

Strategies of Interpreting English Idioms in Simultaneous Interpretation

A Study Applied to Students of Simultaneous Interpreting Program, Suez Canal University

By

Sameh Mohamed Abdel Wahab Mahmoud

Assistant Lecturer, Department of English,

Faculty of Arts & Humanities,

Suez Canal University

استراتيجيات ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية الانجليزية في الترجمة الفورية دراسة حالة علي طلاب برنامج الترجمة الفورية بجامعة قناة السويس

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الي تقييم استخدام طلاب الترجمة الفورية لاستراتيجيات معينة في ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية أثناء الترجمة الفورية. تجري الدراسة على عينة من الطلاب الذين تم اختيارهم عشوائيا من طلاب برنامج الترجمة الفورية بكلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية بجامعة قناة السويس. تم بناء المشروع البحثي على اختبار عينة الطلاب لتحديد قدرتهم على تطبيق الاستراتيجيات المعروفة في ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية في سياقات منطوقة. ويعتمد الباحث علي المنهج التجريبي التحليلي لجمع البيانات وتحليل النتائج التي حصل عليها من خلال أداء الطلاب في الاختبار المذكور أعلاه. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن الطلاب يجدون صعوبة في ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية أثناء الترجمة الفورية دون الحصول على تدريب خاص على استخدام استراتيجيات ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية في كل من لغتي المصدر والهدف و ثقافتهما. توصلت الدراسة أيضا إلى استنتاج مفاده أنه ليس كل الطلاب على دراية بالاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي يتم اللجوء إليها أثناء ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية فوراً في السياقات المختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة - الاستراتيجيات - التعبيرات الاصطلاحية - الترجمة الفورية - برنامج الترجمة الفورية

Abstract

The objective of this study is to evaluate simultaneous interpreting students' use of certain strategies in interpreting English idioms while interpreting simultaneously. The study is applied to sample students chosen randomly from the simultaneous interpreting program students at the faculty of Arts & Humanities, Suez Canal University. The research project is built on a test of the sample students to identify their ability to apply the well-known strategies in interpreting English idioms in spoken contexts. The researcher adopts the experimental and analytic methods to collect data and analyze the results obtained by the students' performance in the test mentioned above. The study concludes that the students find difficulty in simultaneously interpreting English idioms without having special training on the use of strategies of interpreting idioms in both the source and target languages and cultures. The study also comes to the conclusion that not all students are familiar with the different strategies resorted to while simultaneously interpreting idioms in contexts.

Keywords: Interpreting – Strategies – Idioms – Simultaneous Interpreting – Interpreting Program

Introduction

Interpreting is a form of translation in which the interpretation to another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language (Kade cited in Franz Pochhacker, 2004:11). It is an activity to bridge a communication gap between two or more speakers who are not speaking the same language. Both interpreting and translating

involve the recognition of a message in the source language and the presentation of the message in the target language. The main difference is translation in the written form in which there may be an opportunity for the translator to look up certain words in a dictionary, thesaurus, or any other sources, while interpreting is a one-time presentation of an utterance. Interpreting requires higher level of concentration and stress management.

In order to do the interpretation well, the interpreter must be able to concentrate well to receive and understand the message in the source language and then present the message in the target language. In order to accomplish this task, the interpreter must go through an overlapping series of cognitive processing activities which include attending to and concentrating on the message, comprehending and analyzing the meaning of the message, remembering the message, and finally reformulating the message in the target language and presenting the message verbally.

The simultaneous interpreter has to start giving the interpretation soon after the speaker present a phrase or a clause/short sentence. It is not easy to anticipate the meaning of a message before fully hearing the entire sentence. This is the real challenge faced by simultaneous interpreters. They have to present fast and accurate interpretation while at the same time concentrating on the next message delivered by the speaker.

Idioms

The term idiom, In Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics, is defined simply as “an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out

from its separate parts. For example: She washed her hands of the matter means She refused to have anything more to do with the matter” (Richards & Schmidt 2010: 270). A similar definition is given by Seidl and McMordie, who say that “an idiom can be defined as a number of words which, when taken together, have a different meaning from the individual meanings of each word” (Seidl & McMordie 1988: 12–13). Brenner believes that native English speakers simply use idioms without being aware what constitutes them. He points out that in dictionaries certain confusion and disagreement can be observed regarding the definition of idioms. However, the most common one is “two or more words together that, as a unit, have a special meaning that is different from the literal meaning of the words separately” (Brenner 2003: 4–5). These units sometimes are not only different in meaning from what the words would mean separately but they are also considered more effective or gripping in certain contexts. Baker considers it important to distinguish idioms from collocations. She does this based on the transparency of meaning and flexibility of patterning. According to her, while collocations allow variations in form and are more flexible patterns of language (e.g., deliver a letter, a letter has been delivered, delivery of a letter), idioms are “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components”. She also adds that there are certain things which under normal circumstances (except jokes or play on words) cannot be done to an idiom: changes in word order, deletion of words from it, adding other words to it,

replacement of a word with another, or changes in its grammatical structure (Baker 1992, 63).

Idioms differ from one language to another according to the culture of people speaking this language. Culture plays an important role in interpreting the meaning of idioms. So, we may find some idioms with equivalents in other languages. But other idioms may not have any similar idioms. According to Baker (1992), "this strategy of finding an idiom of similar meaning and similar form in the target language may seem to offer the ideal solution, but that is not necessarily always the case" (72).

Types of Idioms

Makkai (1972), (cited in Fernando, 1996:3), distinguishes between two types of idioms: idioms of encoding and those of decoding.

Idioms of Encoding (Identifiable)

According to Makkai, Idioms of encoding are those idiosyncratic lexical combinations that have transparent meanings. This type of idioms could be best identified through making a comparison between different languages by the use of proper prepositions. Therefore, "at" is used instead of "with" in the English expression "drive at 70 m.p.h" (not drive with as in Arabic).

Idioms of Decoding (Non-Identifiable)

Idioms of decoding, in Makkai's view, refer to those non-identifiable and misleading lexical expressions whose interpretation could not be figured out by using only independently learned linguistic conventions. They include expressions like "beat around the bush" and "fly off the handle." This type of idioms could be classified into lexemic and sememic.

1- Lexemic Idioms include:

- a. Phrasal Verbs: e.g., "to come up with," "to turn off," and "to take part in"
- b. Phrasal Compounds: e.g., "black ice" and "black board"
- c. Incorporating Verbs: e.g., "man-handle"
- d. Pseudo-Idioms: e.g., "spick and span" and "kit and kin"

2- Sememic Idioms: They convey pragmatic meanings related to a particular culture. They include:

- a. Proverbs: e.g., "Chew of something over" and "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush"
- b. Familiar Quotations: e.g., "Not a mouse stirring"

McCarthy and O'Dell (2003:06) classify English idioms into different types focusing on their possible combinations, as it is shown in the following examples:

a- Verb+object/complement (and or adverbial):

e.g., "Kill two birds with one stone"

To produce two useful results by just doing one action

b- Prepositional Phrase:

e.g., "In the blink of an eye"

In an extremely short time

c- Simile (as +adjective+as or like+a noun):

e.g., "As dry as a bone"

Very dry indeed

d- Binominal (word + and + word):

e.g., "Rough and ready"

Crude and lacking sophistication

e- Trinomial (word + word + and +word):

e.g., “Cool, calm and collected”

Relaxed, in control, not nervous

f- Whole clause or sentence:

e.g., “To cut a long story short”

To tell the main points, but not all the fine details

Characteristics of Idioms

From a technical point of view, an idiom is a kind of lexical unit in which the whole meaning of the expression is not apparent from the meanings of its components. Bell (1974) specifies certain features which are crucial in the recognition of idioms. Some of these features are:

Alteration of Grammatical Rules

The idiomatic expression is not always grammatical, but it is established, accepted and used by native speakers of the language with a fixed structure and meaning.

E.g. 1. It's ages since we met (singular with a plural noun).

2. He is a friend of mine (possessive instead of personal pronoun).

Conventional Phrases

Idioms are special expressions which are almost known and agreed by all the members of a particular community.

E.g. 1. How are you doing? (Expression used to ask someone about his health).

2. Once in a blue moon (rarely, infrequently).

Alteration of Word Order

Idiomatic expressions in English, usually, do not maintain the English word order.

E.g. 1. It may be well ahead of time (normal word order).

2. It may well be ahead of time (probably): idiomatic expression.

Figurativeness

The main feature that characterizes idiomatic expressions is that the words are used metaphorically. Therefore, the surface structure plays a little role in understanding the meaning of the whole expression. For example, in “to bury the hatchet,” meaning “to become friendly again after a disagreement.” The meanings of the words “to bury” and “the hatchet” are different from the meaning of the whole expression.

Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are the most common type of idioms in English. Many of them carry idiomatic meanings that cannot be inferred from the form, unless the phrase is already known.

E.g. 1. After war began, the two countries broke off diplomatic relations (discontinue).

2. Most automobile companies bring out new models each year (to show or introduce).

In addition to all these features that are essential in the recognition of idioms, Baker (1992) identifies the grammatical and syntactic restrictions of idioms. For her, a speaker or a writer cannot normally do any of the following with an idiom:

a. Addition: Adding any word to an idiomatic expression would alter its meaning, or remove its idiomatic sense. Thus, adding the adverb “very” to the adjective “red” in “red herring” (*very red herring) affects the figurativeness of its meaning completely.

b. Deletion: Deleting the adjective “sweet” and the article “the” from the expressions “have a sweet tooth” and “spill the beans”

would change their meanings totally. Hence, (*have a tooth) and (*spill beans) have no idiomatic sense.

c. Substitution: Idioms do not accept any replacement of words even if those words are synonyms. For example, “the long and short of it” means the basic facts of a situation. The adjective “long” cannot be substituted by another adjective, like “tall,” although they may nearly mean the same.

d. Modification: Any change in the grammatical structure of an idiom may lead to the distortion of the idiom’s meaning. For example, the expression (*stock and barrel lock) is no more idiomatic because of the altered order of the items in the expression “lock, stock, and barrel.”

e. Comparative: Adding the comparative form “er” to the adjective “hot” in the expression “be in hot water” changes the conventional sense of the idiom which has the meaning of “be in trouble.”

f. Passive: The passive form “some beans were spilled” has a different meaning from its active form “they spilled the beans,” meaning “they reveal a surprise.” All these restrictions should be taken into account since they affect the degree of idiomaticity of lexical items, and they may remove their main feature of figurativeness.

Classification of Idioms

The basic characteristics that differentiate between the various kinds of idioms to be easily understood or totally opaque is the degree of idiomaticity which an idiom carries. Idioms are classified in a continuum from transparent to opaque called “the spectrum of

idiomaticity.” The latter plays an important role in the comprehensibility of idioms. Therefore, idioms can be divided into two broad categories:

Transparent–Opaque Idioms

This category includes two types:

1.5.4.1.1 Transparent Idioms

In this type, idiomatic expressions have a very close meaning to that of the literal one. Hence, transparent idioms are usually easy to understand and interpret, simply because their meanings can be easily inferred from the meanings of their constituent parts (Fernando, 1996).

E.g. 1. Fight a losing battle: يجارب في معركة خاسرة

2. Stand firm: يثبت علي موقفه

3. Back and forth: ذهابا و ايابا:

Semi Transparent Idioms

The idiom usually has a metaphorical dimension that could not be understood only through common use. i.e., the meaning of its constituent parts plays a little role in understanding the entire meaning. For example, “break the ice” means “relieve the tension.”

Semi–Opaque Idioms

This type refers to those idioms in which the figurative meaning is not related to that of the constituent words of the idiom. In other words, the expression is divided into two parts; a part of the phrase has a literal meaning, whereas the other has a figurative one. For instance, “to know the ropes” means “to know how a particular job should be done.”

Opaque Idioms

Opaque idioms are the most complex type of idioms, because the meaning of the idiom is too difficult to be inferred from the sum of the literal meanings of its constituent parts. In other words, it would not be an easy job to deduce the actual meaning of the idiom from the meanings of its components. This is mainly due to the presence of items having cultural connotations. These culturally specific items have a great impact on the comprehensibility of idiomatic expressions.

- E.g., 1. To burn one's boat (to make retreat impossible).
2. Kick the bucket (die).
3. Spill the beans (reveal a secret) (Kharma, 1997: 41-42).

Culture-Free and Loaded Idioms

The fundamental feature that leads to the difficulty in interpreting idioms is their culture specificity. According to the Oxford Dictionary (1983), an idiom is defined as "a form of expression peculiar to a language." In this definition, the term "peculiar" means that idioms are meaningful or they make sense in only one language or culture. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find such an equivalent idiom in another different language or culture. However, some idioms, such as metaphors and proverbs, may have direct equivalents and, hence, they can be easily interpreted into other languages. An example of this is the English expression "shoot a line" which has a direct equivalent in Arabic "يتفاخر بنفسه" (to be proud of oneself). The difference between the two expressions is in the degree of transparency. "Shoot a line" is totally opaque (it is very difficult to understand, and its meaning

cannot be derived from the meanings of the words “shoot” and “line,” and therefore it is a loaded culture idiom). Nevertheless, the Arabic expression “يتفاخر بنفسه” is easily understood because it has a transparent meaning, and, thus, it is culture-free. Having a wide knowledge of cultural references, as well as the context of use, is the cue for better understanding and interpreting idioms. In this regard, Ponterotto (1994) says that “it is necessary to understand metaphoricity and its culture-specific connotations in order to correctly interpret even simple texts” (3).

Strategies Used in Interpreting Idiomatic and Culturally-Bound Expressions Idioms interpretation strategy is defined by Baker (1992) as "... strategy of finding an idiom of similar meaning and similar form in the target language may seem to offer the ideal solution, but that is not necessarily always the case" (72). Loescher (1991) defines it as "a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text, or any segment of it" (8). Baker (1991) suggests four main strategies for interpreters to use in interpreting idiomatic and culturally-bound expressions. These strategies are: (1) using an idiom with similar meaning and form (total equivalence); (2) using an idiom with similar meaning but different form (partial equivalence); (3) interpretation by paraphrasing; and (4) interpretation by omission (85-93). As for the first strategy, total equivalence in form and meaning, a kind of matching can only be reached on certain occasions; when the source and the target languages belong to the same family and are culturally similar. However, there are some English idioms which have equivalent in the present-daily Arabic and they are transparent in their meaning and form. For

example, “to shed crocodile tears (بيكي بدموع التماسيح) is considered a transparent idiom, and meaning and form are similar to greater extent. Concerning the second strategy which is partial equivalence, it involves interpreting the source language idiom into its equivalent in the target language which conveys the same meaning, but in a different form. Therefore, the interpreter's cultural background competence and awareness is really essential to enable him/ her to find equivalent idioms with similar meaning and function in the target language. For instance, “to carry coals to Newcastle” (بيبع الماء في حارة السقايين) are considered as partially equivalent as they differ in form but they convey the same meaning and function. This type of strategy is useful in interpreting semi-transparent idioms. Regarding interpreting by paraphrasing, the third strategy, it involves giving a brief explanation of the meaning behind the idiom being used in the source language. This strategy is usually adopted when the interpreter encounters idiomatic and culturally-bound expressions in the source language (SL) which have no equivalence in the target language (TL). This strategy is commonly and widely applied by interpreters when match of idioms cannot be found in the target language (TL) due to the difference in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages. For example, in “to let the cat out of the bag” (امرا - يذيع سرا يفشي), the latter is considered paraphrasing to the meaning of the idiom in the source language. Finally, the fourth strategy in which interpretation is done by omission involves omitting the idiom in the target text as its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased for stylistic reasons. The meaning could be compensated elsewhere in the target text (Baker, 1992, 85-93).

Idiomatcity in English

Cultural idiomatcity is deeply rooted in human languages and it varies from one language to another (Ajaaj & Mohammed, 2014). Idiomatcity is regarded as a common feature in all languages and its appreciation is basic to learning and mastering a given language. Idiomatic expressions have semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic complexities which represent a real challenge for learners and interpreters (Aldahesh, 2013, 23). An idiom is defined as " an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, 246). For example, the meaning of each word in the idiom "it rains cats and dogs" has nothing to do with the meaning of the idiom as a whole. In addition, Barkema (1996) defines idioms as " lexicalized expressions with idiosyncratic meanings" (127). Whereas, Larson (1984) defines idioms as " a string of words whose meaning is different from the meaning conveyed by the individual words" (122). The majority of idioms are used interchangeably between spoken and written discourse but they are mostly associated with spoken discourse and therefore, sixty to seventy percent of idioms are associated with spoken language (Maxos, 2003, 4). The main features of idioms are: idioms are all in all metaphorical and cannot be understood directly; they should not be taken literally as their meaning lies on their constituents rather than individual words; their syntactic form is usually fixed and cannot be changed or described as ungrammatical; their meanings are also invariable and they are mainly cultural and informal (Ghazala, 2003, 204).

English idioms are differently classified according to grammatical category or parts of speech, the concepts or emotion portrayed, the image they convey such as body parts, food idioms, and their semantic category. Idioms may occur in such forms as: slang, proverbs, allusions, similes, dead metaphors, social formulas, and collocations. Moreover, Ghazala (2003) classifies them into five major types: full and pure idioms, semi-idioms, proverbs, popular sayings and semi-proverbial expressions, and metaphorical catchphrases and popular expressions (24). Therefore, idioms acquisition and interpretation may be too difficult for foreign learners and interpreters due to several factors. Trosborg (1997) assures that interpreting idioms and culturally-bound expressions is not an easy job to do, though they may be central to the intended meanings (109). That is why Larson (1984) confirms that idioms should be interpreted with great care and that interpreters must figure out the meaning of the idioms they intend to interpret and then look for an equivalent which can express the whole meaning. Interpreters should avoid interpreting idioms literally or word for word interpretation (Newmark, 1988,125). Therefore, idioms should not be interpreted in isolation; rather interpreters should search for the real meaning conveyed by that particular idiom and consider the cultural connotation as well.

Objectives of the Study

In this study, the researcher attempts to prove that students of the simultaneous interpreting program find difficulty in interpreting English idioms due to their lack of knowledge of strategies of interpreting idioms as well as English culture, since their mother

tongue is Arabic. The researcher also surveys the different strategies used by simultaneous interpreting students in an attempt to identify the most common ones they resort to while interpreting.

Research Methodology

In order to carry out the project upon which the study is built, the researcher adopts the experimental and analytical methods to test how simultaneous interpreting program students in the faculty of Arts & Humanities, Suez Canal University interpret English idioms into Arabic, and the pitfalls they may face in this process. Case study is the most suitable way to study the students' practice of interpreting in reality, and to collect the needed data so as to analyze them in light of the main objectives of the study. Therefore, case study is the best strategy to be used in this research project.

Data Collection and Sampling

The current study relies on a case study of the simultaneous interpreting program students at the faculty of Arts & Humanities, Suez Canal University. From this program, a number of students are selected randomly to be tested in order to achieve our research objectives. This case study is not meant to include all the students of the program because a study like that will take a longer time to end up with reliable results. This is mainly inapplicable because the researcher has to move in his analysis from first to fourth year students in order to have a representative sample and to produce meaningful outcomes. Therefore, random students from different grades, especially fourth year, are selected as a sample for this study simply because it is assumed that these learners have an adequate

linguistic competence in both English and Arabic together with considerable background of the English culture. The sample is mainly built on fourth year students who have studied translation and interpreting for 8 semesters, and they are supposed to have some knowledge about idioms. A spoken test is given to eighty (80) students. The test is used in this context as the best research tool because it is the most appropriate technique for better meeting the objectives of the study.

Description of the Test

The sample students are exposed to a spoken text made up of twenty-four (24) contextualized idioms selected on the basis of their frequency in English use and according to the degree of transparency. The sample students are asked to interpret such text simultaneously. The objective of this test is to identify the number of students whose background of English culture and idioms makes them familiar with such idioms and are able to interpret them into Arabic. All the selected idioms represent the different types of idioms used in various contexts. Such idioms are taken from the “Dictionary of English Idioms in Use,” “Exercises on idioms,” and “Essential idioms in use.” The answers of the sample students are classified according to the strategies they adopted in their interpretation.

Results of the Test

Idioms in Context	Acceptable Interpreted Idioms	Unacceptable Interpreted Idioms
-Transparent Idioms		
1. Although her doctors told her that she has a dangerous illness, she still has a ray of hope to recover.	80	0
2. He was utterly unprincipled, but he drew the line at black mail.	16	64
3. You should not really drink here, but I'm willing to turn a blind eye to	70	10
4. You always know what Ola is thinking of; She is an open-book to me.	80	0
5. We have limited time. Let's get straight to the point .	75	5
6. Mona always knows when something is going to happen; she has a Sixth-sense	60	20
Total	381	99
Percentage	79.37%	20.63%
- Semi-Transparent Idioms		
7. Andy likes to tell a jock to break the ice .	20	60
8. If Mary said she will bring you the book, she will do it: she always keeps	55	25

her word.		
9. After a long discussion, they did not see eye to eye on this matter.	30	50
10. It is too difficult to find the address; it is like trying to find a needle in a haystack.	45	35
11. Ali always can't make up his mind; he is sitting on the fence.	15	65
12. He doesn't have his own opinions; he is like a sheep following the herd.	37	43
Total	202	278
Percentage	42.08%	57.02%
- Semi-Opaque Idioms		
13. Let's come to the point; why should you always beat around the bush	56	24
14. That man made me lose half my salary last night. Now I wonder how I will make both ends meet.	25	55
15. I will enjoy my job as soon as I know the ropes.	13	67
16. Don't let hostile actions bring you down; Keep your chin up.	16	64
17. Azza is a very skilled and talented person; she is a cut above the rest.	5	75
18. Stay focused and don't give up; Keep your nose to the grindstone.	3	77

Total	118	362
Percentage	24.58%	75.42%
- Opaque Idioms		
19. If Gloria has one more crisis, she will be a basket case	2	78
20. Let's invite Chang to our party. He is a barrel of laughs	4	76
21. If he wants money to buy a land, that's a horse of a different color .	9	71
22. Dalia has just won the lottery; she is on cloud nine	0	80
23. I don't understand what's going on; it is all Greek for me.	1	79
24. You can answer all the exam questions; it is a piece of cake .	22	58
Total	38	442
Percentage	7.91%	92.09%
Total of All Answers	739	1181
Percentage of All Answers	38.48%	61.52%

Table 1: Percentage of Student's Ability to Interpret English Idioms within Contexts into Arabic

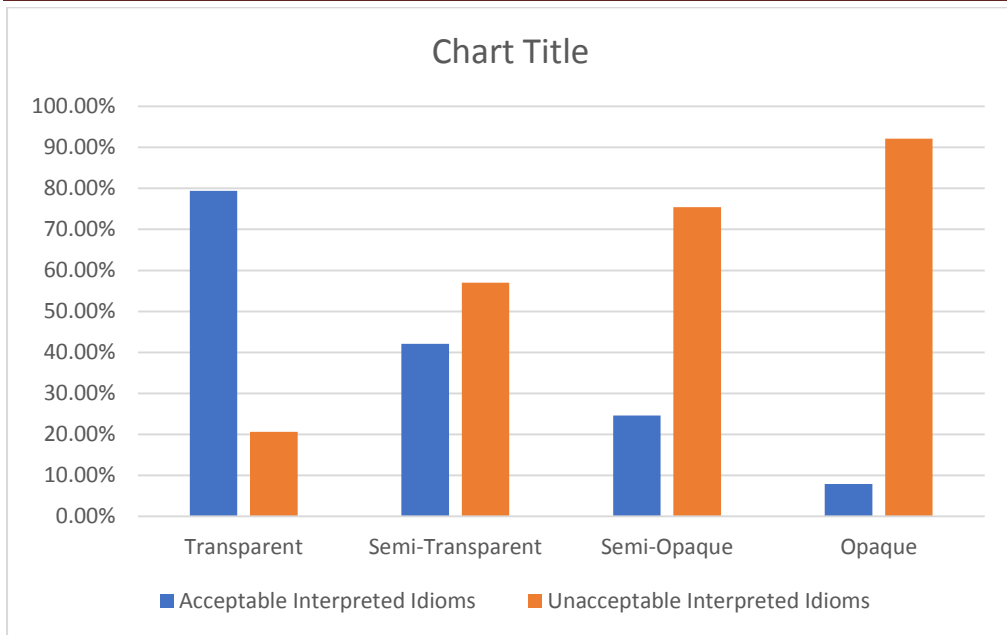


Figure 1: Percentage of Student's Ability to Interpret English Idioms within Contexts into Arabic

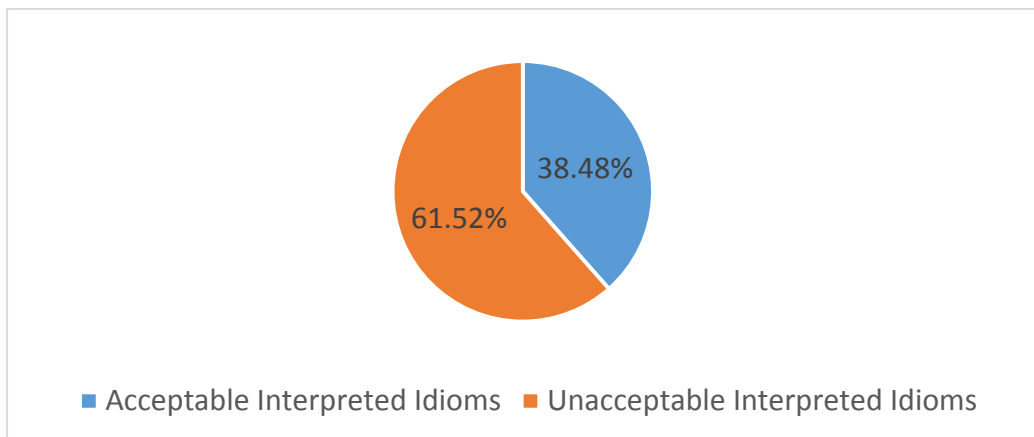


Figure 2: Students' Ability to Interpret English Idioms within Contexts into Arabic Analysis

Table 1 indicates that the degree of idiomaticity has a great impact on the percentage of students' familiarity and unfamiliarity with English idioms. The data above shows that the highest score is

recorded for transparent idioms with 79.37% for familiar idioms and 20.63% for unfamiliar ones. Semi-transparent idioms record an average score and come in the second position after transparent idioms with a percentage of 42.08% for appropriate guesses and 57.02% for inappropriate ones. The other two categories of idioms (semi-opaque and opaque) get low scores and hence, they come in the last positions with rates of 24.58% for correct answers and 75.42% for incorrect ones for semi-opaque idioms, and 7.91% and 92.09% for opaque ones. Generally speaking, it could be concluded that simultaneous interpreting students are familiar with English idioms with a percentage of 38.48% and unfamiliar with them with a rate of 61.52%. It is also realized that the percentage of familiarity decreases with the increase in the degree of idiomaticity (79.37%, 42.08%, 24.58%, and 7.91%), in contrast to the percentage of unfamiliarity which increases from one category to the other (20.63%, 57.02%, 75.42%, and 92.09%).

4.2.1.2 Analysis

Transparent idioms represent the highest score because they can be easily comprehended from their word-for-word meanings. In other words, simultaneous interpreting students can deduce the meaning of the idiom related to this category by only knowing the meanings of its constituent parts. Therefore, transparent idioms are easy to interpret by most simultaneous interpreting students owing to the high degree of closeness between the literal and figurative meanings of the idioms, as well as their simple structure that results in a clear and simple interpretation into Arabic. The high degree of transparency characterizing this category of idioms has also

simplified the use of their literal meanings to infer the figurative meanings. For instance, this can be applied to idiom one and three in the first category “a ray of hope” and “turn a blind eye to” which are made up of simple and clear words that help students catch the metaphorical image which actually leads to the comprehension of the idiomatic meaning. In contrast, although idiom two “draw the line at” belongs to the transparent category, it is difficult to interpret properly because, in the surface, it has the meaning of drawing a line. Therefore, most of the sample students have interpreted it as "يرسم الخط علي" "ارسم هدفك" "ارسم الطريق الي". So, familiarity decreases as the degree of idiomaticity increases.

In comparison to transparent idioms, Semi-transparent ones or partial idioms are somehow difficult to interpret. This is basically because the idiomatic expression is usually divided into two main parts: one part has a literal meaning whereas the other has an idiomatic sense that cannot be understood from the constituent words. An example of this is idiom seven “break the ice” in the semi-transparent category where the first part of the expression “break” is lexically understandable, because it has a literal meaning; in contrast, the second part “the ice” is idiomatic. In essence, the whole idiomatic expression means “relieving the tension.” In semi-opaque idioms, the percentage of difficulty and unfamiliarity increases to 75, 42% together with the degree of idiomaticity making this category come closer to the position of opaque idioms. So, in opaque idioms, the degree of complexity and indirectness increases to the highest level leading to an opaque and ambiguous combination that cannot be understood by simultaneous

interpreting students unless they are previously exposed to such idioms. In conclusion, the table shows the difficulty the sample students find in interpreting simultaneously the English idioms given in the test. This suggests the necessity of improving the students' background about English idioms as well as the cultural contexts in which they are used.

Students' Strategies Adopted in Interpreting English Idioms

Strategies	Word for Word	Paraphrasing	Illustration	Cultural Substitution	Total of All Answers
Idioms					1920
1. Although her doctors told her that she has a dangerous illness, she still has a ray of hope to recover.	70	8	2	0	
2. He was utterly unprincipled, but he drew the line at black mail.	23	44	13	0	
3. You should not really drink here, but I'm willing to turn a blind eye to	20	52	8	0	
4. You always know what Ola is	73	7	0	0	

thinking of; She is an open-book to me.					
5. We have limited time. Let's get straight to the point.	12	66	2	0	
6. Mona always knows when something is going to happen; she has a Sixth-sense	69	2	9	0	
7. Andy likes to tell a jock to break the ice.	3	47	20	10	
8. If Mary said she will bring you the book, she will do it: she always keeps her word.	56	22	2	0	
9. After a long discussion, they did not see eye to eye on this matter.	74	0	6	0	
10. It is too difficult to find the address; it is like trying to find a needle in a haystack.	42	38	0	0	
11. Ali always can't make up his mind;	13	64	3	0	

he is sitting on the fence.					
12. He doesn't have his own opinions; he is like a sheep following the herd.	8	54	18	0	
13. Let's come to the point; why should you always beat around the bush	15	48	17	0	
14. That man made me lose half my salary last night. Now I wonder how I will make both ends meet.	19	26	35	0	
15. I will enjoy my job as soon as I know the ropes.	63	14	3	0	
16. Don't let hostile actions bring you down; Keep your chin up.	9	51	20	0	
17. Azza is a very skilled and talented person; she is a cut above the rest.	11	60	9	0	
18. Stay focused and don't give up;	12	58	10	0	

Keep your nose to the grindstone.					
19. If Gloria has one more crisis, she will be a basket case	21	47	12	0	
20. Let's invite Chang to our party. He is a barrel of laughs	8	60	0	12	
21. If he wants money to buy a land, that's a horse of a different color.	4	65	11	0	
22. Dalia has just won the lottery; she is on cloud nine	3	34	43	0	
23. I don't understand what's going on; it is all Greek for me.	4	28	48	0	
24. You can answer all the exam questions; it is a piece of cake.	7	67	6	0	
Total Answers	639	962	297	22	
Percentage	33.28%	50.10%	15.47%	1.15%	

Table 2: Students’ Strategies Adopted in Interpreting English Idioms into Arabic

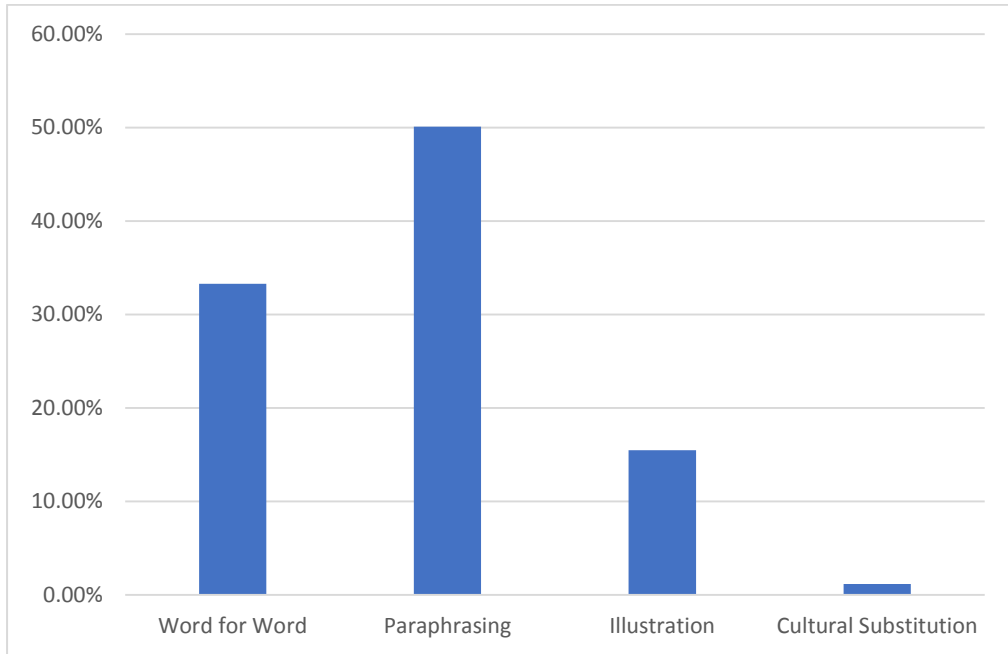


Figure 3: Students’ Strategies Adopted in Interpreting English Idioms into Arabic

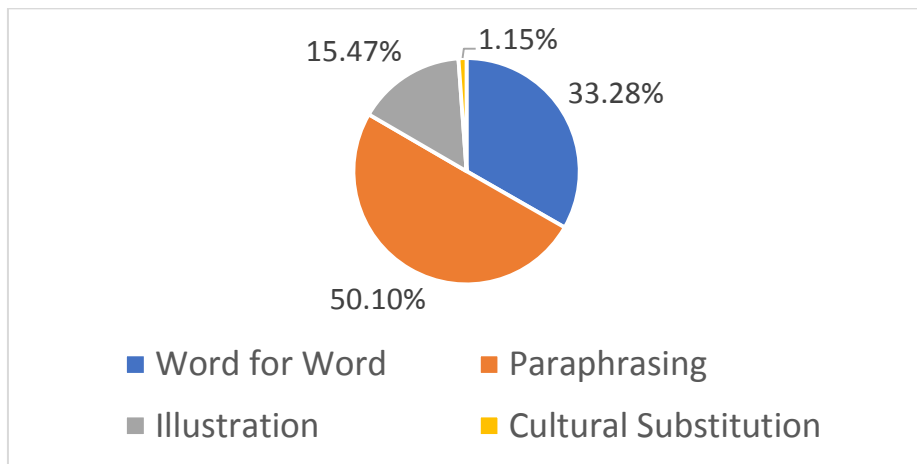


Figure 4: Percentage of Students’ Strategies Adopted in Interpreting English Idioms into Arabic

Results and Analysis

The results of the sample students shown through table (2) demonstrate that the basic strategy upon which the students depend in their interpretation of English idioms into Arabic is paraphrasing (50.10%), whereas word for word strategy comes next (33.28%). The results also indicate that the least strategies used by the students are illustration (15.47%) and cultural substitution (1.15%). Furthermore, the table does not include reference to the rest of the strategies because they are not used at all by the students. Generally speaking, the results confirm the students' use of paraphrasing as a basic strategy in interpreting idioms simply because they do not find equivalent idioms in Arabic in their minds. That is why they resort to paraphrasing in transmitting the meaning understood from the English idiom. The results also show that the students use paraphrasing in interpreting opaque idioms because the meaning here is not direct, whereas word for word strategy is used as a second strategy in interpreting transparent idioms where the meaning can be derived directly.

Conclusion

Familiarity with English idioms represents a basic component of the simultaneous interpreter, so long as idioms are an indispensable part of daily use of language. The current study applied to sample students of the simultaneous interpreting program at Suez Canal University confirms the students' inability to interpret English in-context idioms simply because they lack considerable knowledge of the strategies adopted in interpreting idioms as well as English culture. The results of the experiment show that the number of

students who have the ability to simultaneously interpret idioms properly is limited, whereas the majority of the students find real difficulty in dealing with English idioms. Finally, the study recommends the necessity of specifying a separate course on English idioms to improve the simultaneous interpreting students' performance while doing their job.

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