** Stay far and love will grow

**English Example:** Lynne and I are the best of friends, but we often like to spend time apart. A hedge between keeps friendship green.

**Arabic Example:** أنا و لين صديقات مقربات من بعض، لكن في نفس الوقت نسعى إننا نقضي بعض الوقت كل وحدة لحالها. لأن المثل يقول: زر غباً تزدد حبا.

With the help of another idiomatic expression consisting of a similar meaning but a different form in the TL, this SL colour idiomatic expression has been successfully translated. The colour green is used in the SL idiom and represents balance and harmony. Bearing the colour psychology in mind, the colour green not only represents growth but also establishes a balance between the head and the heart; hence, it balances the heart and the feelings. The implication is the same in the idioms of both languages. In Arabic, it means that one will have long-lasting relationships and friendships if one maintains certain boundaries. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, if friends respect each other’s privacy, their friendship will surely grow. While maintaining the meaning in the TL, the colour green was deleted in the translation. By employing one of the implications of “grow,” the SL portrays the meaning of the colour.

**3. English colour idiomatic expression:** Green-eyed or green with envy

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** عينه حارة

**Back translation:** His eye is hot.

**English Example:** Ahmad is a green-eyed monster.

**Arabic Example:** عين أحمد حارة

Notably, William Shakespeare produced many idiomatic expressions that are still applied in modern English speaking countries. His dramatic piece *Othello* pioneered the use of a “green-eyed monster” in relation to the thematic concerns of jealousy and betrayal that are at the core of the narrative. However, unlike the anticipated vision involving a toothy, viridian terror that many people conjured up, the Bard used the cat that played with the captured meal prior to consumption (Dennis, 2011).

The translation of the English colour idiomatic expressions “green-eyed” and “green with envy” into Arabic has been achieved using an idiom that has a similar meaning but a different form. As observed earlier, the SL colour idiomatic expression as well as its equivalent can be applied when describing a person whose heart is filled with jealousy and envy.

In some cases, the colour green contains negative meanings in the English culture; this may assume a possessive or materialistic form, alongside a desire to own people as well as property. The colour green symbolises envy, greed, lack of consideration, and self-centredness. However, it should be noted that in the Arabic culture, the colour green is associated with positive aspects; thus, the colour is lost when the translator translates the SL colour idiomatic expression for the colour green containing several meanings in the two cultures. However, the TL idiomatic expression still contains the meaning involving the SL colour idiom "عينه حارة" “his eye is hot,” as "حارة" “hot” in this idiomatic expression carries the meaning of red, which is associated with envy in the Arabic culture.

**4. English colour idiomatic expression:** He is in a brown study.

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** غارق في تفكيره

**Back translation:** Sunken in his thinking

**English Example:** Ahmad walked around in a brown study, trying to think of a solution to his problem.

**Arabic example:** كان أحمد غارق في تفكيره عشان يلقى حل لمشكلته.

In the above example, the translator decides to use an idiomatic expression that is similar in meaning but different in form because the SL colour idiomatic expression lacks a specific equivalent in the targeted language. The colour brown in the context of the SL colour idiomatic expression implies being absorbed in personal thoughts, seemingly from “brown” in the sense of “gloomy**.”**

Although the meaning of the colour brown is the same in English and Arabic cultures because it is a severe, simple colour that symbolises stable structures, the Saudi Arabic idiomatic expression lacks the word brown; however, its purpose does not change. The Arabic idiomatic expression “غارق في التفكير"is related to hard work, being active and reliable, with one’s two feet planted firmly on the ground. Someone who is deeply engrossed in thought may be thoughtful in terms of trying to find a lasting solution to a problem.

**5. English colour idiomatic expression:** Pot calling the kettle black (shorter version—pot kettle black)

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** الشبكة تعاير المنخل

**Back translation:** The net calibrates the sieve.

**English Example:** Elliot accused me of being selfish. Talk about the pot calling the kettle black!

**Arabic Example:** اتهمتني إليوت بإني أناني و المشكلة إن الشبكة تعاير المنخل!

The colour idiomatic expression “pot calling the kettle black” has been used with reference to a person who criticises others for doing the same thing that he/she has done. It was initially used in early 17th-century literature, particularly by Cervantes in the book *Don Quixote*; this expression originated from the ancient kitchen, when pots and kettles made from sturdy cast iron would be blackened with soot from the fire (Banard, 2009).

In the above example, the translator uses an idiom that contains a similar meaning but has a different form because the SL colour idiomatic expression lacks a specific equivalent in the targeted language.

In both cultures, the colour black is associated with negative and positive meanings. However, it should be noted that several idiomatic expressions that use the colour black in the form of a synonym to imply negativity exist in the two cultures. For instance, the aforementioned colour idiomatic expression contains negative aspects of the colour black. Black in this idiomatic expression symbolises disrespect and rejection in both languages.

While retaining the TL meaning, the colour black was omitted from the translation. By adopting the implication of imperfection, the SL indicates the meaning in the colour.

### **4.1.4 Translating SL colour idiomatic expressions using a literal translation strategy**

As Newmark (1988) states, word-for-word translation is an approach in which the grammatical structure in the SL is changed to its closest TL equivalent; words, however, have to be translated individually, out of context. Some examples of this category are as follows:

**1. Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** القاعدة الذهبية

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** Golden rule

**Arabic example:**"القاعدة الذهبية في التدريس هي الوضوح"

**English example:** The golden rule of teaching is to be clear

“Golden rule,” as defined in *Collins English Dictionary*, is any important principle (Golden Rule, n.d.).

In the aforementioned colour idiomatic expression, the colour golden in English and Arabic languages symbolises wisdom, quality, and prosperity; thus, it is a colour associated with success. The SL colour idiomatic expression is literally translated into the TL because the colour golden has a similar meaning in the two cultures.

**2. Saudi Arabic example:** الضوء الأخضر

**English equivalent:** Green light

**Arabic example:** عطوهم الضوء الأخضر عشان يفتحون سوقين مركزيين في المنطقة

**English example:** They have just received the green light to establish two supermarkets in the town.

A green light implies giving someone permission to engage in a certain activity (*Cambridge Idioms Dictionary*, 2006). In the two languages, the colour green is a symbol of revival as well as vigour; its meaning is closely related to development as well as safety. Additionally, the colour green is believed to have powers of healing and is regarded as cool and soothing for visualisation in humans. This colour can be used in the enhancement of vision, perseverance, hope, and stability. In addition, green symbolises regrowth and rebirth.

The colour green has a physical and mental effect on human beings in different ways. This colour soothes, relaxes, and revives. The colour green can be used in the alleviation of anxiety, nervousness, and depression.

In the aforementioned example, the translator chose word-for-word translation for the original language idiom to the targeted language idiom because green in this colour idiomatic expression has the same connotation in both English and Saudi Arabic cultures.

**3. Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** السجادة الحمراء

**English equivalent:** To roll out a “red carpet”

**Arabic example:** استقبلوا الرؤساء العرب على السجادة الحمراء

**English example:** They rolled out the red carpet to welcome the Arab presidents.

Rolling out a red carpet means greeting someone with respect and giving them a cordial welcome (Bright, 2008). The colour red in the two cultures symbolises a creative spirit, high-quality leadership, ambitions, and determination. This colour attracts attention, instils a sense of confidence, energizes, stimulates excitement, empowers, strengthens, and encourages people. This requires a word-for-word translation from the original language idiom to the targeted language idiom because the colour red carries the meaning in both languages.

**4. English colour idiomatic expression:** White lie

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** كذبة بيضاء

**English example:** I told her a white lie to help her. I didn’t want to frustrate her

**Arabic example:** كذبت عليها كذبة بيضاء عشان أساعدها و لأني ما بغيت أحبطها

According to the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary*, a white lie is a lie that is told in order to be polite or to prevent someone from being upset by the truth.

Along the same lines, a white lie is one that lacks evil intent, as opposed to a black lie, which is most certainly malevolent, although normally we do not bother to specify that lies are evil. A white lie is harmless or trivial, frequently one said in order to avoid hurting someone’s feelings. The term was first found in the 18th century, when it suggested something slightly different:

A certain Lady of the highest Quality...makes a judicious distinction between a white Lie and a black Lie. A white Lie is that which is not intended to injure anybody in his fortune, interest, or reputation but only to gratify a garrulous disposition and the itch of amusing people by telling them wonderful Stories. (“worldwidewords,”2014).

White indicates cleanliness in both languages; white is the height of completion and purity; it is the colour of flawlessness. This is a word-for-word translation of the SL idiom into the TL idiom, as the colour white has the same connotation in both languages.

Sometimes it is better to tell a white lie than to tell someone a painful truth.

**5. English colour idiomatic expression:** Blacklist

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** القائمة السوداء

**English example:** This person is on my blacklist. I cannot trust him anymore.

**Arabic example:** هالشخص في القائمة السوداء لأني ما عاد أقدر أثق فيه أبد

A blacklist refers to a group of people or institutions that have been disapproved of, suspended, outlawed, or penalised (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2009).To blacklist a person usually holds a similar meaning as well as connotation, although in a contemporary perspective, it does not imply a literal blacklist. However, during the reign of King Charles II, the expression suggested the existence of a black book in which the names of his father’s murderers were listed. Notably, “black book” may be applied in place of “blacklist”; however, preference is usually given to the latter (Thomson, 2011).

Black usually carries a negative meaning in both cultures. This colour absorbs other colours and it means lack of light. Black is a symbol of mystery, satanic acts, aggression, sophistication, and rebellion. This entails a word-for-word translation involving the original language idiom to the targeted language idiom because the colour black has a similar meaning in both languages.

### **4.1.5 Translating by paraphrase**

This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the TL or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the SL and TL (Baker, 1992, p. 74). Some examples of this category are as follows:

**1.Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expression:** وجه خمري

**Back translation:** Red dark face

**English equivalent:** Glamorous face

**Arabic example:** محمد يبي يتزوج وحدة وجهها خمري و شعرها أسود

**English example:** Mohammed wants to marry a lady with a glamorous face and black hair.

In the above example, the Arabic colour idiomatic expression "وجهها خمري" when translated means “glamorous face.” In Arabic, describing a woman by saying "وجهها خمري" “her face is russet” implies that the woman is beautiful. The translator has decided to use the paraphrasing technique because an equivalent colour idiomatic expression in the TL does not exist.

**2. English colour idiomatic expression:** A black tie event

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** مناسبة رسمية

**Back translation:** ‘Formal occasion’

**English Example:** I am invited this evening to a black tie event.

**Arabic Example:** أنا معزوم الليلة في مناسبة رسمية

Based on British and American standard costume of the 19th century, black tie is a dress policy for evening events and social gatherings. It represents a formal social gathering. Black imparts an impact of weight and power; it gives a solid feeling to things, as declared by an American color expert, Eiseman (2009, p.1). It can give a person a feeling of authority. It is in English as well as Arabic a symbol of power, style, decorum, classiness, prosperity, secrecy, intensity, and elegance. Because of the power of the color black, it has been translated to “رسمية” which means formal.

**3.English colour idiomatic expression:** Blue Monday

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** وصف ليوم الاثنين الذي يأتي بعد عطلة و يكون غير مبهج

**Back translation:** A Monday that is depressing or trying especially because of the return to work and routine after a weekend (Webster, 2010).

**English Example:** It is a blue Monday! Time to go back to work after a weekend of rest.

**Arabic Example:** "يوم الإثنين يضيق الصدر! لأنه أول يوم للشغل بعد الإجازة"

In both cultures, the colour blue is normally used for relating present and future events with previous experiences. In the above example, blue is associated with sadness, depression, and rigidness. When this colour is used to describe people and things, this implies that they are rude, mentally unstable, unhappy, and frigid. Being blue means being depressed because the colour blue creates melancholic, negative, and sadistic feelings. In some instances, people feel saddened when they resume work after resting over the weekend. Thus, the meaning portrayed by the colour idiomatic expression “blue Monday” is “end of the weekend.” Because an equivalent TL idiomatic expression for the SL idiom does not exist, the translator uses the paraphrasing technique.

**4. English colour idiomatic expression:** Black spot

**Saudi Arabic equivalent:** مكان في الطرق العمومية تكثر فيه الحوادث

**Back translation:** A place on a road where accidents frequently occur.

**English Example:** Do not go from that road; there is a black spot at the end of it.

**Arabic Example:** لا تروح من ذاك الطريق. لأن في آخره مكان تكثر فيه الحوادث

In the above example, the English colour idiomatic expression “black spot” has been used. In this example, the colour black symbolises tragedy, mystery, and evil. Its equivalent in the Arabic language is not an idiomatic expression; however, it contains a similar image as the SL idiom. In this case, the translator uses this strategy because an Arabic equivalent for the English idiom that carries a similar meaning and function does not exist. The use of the colour black in this colour idiomatic expression implies fear. It is associated with the unknown, the unseen and the cautious, and thus creates a mysterious aura. It keeps things out of sight. Hence, in the earlier example, the SL colour idiomatic expression coupled with its equivalent is used to describe a place that is unsafe. This strategy is useful, particularly when an equivalent in the TL does not exist; however, it should only be used as a last resort.

# Chapter Five

# 5.1 Findings and conclusion

This chapter explains the findings in connection with the whole study. It includes the results of the data analysis on the chosen translation strategies applied to colour idiomatic expressions in both English as well as Saudi Arabic. Consequently, some of the similarities and the differences between the connotations of colours are mentioned among both languages. Furthermore, a recommendation for further research is provided in order to expand the study to include different Arab regions. The final part is the conclusion, which summarizes the content of the study and emphasizes the differences between English and Arabic cultures despite the similarities.

## 5.2 Statement of findings

The results from this research indicate several selected translation strategies, which feature prominently within the data, whereas others are rarely seen. The following part provides an appropriate answer to the research question, which mainly entails an investigation of the strategies that characterise the procedure for translating colour idiomatic expressions between English and Saudi Arabic. In the subsequent parts, an insight into the outcomes and findings pertaining to the chosen translation strategies used for translating specific colour idiomatic expressions are provided.

### **5.2.1 Results of analysing Saudi Arabic and English data**

The researcher counted the Saudi Arabic and English data, which were examined by the chosen translation strategies. In total, the collected Saudi Arabic data amounted to nine colour idiomatic expressions, whereas the English data amounted to fourteen.

### **5.2.2 Findings on the chosen translation strategies used to examine the data**

As the analysis clarifies, for both English and Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions, the most frequently used translation strategy was to translate idioms with non-idiomatic expressions. Because idiomatic expressions are almost always language-specific expressions, unsurprisingly the most common translation strategy for colour idiomatic expressions in this data was translation using non-idiomatic expression of TL. To an extent, this confirms translation scholars’ claims about the translation of idiomatic expressions. To quote, for example, Nida and Taber (1969), “the most frequently sourced language idioms are shifted to TL as non-idioms (p. 106).” The second most commonly chosen strategy, again for both English and Saudi Arabic, was theuse of an idiom of similar meaning and form. This strategy seems to be the best solution; however, as Baker (1992) implies, the strategy relies on the various effects of the SL and TL texts. These effects include the register, style register, and the rhetorical effects. Therefore, the wrong equivalents remain famous among people. The third most commonly applied translation strategy was to use an idiom that has the same meaning but a different form. These outcomes were fairly reasonable because, during the process of the data analysis, the researcher revealed many similarities between English and Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions. It was then estimated that there were probably more translated colour idiomatic expressions with idioms of similar meaning and form than idioms which have the same meanings but different forms. Literal translation in the English and Saudi Arabic data was the fourth most commonly used strategy. As mentioned at the beginning of the research, many translation theorists have strictly prohibited the use of the word-for-word translation strategy, which they consider wholly inappropriate because it changes the meaning of the original idiomatic expressions and results in meaningless expressions in the TL. However, although literal translation sometimes gives different meanings or even no meaning in the TL, the analysis of this study showed that this strategy can work successfully in some cases and under certain circumstances. Finally, translation by paraphrasing was the least commonly used strategy. Because of cultural differences, translators may sometimes be unable to translate colour idiomatic expressions using idioms from the TL. Thus, this strategy is usually translators’ last resort to explain the meaning of the idiomatic expression. However, the results of this procedure may be acceptable in some cases. The outcomes of this study suggest that whereas the translation of idiomatic expressions is considered a difficult task, this difficulty can be overcome as the meaning of idiomatic expressions can always be translated into other languages by some means or other. The actual problem lies in the translation of idiomatic expressions whose idiomatic features do not always exist in the TL idiomatic expressions rather than their alleged untranslatability.

### **5.2.3 Findings on the similarities and differences between English and Saudi Arabic cultures**

The research question concerns the presence of cultural similarities and differences between colour idiomatic expressions in English and Saudi Arabic. The similarities are as follows:

* In analysing English and Saudi Arabic colour idiomatic expressions, some colours have exactly the same images or symbols in both English and Saudi cultures. Examples include the colour silver for “wealth,” green’ for “growth and harmony,” white for “cleanness,” and black for “mystery.”
* There are some colour idiomatic expressions that have the same image and concept in both English and Saudi Arabic cultures regardless of the fact that they do not connote the same colour meanings. These include blue and green for “envy” and gold and silver for “wealth.”

The differences are as follows:

* Generally, the major difference between the English and Arabic languages lies in the regularity and diversity of colour idiomatic expressions in these languages. Whereas in English the richness of colour idiomatic expressions is outstanding, in Saudi Arabic they are rather insignificant. In other words, the use of colour idiomatic expressions in English culture is more metaphorical than in Saudi Arabic. This is why there is a smaller amount of Saudi Arabic data in this data analysis than English data.
* In general, the use of colour idiomatic expressions is normal in English in both formal and informal speech, even when the written mode is associated with a high level of formality; however, in Arabic, idioms are mostly used in informal speech.
* In English and Arabic, there are some colour idiomatic expressions that are totally different, both in the use of colour expressions and of pictures; for instance, envy is signified by green in English but by red in Arabic.
* In almost every language, there are a few extraordinary colour terms ascribed to idioms that may not be found in any other dialect whatsoever, such as "خمري" “russet” in Arabic.

## 5.3 Limitations and recommendations

Colour idiomatic expressions are translatable by various methods; however, in exceptional circumstances each one demands a specific procedure. Because most colour idiomatic expressions in one language do not normally have equivalent colour idiomatic expressions in another language, there does not appear to be one “best” procedure. Then again, employing a word-for-word strategy without considering its limitations may produce an ungainly and unnatural translation. At that point, the strategy of translating any colour idiomatic expression with an ordinary, non-colour idiomatic expression may be suitable when there is no corresponding TL equivalent that carries the same connotation of the source language colour idiomatic expression. Nevertheless, when translating colour idiomatic expressions, interpreters and translators must be consistently mindful of social and lexical diversities.

In summary, based on these findings, the researcher is hopeful to find more examples of Saudi colour idiomatic expressions. I anticipate some limitations (restricted Saudi colour idiomatic expressions), which may require the research to expand to different Arab regions.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, translating colour idiomatic expressions is a complex issue. This research explained translation strategies from the different viewpoints of translation theorists and the ways in which they are affected by different cultures. It stressed that, because of cultural issues, it may sometimes be difficult to find the exact equivalents of certain words or terms if they do not exist in the other culture or if they have different connotations. Cultural translation theorists stress that the translator should be aware of cultural differences and their significance when dealing with a colour idiomatic expression in order to convey the exact meaning. Moreover, because idioms are highly representative of any culture and show the values of any speech community, Saudi Arabic colour idioms were taken as a model to be analysed and modified with illustrative examples to show that differences between cultures may affect the choice of equivalents.

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