

An Analysis of Idiomatic Translation Problems: A Case of Government Colleges at Baloch AJ&K, Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the idiomatic translation problems faced by Boys and Girl of Intermediate students at Intermediate Colleges in Baloch, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. This study employs Baker's (1992) proposed strategies mentioned in Owji (2013) for translating idioms. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used for data analysis. The researchers selected the sample of eighty (80) students randomly from the total population of one hundred and sixty (160) students. Eight lecturers were also selected for interviews. The test was consisted of twenty (20) English idiomatic statements chosen to translate into Urdu and informal open-ended questions were framed for interviews. The findings showed that, in translation test, wrong translations were the most prominent, while the acceptable translations were proved to be least prominent errors. The literal translation achieved the highest error frequency, whereas paraphrasing achieved the lowest error frequency. The main causes of mistranslations were: students' unfamiliarity with the target language and its culture, and had little awareness of the appropriate translation strategies.

Key words: Idiomatic translation problems, Urdu and English languages, Baloch AJ&K, Pakistan

Introduction

The use of different languages is important with the growing population and its mobility from one region to another, or country to country, for various purposes. Translation is critical in transferring ideas, emotions, knowledge, and scientific and technological innovations among people from various backgrounds. Except for the basic structure of grammar and historical binding, it is a method of converting source language text into target language text. There are various translation subjects, the most difficult of which is the idiomatic translation problem. Idioms and fixed expressions have a significant role in that they can include many cultural aspects such as

culturally specific items, religious beliefs, and various ideologies of people from various cultures and countries. The process of interpreting cultural bound expressions from one language to another is a highly skilled job. It is the requirement of an interpreter to have a good knowledge of both target and source languages. Translator first identifies the idioms, and then turns its meaning properly into the target text. In course of interpreting an idiom, the key problem is associated with the ability of identifying and inferring an idiom correctly. Shojaei (2012) discovered that idiomatic translation is a challenging task, and it is dire need for a interpreter to get acquaintance and better comprehension of these languages and culture bound expressions of these languages. For the translation of such type of expressions in terms of education, some convinced procedures and strategies should be applied in translating idiomatic expressions as their meanings are not easy to describe from the meanings of their lexical items.

Before translation, it is important to know the brief and relevant history, culture, and the conceptual meaning of the language. It is a fact that fixed meanings of idioms and proverbs of English language remain unchanged while translating them from one language to another. For instance, A wet blanket is an idiom, and its Urdu is "hoslashikni krna". "A wet blanket" literal translation is watered blanket and in Urdu literal translation is "Gila kambal" but the translation is entirely different. Oxford Dictionary defines this idiom "a person who spoils other people's failing to join with or by disapproving of their activities". Another idiom "A drug in the market" Urdu equivalent of this idiom is "purany tarz k" word to word translation of this idiom is "a medicine in the market". The translation of this idiom in Urdu is totally different. In a simple way, the complete translation of one language into another is a very challenging task. The fundamental purpose of translation is to comprehend the addresser's intentional meaning.

The world has become global village, so the requirement of translation is stressed more than earlier. Translation undoubtedly creates a harmonious atmosphere for the people of different countries. Translation helps different people to understand and communicate regardless of their culture, religion, background, and color. Translation is as historical as medium of expression. The language and translation are interconnected with each other. Language is translated wherever it is spoken and documented. It is a reality that translation is becoming more important to modern day needs, but on the contrary, it is somehow devalued with the time. It is a misconception that master of non-native language can easily manage the translation of two languages without putting an additional effort.

Research Questions

1. What are the major problems faced by Intermediate students while translating idioms from English to Urdu at Intermediate Colleges Baloch AJ&K?
2. What are the possible solutions to overcome translation problems faced by the students at Intermediate level in Intermediate Colleges Baloch AJ&K?

Literature Review

Rais, Hartono, & Yulianto, (2021). explain the notion of translating idioms and idiomatic expressions in the literary context of English and Indonesian languages. This research deals with phraseology and translation studies, the authors first define central terms used in German, Slavonic and Anglophone tradition (Nafisah et al 2018). Research suggests that in adding to other translation strategies, recompense is a vital constituent in keeping or changing the specific dominants of that source content. Nengovhela (2017) explains translation of idioms and fixed expressions between Tshivenda language and English. These consist of the following problems: ambiguity of idioms; idioms expressing meaning at a literal level; idioms that do not exist in the target language and the regularity of use of an idiom. It is compulsory for the translators to know very well about both, the source and target languages. The results reveal that translators need to study more about the translation techniques that are accessible to deal with the translation of idioms and fixed expressions. This will help in improving the selection of an appropriate strategy at any time. It is significant to use perfect strategies to solve the problems of non-equivalence, and to be well-known with the differences between the source and target languages.

Zuhra, & Riaz, (2022) claim that cultural terms play a vital role in translation of Harry Potter Novel from English to Urdu language, however, there are great challenges of translation of proper nouns. In another study, strategies planned by Davies (2003) were used for translation of cultural associated items and idiomatic expressions. The findings of this study showed that translators or readers mainly used different strategies like localization and conversion for magical objects, imaginative words and for food items and translated language always lost the actual beauty of the original work. Ali, & Sayyiyed Al-Rushaidi (2017) asserted that interpretation is the process of depicting aspects and features of a target text semantically, culturally, and pragmatically into another language. However, translating idiomatic and culturally bound terms have been a confront for interpreters as they are culturally bound and engage numerous cultural elements.

Idiomatic expressions

The cultural bound expressions are part of every language: the common people cannot notice that in which quantity they are using idiomatic expressions in every conversation in their speeches and formal writings. The cultural bound words are metaphors and idioms that need basic information and experience in second language idiomatic expressions. The cultural bound expressions are natural part of every language in everyday conversation whether in oral or in written discourse. A cultural bound expression is a natural metaphor that needs basic information and experience in the second and native languages. It is compulsory for the translators that they should have cultural and historical knowledge in both texts. Langlotz (2006) defined that idioms are like cultural wording which have vague meanings and is properly confined to specific culture. Zagy (2000) considers that the purpose of translation is exchanging the meaning into the target language (TL) rather than changing the grammatical forms of the words and functions of the natural languages.

Yowelly and Lataiwish (2000) assume that English idiomatic expressions are found in everyday speeches as well in written discourse rather than elaborating them as refined compositions. Idioms are used in newspapers and magazine articles, in novels and books of literature. There are different types of idioms like, phrasal verbs,

prepositional phrases and partial idioms. This dimension is also a great challenge for translators. A translator must have proficiency and competence because of the profundity of knowledge of the language for successful translation.

Fixed Expressions and Idioms

According to Al Shaar (2014), culture is the mixture of knowledge, art, traditions, moral laws and values and many other abilities and ways of life in a society. A large part of culture is influenced by nature and the natural environment. Even though the ordinary use of terms such as 'fixed expression' and 'idiom', it is not so simple to describe these concepts, these expressions are not free from culture, nobody can get the meanings of these concepts without the knowledge of its culture. Moiron (2005) states that fixed expression is very general but appropriate term, under which frozen collocations are entrenched and require to be translated in its definite sagacity.

Theoretical Framework

This study applies Baker's 1992 selected framework mentioned in Owji (2013) who proposed strategies for translating idioms. These strategies are most relevant for this study.

Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning and Form

By applying the methodology, the interpreter attempts to discover idiom in the given language that is same for the native language both in synonyms and structural items (Strakšienė 2009). This type of method is not easy to be attained, as every language has its method and strategy to convey specific theories, those are fundamentally different from each other. It is observed that this is most suitable methodology for idiomatic translation. This type of strategy by using an idiom of same meaning and form has an exact equivalent in both the synonyms and the structure of the source language.

Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning, but Dissimilar Form

In this category, both target and source language meanings are same, but lexical forms are different. The source text is represented with abbreviation (ST) and target text with (TT).

Urdu ST	English TT Equivalent Idioms
Agg sy khelna	To play with fire
Maggar mach ky ansu bahna	To shed crocodile tears
Rangy hathu parkna	catch someone red handed
Hawai qeely bnana	Build castles in the air

Translation by Paraphrasing

This method is mostly used by translators or language learners in the procedure of interpreting idioms in the cases when the translator cannot find any similar idiom in the native language. This strategy is mostly used by students, if there are no similarities, it is better to add more explanation in it. It does not happen all the times that

communication can be identified their denotative and stylistic items of source and target languages. They are totally different from one another (Callison-Burch, 2007). The interpreter must emphasize on the language idioms to change its meanings as required to the source language idiom.

English Target Text (TT) Idiom	Urdu Paraphrased Equivalent
Bring to light	Roshni mein lana (zahir karna)
Broad daylight	Bari din ki roshni (din dayiry)
Eat one's words	Ilfaz khajana (ilfaz wapis lyna)

By using this technique, interpretation may entail failure of the proposed result as (Shojaei, 2012) explains that translation is like interpreting target language expressions by forwarding its interpretation in source language. By applying this appropriate method, the impression of the cultural bound word and their traditional importance can be lost during interpretation.

Translation by Omission

This strategy is used when a meticulous word has no comparison (Dimitrui, 2004) in the target language (TL), and it plays a slight role in the expansion of the source text (i.e., its omission does not alter the meaning of the text).

Translation Problems

There are different difficulties faced by interpreters in translation process. These difficulties are basically due to stylistic, lexical, idiomatic, grammatical, and cultural problems. Second language learners of English, when interpreting cultural bound expressions from English to Urdu are not able to give the correct or even a closer sense for phrasal verbs, idioms and proverbs. While phrasal verbs, and idioms are difficult to understand from the context (not like simple words), learners translate them like literal translation that is not correct.

Research Methodology

The current study is based on the mixed-method research paradigm in which the quantitative method is employed to quantify the identified errors and the qualitative method is used to discuss causes of the errors and remedies or solutions to rectify those errors. The proposed study is descriptive and analytical in which researchers are not only putting forward the description of identified idiomatic translation errors, but they also analyze them and evaluate the reasons of these problems. In this regard, eighty students of class 2nd year (girls and boys) were selected randomly as sample. These students were studying idioms as an integral part of course for two years. To strengthen the research phenomenon, eight lecturers were also selected from the related colleges. The sample was selected randomly from total population and data was collected through idiomatic translation testing tool and interviews. The researchers collected written tests as first-hand source from the selected sample and the focus of the written test was on the translation of idiomatic expressions. Another tool for data collection was interviews to find out the solutions of translation problems.

The test consisted of twenty (20) English idiomatic statements particularly selected to fulfill the needs of the current study. These idioms were part of their course. The test was prepared by following the design of Sajiduma'a (2014). Selected translation strategies of Baker (1992) mentioned in Owji (2013), about classification of different techniques were used to interpret idioms. These strategies include 1) an idiom having same meaning and form, 2) using an idiom of same meaning, but different form, 3) translation by omission and 4) translation by paraphrasing. These strategies are taken into consideration for analysis as most appropriate strategies for this study.

Eight lecturers of Intermediate Colleges Balouch were also selected for interview. Different questions asked were based on major problems faced by students while interpreting idioms from English to Urdu and the basic reasons of these problems. Moreover, suggestions related questions to overcome the problems were also the part of interview. The data was collected and checked for further analysis and categorization.

Analysis and Discussion of Data Collected from the Students

The researchers selected 20 statements for translation particularly focusing on idiomatic expression and put those statements into three categories. The correct answers, acceptable and wrong answers. The statements which were translated in a right way were considered as correct answers. The cultural bound expressions were translated by the students using word to word translation technique or by using some lexical mistakes that change the whole meaning of the statements considered wrong answer. The detailed data that was collected from participants is presented in table No. 5.1 which presents frequencies, and percentages of correct, acceptable, and wrong answers.

Table 5.1 Participants' Idiomatic Translation Performance in English into Urdu Tests (Frequency 80 and Percentage 100)

English Statements	Correct Answer		Acceptable Answer		Wrong Answer	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Statement 1	50	62.5%	0	0%	30	37.5%
Statement 2	21	26.25%	0	0%	59	73.75%
Statement 3	37	46.25%	2	2.5%	41	51.25%
Statement 4	41	51.25%	0	0%	39	48.75%
Statement 5	28	35%	26	32.5%	26	32.5%
Statement 6	20	25%	8	10%	52	65%
Statement 7	8	10%	16	20%	56	70%
Statement 8	8	10%	13	16.25%	59	73.75%
Statement 9	34	42.5%	1	1.25%	45	56.25%
Statement 10	4	5%	1	1.25%	75	93.75%
Statement 11	38	47.5%	1	1.25%	41	51.25%
Statement 12	5	6.25%	4	5%	71	87.75%
Statement 13	15	18.75%	5	6.25%	60	75%
Statement 14	21	26.25%	0	0%	59	73.75%
Statement 15	6	7.5%	3	3.75%	71	88.75%
Statement 16	31	38.75%	13	16.25%	36	45%
Statement 17	4	5%	2	2.5%	74	92.5%
Statement 18	3	3.75%	0	0%	77	96.25%
Statement 19	16	20%	6	7.5%	58	72.5%
Statement 20	11	13.75%	11	13.75%	58	72.5%

Total	400	(25%)	112	(7%)	1088	(68%)
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As displayed in table No. 5.1, only 400 statements were translated correctly. There were 112 statements paraphrased and 1088 statements interpreted wrongly. The table showed that the highest score of wrong translation represented that Intermediate students are facing different problems so, they could not translate the statements correctly.

Analysis and Discussion of Data Collected from the Lecturers

There were different ideas of English lecturers about the main problems that Intermediate students faced while translating idioms from English into Urdu. English teachers were interviewed and asked about the translation problems of English idioms faced by the Intermediate students. Using thematic analysis, following common themes from the answers of the selected sample of teachers are as under:

- 1- Students were not familiar with the target language expressions: this was the basic reason of the idiomatic translation problem for Intermediate students.
- 2- There is big difference between Urdu native language culture and English as a second language culture.
- 3- Students were not able to differentiate the cultural differences with consideration to habits, traditions and different functions like holly functions, entertainments, and social differences. This was confirmed by Al-Shaar (2014) that culture is the mixture of beliefs, knowledge, art, traditions, many other abilities and ways of life in a society.
- 4- There was a distinction between the meanings of native language and target language idioms. Idioms might be similar in both languages, but meanings were different. In this respect, Zagy (2000) considers that the purpose of translation is exchanging the meaning into the target language (TL) rather than changing the grammatical forms of the words and functions of the natural languages.
- 5- The context in which cultural bound expression is used plays vital role and their occurrence may not be same in both languages.
- 6- It is rare that in some of the cases, an idiom may be used in native and second language context with the same meaning in both its actual and idiomatic senses for example "crocodile's tear", its Urdu equivalent is "magarmach k ansu".
- 7- Idiomatic expressions were translated metaphorically but not literally. The idiomatic meanings were not guessed from common meanings of individual words for example "kicked the bucket", Urdu equivalent of this idiom is "foat ho jana". Most of the participants translate this expression literally in source language "balti ko lat marna" but its idiomatic meanings are totally different "to die".
- 8- Pakistani culture is totally different from British culture. Urdu speakers' culture makes dissimilar use of different words to their living styles, and traditions as does English.
- 9- The idiomatic meanings cannot be comprehended without context.

The lecturers pointed out that students might not be familiar with the correct inference of the idiom. They explained that it was important for students to recognize the idiomatic expression. Students were not aware of such type of text and they considered it ordinary text and the results were like meaningless expressions. Moreover, they pointed out that the students should get into account, keeping away from literalism which must be avoided in idiomatic translation. It was important to make form as well as proposed meaning. Most of other lecturers from the selected sample pointed out that some cultural bound expressions were characterized by group of words which were of inflexible and indefensible word order.

In this study, third research question was related to the possible solutions used to overcome the translation problems faced by Intermediate students. The researchers obtained the answers related to solution of suggestions from the selected sample of the college lecturers and by applying thematic analysis technique, following are the possible solutions for common mistakes in translation of the idiomatic expressions.

- 1- Teachers should explain them the basic concepts of the source language as way of life, including religion, practices, and traditions.
- 2- Participants should be well-known with the distinction between both cultures of native and target language.
- 3- Translators should keep away from word-to-word whose results are considered as wrong translation.
- 4- It was duty of schools, universities, and institutions' administration, that they must introduce English culture to their students.
- 5- Students should listen to the English songs, religious lectures and watch English movies, these techniques may improve students' translation skills and they can learn about cultural bound expressions that how these expressions can be used for translation in their source language.
- 6- It is very important for students to contact with English native speakers through social media.
- 7- It is the responsibility of English teachers to provide students a translation practice class in which students can practice and learn about English as target language.
- 8- Students should take part in different cultural workshops at universities and colleges.
- 9- Translators should make an effort to use cultural bound expressions in their daily conversation.

Some of the professional teachers in the field of linguistics and translation offered same recommendations and solutions that can assist translators to overcome these problems. They suggest that reading English novels, dramas, newspaper, watching movies, (as claimed by Yowelly, 2000) listening songs taking different English courses to improve their knowledge in the target language culture. They also suggest that idiomatic expressions or cultural bound expressions should be included in the dialogues, in classroom discussions and reading comprehension passages, etc. They recommended that students should learn about the different types of idioms, it is helpful for them when they translate the idiomatic expressions, they should recognize the idiom. Students should try their level best to discover similarities which change both meaning and form and are considered of not omitting the complete or a single part of idiomatic expression. It was also suggested that students should be taught translation techniques for idiomatic translation. They should also practice in translating idiomatic expression during their

course of the study. Use of good dictionary of idioms like Cambridge and Oxford dictionaries were also suggested to get facilitation in translation from English not Urdu language.

Conclusion

The current study was based on analysis of the idiomatic translation problems faced by Girls and Boys of Intermediate students at Government Intermediate Colleges Balouch, Azad Kashmir. The results show that Intermediate students face many difficulties while interpreting cultural bound expressions from English to Urdu. The main reasons of misinterpretation are cultural difference in both English and Urdu languages and unawareness of cultural bound expressions like idioms and proverbs. Lack of awareness about categories or techniques of translation, appropriate for idiomatic translation leads students to commit mistakes while translating idiomatic expressions. Literal translation of the idiomatic expressions is another reason of incorrect translation and the results showed the highest ratio of incorrect translation of the selected idiomatic expressions. Similarly, most of the respondents translated cultural bound expressions by explaining or paraphrasing strategy rather than by using second language equivalent which is another major reason of incorrect idiomatic translation.

Lecturers at the selected colleges who had experience of teaching translation of idiomatic expressions were of the view that students were not familiar with second language cultural patterns, as well as the way of life and traditions of English language users. They gave valuable suggestions to overcome translation problems of idiomatic expressions particularly to listen to English songs, watch English movies, read target language books, magazines, and newspapers. These techniques may improve students' translation skills as well as enhance their knowledge. They can learn about cultural bound expression as how these expressions can be used and translated in their source language. Students should use idioms in their daily conversation and translate them in their source language. It is also suggested that it is important to find second language idioms rather than interpreting idioms literally or through incorrect translation. Additionally, students should be taught translation studies as a subject at Intermediate level; it may improve students' capabilities to translate more accurately.

Notes:

¹ AJ&K: Azad Jammu and Kashmir

² TL: Target language

³ SL: Source language

⁴ TT: Target text

⁵ ST: Source text

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DEMOGRAPHIC DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Students,

Hope you are good. To collect data for our research work, we need demographic characteristics of the respondents, you are kindly requested to fill in this form by putting an X next to your answer.

Thank you,

Government Girls and Boys Intermediate Colleges Balouch.

(B.A. Students)

Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-22	<input type="checkbox"/> 24-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 26 and Above
Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	
Nationality	Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/>	Others <input type="checkbox"/>	
Your proficiency level in English?	<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
Your interest	<input type="checkbox"/> Linguistics	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Translation
Number of years you have spent in learning English?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 and above
Have you practiced English outside the College?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

ENGLISH-URDU TRANSLATION TEST

Dear students,

This test is designed only for the purpose of carrying out the study titled "Idiomatic Translation problems from English into Urdu". Accordingly, you are kindly requested to translate the following bolded idiomatic expressions into Urdu. External resources are not allowed to use. Your participation, time and efforts are highly appreciated.

1 -Love makes life a bed of roses.

.....

2- He is at home in classical music.

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3-She started meeting ahead of time.

.....

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4-In the meeting everybody was sitting silent when I broke the ice.

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5-The robbers broke into her house in broad daylight and took away almost everything.

.....

.....

6-She made a cock-and bull story about why she had come late but her father not believed her.

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7-You should take into account my past services.

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8-All his falsehood came to light at last.

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9-He worked day in and day out and achieved his goal.

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10-Women are usually in the habit of crying wolf.

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11. During the journey, he fell short of water.

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12. They looked far and wide for the missing dog.

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13. If you don't avoid bad company, you will soon get into hot water.

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14. The ambulance arrived in the nick of time.

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15. Shadab Khan is a back bone of Pakistan cricket team.

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16. The mother saved her child at the risk of her own life.

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17. There were not too many mourners when she kicked the bucket.

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.....

18. Dignified people are always looked up to.

.....
.....

19. Don't put off still tomorrow what you can do today.

.....
.....

20. I shall stand by her through thick and thin.

.....

Publication Ethics Statement

This is great pleasure to state that we have read the publication ethics of your esteemed journal and assure you that this is an original work submitted to your esteemed journal and has not been published earlier. Moreover, we have used our own data for this research work. In addition, there is no apparent conflict or competing interest, authorship has clearly been represented and all co-authors have granted permission for submission in your prestigious journal.

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