THE ABILITY OF JORDANIAN GRADUATE STUDENTS TO TRANSLATE ENGLISH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS INTO ARABIC

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ABSTRACT

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This study is an investigation of the problems facing graduate students of translation at two Jordanian state universities, namely Yarmouk University (Irbid) and the University of Jordan (Amman), when translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic. It analyzes translations produced by forty-five subjects of a forty-five-item test which consists of sentences each of which contains an idiom.

The purpose of the study is to determine the following:

1. the problems arising from the subjects' translation of idioms from English into Arabic;
2. the reasons that cause these problems;
3. the type(s) of idioms that are problematic for these students; and
4. the strategies that the students use in translating idioms.

The problems arising from those translations are losing some shades of meaning, misunderstanding the meaning of the sentences, disrupting coherence and unintelligibility due to the culture-bound idiomatic expressions, the presence of counterparts similar in form but different in meaning, the failure to determine whether the expression at hand is an idiom, the lack of competence required to translate such expressions, the lack of familiarity with the presence of idioms and the factors of carelessness and time pressure. The idiomatic types are arranged from the most to the least idiomatic, i.e. from idioms with adverbs to phrasal verbs.
The subjects used the following strategies proposed by Baker (1992):

1. using a target language idiom of the same form and meaning,
2. using a target language idiom of the same meaning but different form,
3. paraphrasing the idiom, and
4. omitting the idiom.

Finally, this researcher concludes with some recommendations for the improvement of the students' command of English idiomatic expressions and their ability to translate them into Arabic.