

Color Idiomatic Expressions in the Translation of Naguib Mahfouz's Novel "*The Thief and the Dogs*": A Case Study

Jamal Azmi Salim¹ & Mohammad Mehawesh¹

¹ Department of English Language and Translation, Faculty of Arts, Zarqa University, Jordan

Correspondence: Jamal Azmi Salim, Department of English Language and Translation, Faculty of Arts, Zarqa University, Jordan. E-mail: jamalazmi1964@yahoo.com

Received: May 21, 2013 Accepted: June 13, 2013 Online Published: July 17, 2013

doi:10.5539/ijel.v3n4p107 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v3n4p107>

This research is funded by the Deanship of Research and Graduate Studies at Zarqa University-Jordan.

Abstract

Colors play a vital role in people's communication. They do not only express the colors themselves, but are also endowed with cultural characteristics of each nation. In other words, colors in different languages and cultures may convey different associative meaning and people from different cultures react to colors in different ways.

The aim of this study is to investigate the translation of color idiomatic expressions from Arabic into English in Naguib Mahfouz's novel "*The Thief and the Dogs*" and to what extent is color idiomatic expressions retained, wasted and distorted. Moreover, the study aims at exploring the different translation strategies applied in translating color idiomatic expressions in this novel and finding out the similarities and differences between their meaning in both languages.

The study mainly focuses on the most common colors: black, white, yellow, red, green and blue. For the purpose of the study, a number of Arabic idiomatic expressions along with their equivalents in English were gathered from the novel and were contrastively studied side-by-side with their translations.

Keywords: color, idiomatic expressions, translation

1. Introduction

Idiomatically, languages use colors to express moods and feelings. In each language, there are numerous expressions in which color plays an important role. In most cases there is no equivalent in other languages and when translating them literally the meaning is lost. Thus, Color idiomatic expressions are considered to be one of the most difficult problems that a translator may encounter. These expressions are often used beyond their original meaning. They are difficult because of their unpredictable meaning and grammar. Furthermore, color idiomatic expressions may be culture bound and this may cause greater problems for the translator. Thus, a translator must choose the most appropriate strategy when translating color idiomatic expressions. Color idiomatic expressions must be recognized, understood and analyzed before appropriate translation methods can be considered. The ability to identify color idiomatic expressions is of enormous importance, since their meaning may not be understood literally. In other words, the translator must first analyze what the writer has meant before s/he can even think of translating the expression. Larson (1984, p. 143) points out that the first step in the translation of idioms is to be absolutely certain of the meaning of the source language idiom. Therefore the most important issue in translating color idioms is the ability to distinguish the difference between the literal meaning and the real meaning of the expression. This is why recognizing and being able to use color idioms appropriately requires excellent command of the source language.

The translation of idiomatic expressions in general, and color idiomatic expressions in particular usually meets some difficulties that are hard to overcome. Color idiomatic expressions express the uniqueness of the language and culture they originated in. Thus, one can safely assume that translating color idiomatic expressions is quite difficult, especially if the translator is not aware of the cultural differences of the source and the target languages. History also plays an important role in the origin of color idioms. That is the case of English Expressions such as "blue blood" and "red carpet" which go back to the Middle Ages.

To set a scene for our discussion, consider the idiom “black-faced”. It designates fury in English, whereas it signifies humiliation and disgrace in Arabic. In English, for instance, the color term “blue” may be associated with grief as in “I have the blues”, whereas in Arabic only dark blue may be associated with calamities as a substitute of black in that case. Such instances can be serious pitfalls for translators unless they are aware of the differences that each color underlies. Colors are not used haphazardly but, rather, symbolically depending on the impressions or feelings each color may arouse. Though color symbolism is looked upon differently by different cultures and peoples, human beings seem to have oneness in experiencing color expressions, with relative differences among mankind. Simply, each individual sees color in a very personal way, and each color produces an impression on the mind that addresses at once the eye and the feelings.

Before going deep, there is a need firstly to define idioms to distinguish them from non-idioms.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Definition of Idioms

The term idiom is generally used in a variety of different senses. Idioms can be considered an integral part of language, “they give information about conceptions of the world considered by linguistic communities” (Carine, 2005, p. 495). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 246), an idiom is “an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts”. In the same vein, Mc Mordiew (1983, p. 4) points out that an idiom is “a number of words which taken together, mean something different from the individual words of the idiom when they stand alone”. Makkai (1972, p. 122) defines “idiom” as multiword expressions whose meaning is not predictable from their component parts.

Jakaitiené (1980), Jackson (1988) and Grant and Bauer (2004) claim that idiom refers to a special kind of unit which is fixed and semantically opaque or metaphorical, and not the sum of its parts. In his discussion of fixed expressions, Jackson (1988, p. 106) describes *idiom* as having “non literal, metaphorical meaning”. Jackson and Amvela (2001, p. 665) agree that an idiom can be defined as “a phrase the meaning of which can not be predicted from the individual meanings of the morphemes it comprises”. That is to say, the real meaning of an idiom can only be clear if the expression is treated as one unit.

Thus, an idiom which is specific to a specific language conveys a distinct meaning. As Moon tells us, “different terms are used to describe the same or very similar kinds of unit; simultaneously, one term may be used to describe very different phenomena” (1998, p. 2).

2.2 Classification of Idioms

Fernando (1996, pp. 60-63) distinguishes three different groups of idioms, as follows:

(1) Pure idioms – they are opaque to users of language with respect to all or some of the words that make them up. Formally such idioms are multiword expressions functioning as a single semantic unit whose meaning of individual words can not be summed together to produce the meaning of the whole. For instance, *smell the rat* meaning “becoming suspicious” but not “sense rodent with olfactory organs” is a totally pure idiom, where a feature of complete non-literality is evident, resulting in “a new meaning-different form what the same unit would have had if each word were void-is now associated with the idiom” (Fernando, 1996, pp. 60-63).

(2) Semi-idioms – the typical result of such idioms is partial non-literality, since one component generally keeps its direct meaning. For instance, in semi-idioms such as *rain cats and dogs* meaning “rain heavily” or *blue film* meaning “obscene film”, one component here “rain” and “film” sustains their direct meanings. Fernando (1996, p. 63) adds “what is evident in such idioms is that a single meaning different from the separate meanings of each word is imposed on the whole unit”.

(3) Literal idioms – can be interpreted on the basis of their parts. Components of such idioms are always used in their direct meaning; although, such combination sometimes needs figurative sense. Regarding this type, Fernando deems that very often literal expressions are quite often considered idioms only on the grounds of compositeness and fixity (1996, p. 63).

2.3 Translating Idioms

The meaning of idioms should never be understood literally. That is to say the translator must first analyze what the writer has intended to say before s/he can even think of translating the expression. Larson (1984, p. 143) points out that the first crucial step in the translation of idioms is to be absolutely certain of the meaning of the source language idiom. Therefore the most important issue in translating idioms is the ability to distinguish the difference between the literal meaning and the real meaning of the expression. This is why recognizing and being able to use idioms appropriately requires excellent command over the source language.

Larson (1984, p. 143) stresses the importance of the ability to use target language idioms naturally; because that ensures that the translator can produce smooth target language text as well as preserve the stylistic features of the source text.

Bassnett-McGuire (1980, p. 24), on the other hand, states that idioms should be translated on the basis of the function of the phrase: the source language idiom should be replaced by a target language idiom that has the same meaning.

From a practical point of view, Baker (1992, p. 65) points out that "the main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret the idiom correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or affixed expression conveys into the target language".

Furthermore, Baker (1992, pp. 68-71) deals with the difficulties in translating idioms and establishes the following categories:

1. An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language.
2. An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different.
3. An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time.
4. The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the context in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source language and in the target language.

Baker adds that we cannot do any of the following with an idiom:

1. Change the order of the word.
2. Delete a word from it.
3. Add a word to it.
4. Replace its word with another.
5. Change its grammatical structure.

Nida and Taber (1969, p. 106) exclude the literal translation strategy and propose three translation strategies for idioms:

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

They (1969, p. 106) also maintain that "the most frequently source language idioms are shifted to target language non- idioms", although the ideal is to find a target language idiom that has the same meaning as the original one.

Awwad (1990, pp. 57-67) identifies two major difficulties when translating idioms. The first one is misinterpreting the intention of the writer or speaker, and the second is recognizing the cultural differences among languages with regard to both traditional and innovative idioms. In addition, he (1990, p. 59) establishes the following categories:

1. Expressions and functions correspond in both languages;
2. Functions correspond in both languages but expressions are completely different;
3. Functions correspond but expressions differ slightly;
4. Both expressions and functions differ and language specific.

Newmark (1981, p. 125) points out that idiom should never be translated word for word. He (1991, p. 61) holds that "literal translation of L2 idioms may also be useful as a pathway to comprehension and memorization. The distinction between word- for- word and global meanings of idioms and standard collocations has to be made clear". That is to say we cannot translate an idiom literally, since the result will usually be unintelligible in the receptor language. The best translation strategy for idioms is translating them with a natural target language idiom which has the same meaning and effect as the original source language idiom.

3. Data Collection and Methodology

The material for this study was collected from Naguib Mahfouz's novel "*The Thief and the Dogs*" and its English translation by Adel Ata Elyas. The data of the present study consists of altogether 13 Arabic color idiomatic expressions and their English translation. The researchers believe that the quality of the data takes priority of the

quantity. In other words, it seems reasonable to only analyze color expressions which are highly idiomatic and reveal the applied translation strategies. It should be noted that the strategies which are used in this study are those proposed by Baker (1992).

3.1 Naguib Mahfouz's Novel

The Thief and the Dogs (الكلب واللص): It charts the life of Said Mahran, a thief that had then been recently released from jail and intent on having his vengeance on the people who put him there. Said is not only a thief, but a kind of revolutionary anarchist.

Said's world revolves around Nabawiyya, his former wife, and Sana', his daughter. Once in love with the former, she has now betrayed him by marrying his friend 'Ilish. Central to the making of Said Mahran is also Ra'uf 'Ilwan, his one-time criminal mentor, who used the same revolutionist rhetoric, but now, being a respected journalist and businessman, is in seeming opposition to Said, whose outlook hasn't changed. These perceived betrayals throw the protagonist into the utmost confusion and his initial calculation in revenge becomes ever more a wild flailing against the whole world. Only Nur, a prostitute, and Tarzan, a café-owner, provide Said with any respite from his anger and the world at large which is closing in on him, yet in time even they cannot help him.

4. Discussion

4.1 Colors in English and Arabic

Colors and their symbolic signification can be problematic, particularly in translation. Some of their symbolic uses and meanings differ from one culture to another. Some symbolic uses are universal such as the color "red" which is a universal symbol of blood, but there are cases peculiar to particular cultures. Thus, the perception of color idioms depends widely on the culture in question. One color might be interpreted in one way in Arabic and in a totally different way in English. Furthermore, color meaning may be a matter of context. In other words, the meaning of color idioms is determined by the context it is used in, and that is why color idioms could have a multitude of additional meanings other than its dictionary meaning. According to Xing (2009, p. 88), each color term has three kinds of meaning: original meaning, extended meaning and abstract meaning. As for original meaning, it is the etymological meaning of the color. Extended meaning is defined as the meaning extended from the original meaning through metaphor or other cognitive means and lastly is the abstract meaning which refers to the meaning that has been further abstracted from the extended meaning. For example, the extended meaning of this color indicates that it has a positive association such as with "gold", and the abstract meaning indicates that it has a negative function such as "yellow smile" (cruel). According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006, p. 229), color is primarily related to affect". And Halliday sees affect as an aspect of the interpersonal meta function. Halliday believes that color is used meta functionally, and it is therefore a mode in its own right. Kress and Leeuwen (2006, p. 29) add "again color is also used to convey interpersonal meaning" and "it can be and is used to do things to or for each other". Colors and their underlying sociological and historical connotation produce specific reactions in particular contexts – emotions, and associations.

On his part, Berlin/Kay (1969, p. 4) considered black and white as the most basic color term, occurring in all languages before any other color term.

White is the color that indicates purity, cleanliness, piety, holiness, and neutrality in many cultures. It is the reflection of light. It indicates the abstract positive meaning of good, fine and worthy day. It is well-known that doctors work with white coats, brides traditionally wear white gowns. Similarly, white is viewed positively in Arabic. It is associated with purity, harmless and innocent. It is the color that symbolizes luck and purity. In Arab countries, the bride wears white wedding clothes in her wedding ceremony. There are also phrases like "a white day" (يوم ابيض) that means lucky day, "a white lie" (كذبة بيضاء) that means a lie without intention and "a white heart" (قلب ابيض) that means a pure or innocent heart. If we say s/he has a white heart, then it is a compliment. We also have the color term "white night" (ليلة بيضاء) which means a sleepless night in both Arabic and English.

Black, Wyler (1992, p. 156) argues that when black occurs in figurative usage, it is often understood in antithetical opposition to white or light and generally occurs with negative connotations. All kinds of ill deeds occur under the cover of night, because they go easily unseen. Eiseman (2009, p. 1), an American color specialist, states that black gives an impression of weight and strength; it gives objects a solid feel. He adds that [...] spatially, blackness implies vast emptiness and a more foreboding perception of infinity than blue skies depict because black is authoritative and powerful; black can evoke strong emotions, too much can be overwhelming. This color can make one feel inconspicuous. It represents power, sexuality, sophistication, formality, elegance, wealth, mystery, depth and style. However, it also has negative associations, such as sadness, remorse, anger, fear, evil, anonymity, unhappiness. In western cultures this is the color of mourning and death. In Arabic, black is associated with evil.

Therefore, black-handed is used for a person with dirty hands. It is sometimes associated with bad luck and related to depression, pessimism, death and hatred. Moreover, it is associated with funeral clothes and other things pertaining to death (Allan, 2009, p. 627). In Arabic culture too, this color refers to the negative or unfavorable meanings or things which people do not like in the world, perhaps because of the lack of light (Salah, 2006). For instance, “black magic” (سحر أسود) means demonic magic, “black hearted” (قلب أسود) means one who is full of hatred, “black day” (يوم أسود) indicates a bad end. In Arabic culture, however, black is sometimes associated with positive connotations such as when we describe a woman that she has “black eyes” (عيون سود). It means that she has beautiful black eyes, so it is a sign of beauty.

Red is the most common color repeated after “black” or “white”. Eiseman (2009, p. 2) points out that red embodies excitement and passion, both positively and negatively. One of the common associations for red is blood. As Smith (2009, p. 1) suggests, the color red holds its place in culture too; the prominence of the color red during Valentine’s Day is a good case in point. Similarly, a flushed face at anger or embarrassment serves the same case. Furthermore, he adds that red increases enthusiasm, excitement, stimulates energy and increases the blood pressure, heartbeat, and even the pulse rate (Smith, 2009, p. 1). Red, however, may also have negative connotations such as anger, shame, and aggression in Arabic. Furthermore, it is a symbol of blood and red rose (Houghton, 2007). The connection between red and blood is due to the physical manifestation of blood causing the face to flush in emotional arousal. In addition, Arabic speakers say “show the red eye” for being strict with someone or warning and threatening and “see the world red” which means anger. Itten (1961, p. 134) observes that red is the color of revolution because it is linked with spilled blood.

Blue is the overwhelming color. It is the color of our nature (James, 2004). It is the color of ocean and sky, blue is perceived as a constant in peoples’ lives. This color calms and sedates cools and aids intuition. In English, “light blue” is a symbol of cleanliness. The color blue is a favorable one in English, and it carries positive connotations. In Arabic, it is not much favorable as it has some negative connotations. In Jordan, for example, “blue blooded” (دمه أزرق) is equivalent to black-hearted.

However, it has some positive connotations in some contexts such as peace, tranquility, harmony, trust and even confidence. For instance, “blue bead” (خرزة زرقاء) used as a preventive measure to avoid an envious person i.e. the evil eye.

In Arabic, the green color is considered to be the color of peace and growth. This color offers a sense of renewal, self-control, health, safety and harmony. Green might have also negative emotions: jealousy, inexperience and misfortune, etc. In English, green usually associates with envy as in Shakespeare’s Othello *the green eyed monster*, whereas in Arabic the color that associates with envy is blue. In Jordanian culture, “blue-eyed and spaced teeth” used to describe an envious person. Moreover, the idiom *to have a green thumb* (يد خضراء) used in both English and Arabic to describe people who have a special ability in cultivating plants. In addition, unlike Arabic, the green color is usually associated with bad luck in English.

The yellow color stimulates mental processes and the nervous system. It activates memory and encourages communication. In addition, this color signals dishonesty, cowardice, betrayal, jealousy, deceit and illness. In Arabic, yellow is viewed negatively. It is a symbol of death, disease, and, in some context fear. For instance, “yellow as lemon” (اصفر مثل الليمونة) means fearful and “yellow-eyed” (عيونه صفراء) is used for people with liver disease. Yellow is sometimes viewed positively; it is the color of nature, i.e. the sun, the autumn and Arab land (Ibrahim, 2008).

4.2 Adopted Translation Strategies

This section of the study is focusing on revealing the translation strategies that the translator followed while translating the novel. By analyzing the collected data, four translation strategies have been identified. These strategies are:

1. Translation of an Arabic color idiomatic expression by using an English idiom of similar meaning and form.
2. Translation by cultural substitution
3. Translation by paraphrasing.
4. Translation by omission.

4.2.1 Classification of Arabic Color Idiomatic Expressions and Their Translation according to Their Translation Strategies

1. Translation of Arabic color idiomatic expression by using an idiom of similar meaning and form of English language idiom.

This strategy involves the usage of a color idiom in the target language, which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source language idiom, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical item. In other words, the translator tries to find an idiom in the target language which is equivalent in both, meaning and lexical items. Although this strategy is considered an ideal solution, but, as Baker (1992, p. 72) puts it, "it depends on the style, register and rhetorical effects of the SL and TL texts". Some examples of this category are as follows:

Example one:

A. وفتح عينيه فرأى الدنيا حمراء ولا شئى فيها ولا معنى لها (ص. 90)

B. He opened his eyes to see a red world without meaning or significance. (P. 161).

In the above example, we have the Arabic idiom "رأى الدنيا حمراء". Here the color "أحمر" associates with anger and/or horror. The given equivalent in English language is an idiom with same image of the SL idiom "see a red world". The translator in this example resorted to translate an idiom in the SL into an idiom in the TL. Ingo (1990, p. 246) believes that idioms should be translated with a semantically and stylistically corresponding idiom in the TL. By the same token, Bassnet-Mc-Guire (1980, p. 24) argues that the SL idiom should be replaced by a TL idiom that has the same meaning and function as the original idiom.

Example two:

A. نظرة محمرة وانذار يتحرك في شفئك (ص. 70)

B. A reddish look and a warning moving between your lips. (P. 135).

In Arabic, when we say 'to show someone the red eye' "نظرة محمرة", it means to warn and threaten him. It can also mean to react with uncontrollable rage against someone. The given equivalent in English is "reddish look", which means fairly red color. It implies exactly the same image of the Arabic idiom, and both of them are employed to describe an angry person.

Example three:

A. فقال سعيد وهو يدعك عينيه المحمرتين (ص. 91)

B. Sa'eed said as he rubbed his bloodshot eyes (P. 161).

It is observed in this example that the translator translated the Arabic idiom "عينيه المحمرتين" into a TL idiom "bloodshot eyes" which means thin lines of blood in the eyes or surrounded by red because of lack of sleep.

Example Four:

A. فتطلع من النافذة الى زرقة الفجر (ص. 88)

B. Ho looked through the window at the blue color of dawn (P.157).

In this example, we have the SL idiom "زرقة الفجر" translated into a TL idiom "blue color of dawn". As was pointed out above, the color blue is the color of sky and sea, and is usually associated with values such as tranquility and calmness. Here, the blue dawn is a symbol of cleanliness. The translator kept both the meaning and the form of the SL idiom and have an exact equivalent for it. Consequently, the sense is not lost at all.

As we can see, the examples above are more or less literal translations of each other, but they are still well-established and widely used in English and Arabic. Nida and Taber (1969, p. 106) point out that idioms usually suffer a great deal of semantic adjustments in translations, since it is highly unlikely that the same type of peculiar expression will have the same meaning in another language. However, through the above examples, one can safely assume that various Arabic language idioms do actually have the same kind of idiom with the same meaning in English.

2. Translation by Cultural Substitution (approximation)

This strategy involves replacing a cultural-specific expression or item with a target language expression or item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader (Baker, 1992, p. 31). The following examples are under this strategy:

Example Five:

A. (11) وجاء صوت من ورائه يقول: سعيد مهران: ... الف نهار ابيض (ص. 11)

B. Suddenly a voice came from behind, "Sa'eed Mahran: ... what a pleasant surprise (P. 89).

It should be noted before looking at the above example that people in Egypt greet each other by saying "نهارك ابيض" "to have a white day" which means "have a nice day". This indicates the people's positive perception of the color white.

In the above example, we have the color idiom "نهار ابيض" which means "white day". The translator translated it into "what a pleasant surprise". Here, the speaker is very happy that Sa'eed Mahran went out of prison and it was a good surprise for him to see Sa'eed Mahran again. The translator saw it necessary to use the strategy of cultural approximation because he knew very well that the literal translation "one thousand white days" will have no sense in this context. This shows, as mentioned at the outset, how important context is as far as meaning is concerned. It is also one of the reasons why a translator should take into consideration the circumstances in which items uttered.

To illustrate more, we shall consider the following example:

Example six:

A. (63) ليلة بيضاء بالصلاة على النبي (ص. 63)

B. By the prophet, it is a lovely surprise (P. 135).

In this example, "ليلة بيضاء" "white night" means, as indicated above, a sleepless night in both Arabic and English. The translator, again, has been able to understand the importance of context as far as meaning is concerned. The color idiom "ليلة بيضاء" would be meaningless if it were translated literally.

Another example of a cultural substitution is manifested in the following example:

Example seven:

A. (187) يا خير ابيض! جوعان (ص. 187)

B. Dear me! Hungry (P. 226).

Egyptians say "يا خير ابيض" "white news" to express surprise about a piece of news, whereas they say "يا خير اسود" "black news" in reaction to bad news. The translator resorted to cultural substitution "dear me", which is a polite exclamation expressing surprise and sympathy, because the color idiom "يا خير ابيض" has no exact equivalence in English.

3. Translation by Paraphrasing

This strategy is used "when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the TL but in different form, and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the ST is significantly higher than would be natural in the TL" (Baker, 1992, p. 37). In other words, the meaning of the SL word is explained (Newmark, 1988, p. 91). It should be noted that this strategy is the most common way of translating color idioms when a match cannot be found in the TL or when it is inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the TT due to the differences in stylistic preferences of the SL and TL. By using this strategy, the impact of the idiom and its cultural significance will be lost (Baker, 1992, p. 74). To illustrate further, consider the following example:

Example Eight:

A. (40) وثمة رائحة سحرية لاتصدر الا من دم ازرق رغم انه المائل الى الفطس (ص. 40)

B. He felt a magic scent in the air, something he couldn't identify in spite of his long sharp nose. It was the smell of aristocracy (P. 118).

In this example, we have the Arabic idiom "دم ازرق" "blue blood" which was paraphrased into English "smell of aristocracy". The idiom "دمه ازرق" is a symbol of a person of a noble birth or a member of aristocracy. This idiom probably originated in the blueness of the veins of fair complexion as compared with those of dark skin. It matches the literal translation of the Spanish idiom "sangre azul". This idiom is also used in French and English to describe royalty and a member of aristocracy that has not been exposed to the sun, so they have pale skin in which blood veins and vessels appear to be blue. It should be noted that the translator resorted to the paraphrase strategy even that English language has the same idiom. The translator should have translated the Arabic idiom "دم ازرق" into "blue blood" which is equivalent to the Arabic idiom. This strategy is a useful strategy, as indicated above, when there is no equivalent in the TL, and should be as a last resort. Another illustration may be found in the following example:

Example Nine:

A. وجدت نسمة رقيقة مقطرة من انفاس الليل عقب نهار احمر طغى فيه الصيف طغيانه (ص. 39).

B. A gentle breeze blew after a torrid summer day. (P. 115).

As can be seen, we have the Arabic idiom “نهار احمر” “red day” is paraphrased into English “torrid summer day” which means extremely hot. In this example, the translator conveyed the meaning of the SL without distorting the general meaning.

4. Translation by omission

It is another strategy that translators can consider when there is no match in the TL the meaning of an idiom cannot be paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons. Baker (1992, p. 40) points out that this strategy may sound rather drastic, but it does no much harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts, especially if the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question. There are cases where omission is required to avoid redundancy and awkwardness (Nida, 1964, p. 228), and this strategy is particularly applied if the source language tends to be a redundant language.

As stated by Baker (1992, p. 40), deletion may also refer to pieces of content rather than restructuring for grammatical purposes. Such a deletion of expressions or information is debatable in relation to the translation of academic texts, however. Anyone who writes an academic text, for example, will not include unimportant information in his or her writing. Similarly, anyone who reads such a text should consider that all information in the text is important. Translators are not an exception; they should read the text as the original reader or a non-translator reader reads it. This notion of information deletion should not be used as “an excuse” to hide the inability of translators to understand and transfer message of the original text. For illustration, consider the following example:

Example Ten:

A. قلبه ابيض كقلبك وستجده انشاءالله من الطيبين (ص. 129).

B. His heart is as yours, and with God’s help you will live to see him a good man (P. 187).

Example Eleven:

A. والظلام جدار اسود يسد الطريق (ص. 215).

B. Darkness was a wall blocking the road (P. 243).

If we take a look at the above examples (Ten and eleven), we will notice that the underlined color idioms “ابيض, اسود” were omitted in the translation. Yet, the translator conveyed the meaning. This sort of omission is tolerable as it does not distort the meaning. Moreover, it does not deprive the readers of any useful information. However, we have incidents where intolerable omission took place.

Example Twelve:

A. قلبك ابيض. اما انا فلا احب اصحاب المصانع (ص. 77).

B. Don’t trouble me about it; I don’t like the owners of factories (P. 146).

Example Thirteen:

A. جمال فلاحى باستدارة الوجه الخمرى (ص. 111).

B. A country girl’s beauty, especially her dark round face (P. 174).

In the above two examples (Twelve and Thirteen), we have the Arabic idioms “قلبك ابيض” and “وجهه خمرى” deleted or mistranslated in the TL. “قلبك ابيض” was translated or paraphrased into “don not trouble me about it” and “وجهه خمرى” was also translated into “dark face”. By doing so, the translator in the first example omitted the connotation of the white color which is a symbol of purity, as mentioned above, in the Arabic culture. When we say to somebody that s/he has a “white heart”, it simply means that that person has a “kind heart”. As for the second example, “وجهه خمرى”, which means brown red color, was also omitted in the translation. The translator should have translated it into a “brown red face”

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to analyze the translation of color idiomatic expressions in Naguib Mahfouz’s novel “*The Thief and the Dogs*” translated into English by Adel Ata Elyas from which the data of the study was collected. The analysis of the data demonstrates that color idioms are specific to a given language. Colors, even though perceived

in the same way, evoke different associations and emotions in different cultures. In other words, a color might be treated as positive in one language but as negative in the other.

The study has shown that the translator has used four translation strategies for translating color idiomatic expressions: translation of Arabic color idiomatic expression by using an idiom of similar meaning and form of English language idiom, translation by cultural substitution, translation by paraphrasing and translation by omission.

References

- Allan, K. (2009). The connotations of English color terms: Color-based X-phemisms. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41, 626–637. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.06.004>
- Awwad, M. (1990). Equivalent and Translatability of English and Arabic Idioms. *Papers and Studies in Contrastive Linguistics*, 26, 57–67.
- Baker, M. (1992). In *Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. London and New York: Routledge. Brill. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203327579>
- Bassnet, S. (2002). *Translation studies*. London: Routledge.
- Bassnett-McGuire, S. (1980). *Translation Studies*. London: Methuen. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203427460>
- Berlin, B., & Kay, P. (1969). *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*. Berkeley.
- Carine, M. (2005). Idioms. In P. Strazny (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. New York: Fitzory Dearborn. Retrieved January 2, 2013, <http://www.gigapedia.com>
- Eiseman, L. (2009). Color Blog. Retrieved January 10, 2013, <http://eisemancolorblog.com/>
- Fernando, C. (1996). *Idioms and Idiomaticity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gramley, S., & Patzold, K. M. (2004). *A Survey of Modern English*. London: Routledge.
- Grant, L., & Bauer, L. (2004). Criteria for Re-Defining Idioms: Are we Barking up the Wrong Tree? *Applied Linguistics*, 25, 38–61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/25.1.38>
- Houghton, M. (2007). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed., 2000, 2007). Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Ibrahim, M. (2008). Adab Abdul Aziz A. *Derasah Mauthuiaa Faneiah* (p. 223). Al-Refae press. Al-Riyadh.
- Itten, J. (1961). *The Art of Color*. Newyork.
- Jackson, H., & Amvela, E. Z. (2001). *Words, Meaning and Vocabulary: An Introduction to Modern English Lexicology*. London: Continuum.
- Jakaitienė, E. (1980). *Lietuvių kalbos leksikologija*. Vilnius: Moksas.
- Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading Images, the Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Langlotz, A. (2006). *Idiomatic Creativity: A Cognitive–linguistic Model of Idiom–representation and Idiom–variation in English*. USA: John Benjamins publishing CO.
- Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-based Translation. A Guide to Cross-language Equivalence*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Makkai, A. (1972). *Idiom Sructure in English*. The Hague: Mouton & Co. N.V. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110812671>
- Mazurova, V. (2009). Color Terms in English Idioms. Retrieved March 26, 2013, <http://cc.joensuu.fi/linguistics/idioms2006/abstracts/mazurova.pdf>
- Moon, R. (1998). *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Munday, J. (2001). *Introducing Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Newmark, P. (1981). *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice-Hall International.
- Newmark, P. (1991). *About Translation*. Great Britain: Longdunn Press, Bristol.
- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating: With special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Leiden: Brill.

- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: Brill.
- Richards, J., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited.
- Salah, S. A. (2006). Connotation and Cross Cultural Semantics. *Translation Journal*, 10(4).
- Seidl, J., & Mcmordie, W. (1978). *English idioms and how to use them*. New York: Oxford university press.
- Smith, K. (2009). Sensational Colours. Retrieved January 26, 2013, <http://www.sensationalcolor.com/color-meaning-symbolism-andpsychology/>
- Tavangar, M. (2005). Color terms, idiomaticity and translation. *Translation Studies in the New Millennium International Conference*.
- Wright, J. (1999). *Idioms organizer*. UK: Thomson Heinle.
- Wyler, S. (1992). *Color and Language: Color Terms in English*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Xing, J. Z. (2009). Semantics and Pragmatics of Color Terms in Chinese. In J. Z. Xing (Ed.), *Studies of Chinese Linguistics: Functional Approaches* (pp. 87–102). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

المصادر العربية:

نجيب محفوظ، " اللص والكلاب"، دار القلم، بيروت، ط1، (1973).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).