

# Mona Baker's Strategies Used for Translating the Arabic HAND Idioms

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**Abstract**—The issue of target language non-equivalence in the translation of various text kinds can be handled in a variety of ways. In this context, translation studies have extensively addressed Mona Baker's suggested methods for handling non-equivalence at the word level. However, no research has previously used both her description and evaluating the functional appropriateness of translating informative materials at the same time. Based on Mona Baker's recommended strategies for achieving Target Language Equivalence at the word level, this study compares word-level translation methodologies utilized in an informative text genre. The Arabic HAND idioms were chosen for examination. The primary issue /question is whether Baker's methodology can adequately explain and evaluate the word-level strategies utilized by translators to achieve functional Target Language equivalency? This study aims to achieve the following: pinpointing how Mona Baker views translation, identifying the main strategies suggested by Baker, and determining what "Universal of Translation" is.

**Index Terms**—Hand idioms, Mona Baker, strategies, translation difficulties, equivalence, omission

## I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of vernacular stations is one of the most effective ways of communication to many people, especially those who cannot communicate fluently via standard variety. Because translating a text is a difficult process, there is no acceptable translation that satisfies all requirements or takes into account all relevant factors. Given this, the translator must first establish the purpose of the source language (SL) system and then to locate a target language (TL) system that will effectively convey the function (Khudaybergenova, 2021, p. 1370).

Translating HAND Idioms is not an easy task due to the fact that they are uttered via different varieties. In addition, each idiom has completely different meanings and explanations according to culture specific items, norms, aspects and traditions. Items that are specifically tied to a particular culture's heritage and knowledge are referred to be CSIs. The degree of loss and gain that the CSIs will undergo when they are translated depends on the distance and difference between two different cultures (Tiwiyaniti & Retnomurti, 2017, p. 1). Helpful in solving this problem, Mona Baker –the professor of Translation Studies and Director of the Centre for Translation and International Studies at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology- ("Mona Baker", n.d., para. 1) proposed some strategies that are so useful in the achievement of the translation of the data under scrutiny.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Research Questions

This study tries to find answers to the following questions:

- (a). What is translation according to Mona Baker?
- (b). What are the main translation strategies suggested by Baker?
- (c). What is "Universal of Translation"?
- (d). How to apply Baker's strategies in translating The Arabian HAND idioms?

### B. Previous Studies

The author is listing some of the most significant and recent studies dealing with "translating idioms" due to the importance of prior studies to any research and in light of the understanding that there is no perfect scientific study. They have addressed the subject, and the researcher felt it was important to follow up with them to discuss how they compare and contrast with our study.

The first study is carried out by Putra1 and Novalinda (2018). The study aims to examine the translation techniques used while translating an English idiom into Indonesian. The novel *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D Salinger serves as the data's primary source. In translating them, the translator uses the following 4 translation strategies: employing a phrase with a similar meaning and form, translating a phrase with a similar meaning but a different form, paraphrasing a phrase, and omitting a phrase are all examples of idiom translation.

The second study is conducted by Fitri et al. (2019). It proposes that the quality of an idiom translation is determined by the application of proper procedures because an idiom's meaning cannot be determined by its individual words. The purpose of the study was to define the many kinds of idioms that may be found in the *Crazy Rich Asians* book and to

apply Baker's translation strategies to assess the methods employed to translate the idioms. The information was gleaned from the novel *Crazy Rich Asians*' list of idioms. In this study, it is found that translation by paraphrase is the most common strategy used to translate idioms, but it is not appropriate for opaque phrases.

The third study is achieved by Abdelaal and Alazzawie (2019). This study attempted to determine the translation procedures used by Anani in the translation of *Romeo and Juliet* as well as the degree to which the idioms' meanings from the source text (ST) were reflected in the final text (TT). The cultural variations between a source language and a target language make it difficult for translators to translate idioms. The analysis showed that Baker's idiom translation strategies were used by the translator. Also, it was discovered that the most often, the ST meaning of the detected idioms was transmitted.

The fourth study is carried out by Elnoty (2020, p. 17). It investigates the strategies used for the translation of idiomatic expressions from Arabic into English in Mahfuz's works. It identifies the most frequently used strategies, such as using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, and translation by omission, and suggests the most suitable strategies for conveying the idioms that the researcher views as inappropriately translated. It is recommended that translators have a good command of the TL idiomatic expressions and ask for the assistance of a native TL reviewer (Elnoty, 2020, p. 18).

### C. Theoretical Materials

#### (a). *Universals of Translation*

According to Mona Baker, "universals of translation are linguistic features which usually occur in translated rather than original texts and are thought to be independent of the influence of the source language on the target language" (Baker, 1993, p. 243). The concept of universals of translation was first introduced by Baker in 1993 *Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies – Implications and Applications*, and since that time, it has been discussed in most translation studies (Kraskowska, 2022, p. 2). Universals of translation are the following linguistic features: avoidance of repetitions present in the source text, simplification, normalization, discourse transfer, distinctive distribution of lexical items, and, finally, explication, which appears to be the most controversial notion. Kraskowska (2022, p. 1) states saying, "Stylometric techniques used to analyze similar data actually indicate the existence of a "translation style" phenomenon on a large scale". The avoidance of repetitions seen in the source text, simplification, normalization, discourse transfer, specific distribution of lexical words, and, ultimately, explication—which seems to be the most contentious idea—are all widely characterized as universals of translation. In fact, literary translators typically work hard to avoid repetitions. For instance, the phrase (he said) is frequently substituted while translating a text from English to Polish with the equivalents *rzek* (he uttered), *odpar* (he answered), or *zauway* (he observed). Here, it is also possible that the editors and source text's writers will make revisions. In this situation, the issue of self-translation, or the second version of the same text, is very interesting. While normalization involves conforming the language of the source material to the norms of the destination language, simplification often deals with grammar (which usually go against the non-normative stylistic features of the original). Stylometric investigations, Kraskowska (2022, p. 2), have shown that normalization and simplification appear less frequently and are typically utilized in translations of intellectual or scientific materials. Discourse transfer refers to instances in which the structure of the source text is transmitted to the target text, contravening the requirements of the target language, and is related to Gideon Toury's "law of interference" in translation. One place where this phenomenon might be seen is at the level of syntax. In fact, because of this unwelcome interference, the sentences in the translated text frequently still include aspects of the syntactic structure of the original language. It is also claimed that translations have a specific distribution of lexical elements (i.e. some words appear more frequently in translated than in source or non-translated texts). Last but not least, explication is a transformation that entails making explicit in the target text what is implicit in the source text or making already apparent source material even more explicit. In other words, when something suggested in the source text is conveyed explicitly in the target text or when a specific area of the source text has been highlighted in the target text through the use of lexical devices, explication has taken place. Systemic variations have no effect on explication. The fact that we may modify the target text to make it less clear is another argument in favor of explication. Thus, explication parallels the over-translation method. Over-translation, also known as amplified translation, involves adding more information to the target text. Over-translation, on the other hand, is the outcome of the translator's deliberate action and often pertains to certain passages in the text, whereas explication is a somewhat unconscious global cognitive process. Therefore, it may be said that explication is a representative example of Mona Baker's universal of translation since it manifests itself "beyond the specific," according to Andrew Chesterman. Another concept of translation is loss and gain. Loss as a notion refers to the disappearance of specific discourse elements from the source language in the target language (Nozizwe & Ncube, 2014, p. 676). In other words, some aspects of the Source Language (SL; henceforth, SL) such as its properties and process of transfer to the target text are caused by the differences between the two linguistic structures. Gain, on the other hand, refers to a circumstance where the target text acquires qualities that are absent from the source language. Gain is defined by Sallis (2002, p. 89) as the issue of the translation more fully expressing the message as compared to the original text.

#### (b). *Elementary Notions in the Theory of Translation*

Before dealing in detail with the translation strategies suggested by Baker, the translators must be introduced to some elementary notions in the theory of translation. They are instructed in the diverse factors that are elaborated in the process of translating. Such factors, which will be later related to specific strategies, are dealing with the TL and SL culture with all its aspects; beliefs, norms, values and social practices.

Newmark (1981, p. 7) indicates that the translators should be aware that their work as translators is developed in four levels; translation as a science, which requires knowledge of the facts and the language that describes them as well as verification, translation as a skill, which calls for appropriate language and acceptable usage, translation as an art, which separates good writing from undistinguished writing and is the creative, intuitive, and occasionally inspired level of the translation, and translation as a practice (Aguado-Giménez & Pérez-Paredes, 2005, p. 295). Decisions are constantly presented to translators. They are either intentionally following a translation theory while creating them or doing it instinctively. What translation theory actually does is identify and define a translation problem, list all the factors that must be considered in order to solve the problem, make a list of all the potential factors that could affect translation procedures, and then suggest the best translation procedure and translation. Because of the following, translating involves making decisions and addressing problems: first, decision-making due to the options the translator must choose from. Translation is a matter of choice, but choice is always motivated, according to Hatim and Mason (1990, p. 12; cited in Aguado-Giménez & Pérez-Paredes, 2005, pp. 295-296), who also note that "omissions, additions, and adjustments may be justified, but only in connection to intended meaning". Second, the ability to solve difficulties, as the translator is always "working to solve a thousand tiny problems in the setting of a major one.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Idioms are widely employed in daily communications in the Arabian countries to deliver effective messages. The purpose of this study is to look into HANID idioms and translate them into English. To consider this matter, a number of these idioms are randomly selected from people in streets; ten of them are chosen to be translated into English. This study illustrates the translation strategies drawn by Mona Baker (1992, p. 72) since traditional translation techniques will not function effectively to understand them. These strategies are:

#### A. *Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning and Form*

This approach entails utilizing an idiom in the target language (TL) that has essentially the same meaning as the source language's idiom and also contains lexical elements that are similar. Such a combination is really rare to happen upon (Baker, 1992, p. 74).

#### B. *Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form*

Finding a fixed phrase or idiom in the target language that is composed of different lexical elements but has a comparable meaning to the source language's expression or idiom may be achievable.

#### C. *Translation by Paraphrase*

Due to variations in the stylistic preferences of the source and target languages, this is now the most popular method of translating idioms when a correspondence cannot be found in the target language or when it seems undesirable to employ idiomatic language in the target translation (Baker, 1992, p. 74).

#### D. *Translation by Omission*

An idiom could occasionally be completely omitted in the TT, just like it does with single words. It might not have a close equivalent in the target language (TL), its meaning may be difficult to interpret, or it might be for aesthetic reasons (Elnoty, 2020, p. 18).

These strategies support solving equivalence problems, favor translation as a process mindfulness, and they present interpreters with chances to discuss and reflect on contextualized theoretical matters (Aguado-Giménez & Pérez-Paredes, 2005, p. 294).

### IV. DISCUSSION

#### A. *Idiom Definitions*

Idioms are defined by Ayto (2004, p. vii) in details in his book (Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms). To begin at the beginning, he starts with a question; what is an idiom? The shortest meaningful replay to this inquiry would be: "a phrase that behaves like a word". In order to understand idioms meaning, that does not mean their literal meaning, since the literal sense would be inappropriate. On the other hand, understanding each single word does not get us very adjacent to the sense of the phrase. So we must explain the phrase as a whole not parts. Ayto (2004) adds: semantic mistiness is one key merit of an idiom. The other is that its components (words) of which they are made up are more or less decisively immovable and in most cases is little or no scope for changing them.

Cambridge Dictionary of American Idioms (2003, p. ix) proposes another definition and also similar in some aspects. It states that "an idiom" is a phrase whose sense is different from the sense of each word considered separately. These phrases have immobile form. They often cannot be changed- and they are often informal. They can also be vernacular,

rude slang, or even somewhat formal. Many idioms are used in ordinary spoken language. They may be shown in newspapers, magazines, and books. They might be part of one's everyday chat.

The meaning referred to as an idiom is a collection of words that have been proven by usage to have a meaning distinct from the meanings of the individual terms (e.g. over the moon). It is a way of speaking that is intrinsic to a language, individual, or group of individuals. Any set of words that convey a meaning that cannot be inferred from the individual word. In other words, the only way to understand an idiom is to be familiar with it. The above definition is suggested by Pemba Yun (2018, p. 1). By their very nature, you can't determine the meaning of the sentence just by looking at it. Elnoty (2020, p. 18) states that the term "idiomatic" refers to a phrase or sentence that has the structure of an ordinary phrase but tends to be fixed in form and does not easily fit into different combinations or permit the word order to alter. Idioms are embedded elements of a language. These idiomatic phrases, which are excellent for conveying a speaker's intentions in a variety of contexts as well as the culture and writing style of the author, are common in Arabic and English and number in the thousands.

### B. Difficulties in Translating Idioms

The ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly, as well as the challenges associated with rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or fixed expression conveys into the target language (TL) are stated to be the two main issues that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose for translators by Baker (1992, p. 65). In addition, Baker points out that the first challenge a translator encounters is being able to identify an idiomatic term (1992, p. 6). She says it's more likely a translator will identify a term as an idiom if it's challenging to grasp and makes little sense in the context (1992, p. 65).

Baker (1992, pp. 68-71) outlines the primary difficulties associated with interpreting idioms as follows:

1. *There might not be a TL equivalent for the idiom or fixed statement.*
2. *The idiom or fixed expression may have a comparable equivalent in the target language (TL), but the context in which it is used may differ. The two expressions may also not be pragmatically transferrable.*
3. *The phrase may be employed in the ST simultaneously in both its literal and idiomatic connotations.*

The play on idiom cannot successfully be replicated in the (d) The frequency with which idioms are employed, the situations in which they can be utilized, and the very convention of utilizing them in written discourse may vary between the source and target languages. TT unless the TL idiom is congruent with the SL idiom both in form and in meaning.

HAND Idioms are idiomatic expressions in whose component the item (HAND) is available. Parts of the body are usually used in the idioms like; On your toe. That means (alert), Tear one's hair out. That means (Be extremely worried), To bite your tongue. That means (to try really hard not to say what you really feel), Blood is thicker than water. That means (family relations take precedence over others), and many others (web- source 2). This study focuses on Arabic Hand Idioms, i.e. idioms that have the item HAND as one essential part of them. They are common in the Jordanian everyday speech. The suggested translations are found on some websites like;

<https://www.dansenseienglish.com/idioms/angry/>

<https://7esl.com/idioms-with-hand/>

Some translations are found in the Arabian reference (Amer, 2020, pp. 136-150).

Idioms listed down are investigated in this study.

- ايدو ماسكة (بخيل)
- ايدو خضرا (يزرع ويثمر زرعه)
- ايدو طابلية (بيقدر يعمل أشياء كثيرة)
- ايدو واصلة (واسطة قوية)
- ايدو طويلة (يؤدي من حوله)
- ايدو خفيفة (حرامي وشاطر)
- ايدو على قلبه (بيخاف كثير)
- ايدو والكف (عصبي)
- ايدي بزنارك (أطلب مساعدتك)
- غاسل ايدو (يأنس)

They are chosen randomly, based only on the occurrence of the word HAND (ايدو/ايد) in them. Some of them only are selected to be analyzed in this study.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Baker suggests the following classification of strategies used by professional translators (1992, pp. 26-42). This framework (Aguado-Giménez & Pérez-Paredes, 2005, p. 298) is chosen to analyze the selected data and to achieve the aims of this study.

TABLE 1  
BAKER'S (1992) TAXONOMY OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

	Strategy	Comments
1.	Translation by a more general word (superordinate)	Related to propositional meaning. It works in most languages (p. 26).
2.	Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word	It has to do with differences in expressive meaning (p. 28).
3.	Translation by cultural substitution	This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item with a target language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader (p. 31).
4.	Translation using a loan word	Related with culture-specific items, modern loan word plus explanation concepts and buzz words (p. 34).
5.	Translation by paraphrase using a related word	This is used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form, and when the frequency of use in the source language is higher than in the target language (p. 37).
6.	Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words	This is used when the concept in the source language is not lexicalized in the target language (p. 38).
7.	Translation by omission	Omission of words which are not vital to the development of the text (p. 40).
8.	Translation by illustration	Use of illustrations when the source word lacks an equivalent in the target language (p. 42).

*Text 1: eidoh khadrah* ( ايدو خضرا )

In this idiom, the strategy of similar meaning and different form is used in its translation into TL. This idiomatic expression is translated into “Have a green Thumb”, in American English or “Have a green finger” in British English. Both translations refer to the same meaning in the TL; to be good at gardening and making plants grow well.

*Text 2: eidoh wasleh* ( ايدو واصلة )

In the above example, there is an Arabic idiom that refers to the person who is strong, powerful, and well personalist. It is suggested to translate it into “Have a hand in.....” or “Kings have long arm”. In this first translation, the strategy of same form, same meaning is adopted. While in the second, the strategy of paraphrasing is used. We prefer the second one as it keeps the figurative effect (metaphor: kings are powerful and can do whatever they like).

*Text 3: eidoh mafto7a* ( ايدو مفتوحة )

The above idiomatic expression is so common in the Arabic society, referring to generous people who are many and countless.

The strategy of paraphrasing is suggested, since finding an equivalent idiomatic expression has failed. The suggested translation is: “His money burns a hole in his pocket”. The meaning is clearly revealed, and the expression is well-understood.

*Text 4: eidoh taweeleh* ( ايدو طويلة )

The researcher believes that this translation “He is Sticky- fingered” (means given to stealing) is the most suitable one for this idiom. The strategy of dissimilar form and similar meaning is used. A person of such characteristic is so harmful, and mischievous. We have chosen this translation, since there is no equivalent expression found in the TL.

*Text 5: eidoh maskeh* ( ايدو ماسكة )

This idiom is approaching in its meaning the idiomatic expression “Miserly Sort”. The sense refers to someone disinclined to spend or part with money; a skinflint. The strategy of ‘same form; same meaning’ is used in this text. We believe that this translation is equivalent to the meaning of the idiom in the SL.

*Text 6: eidoh khafeefeh* ( ايدو خفيفة )

The researcher here is puzzled between two translations for this idiom that are entirely different. In the Arabic culture, *ايدو خفيفة* might refer to “pickpocket” and in this way it is preferable to be translated into “light- fingered”. In some other countries like Iraq, *ايدو خفيفة* refers to the person who is professional in his work, so we have chosen to translate it as “professional cynic”. It refers to the person who always behaves in a particular way. In both of the above translations, the strategy of ‘the similar form and similar meaning’ is used.

*Text 7: eidoh 3ala galbuh* ( ايدو على قلبه )

This idiom is so flexible in its translation. It refers to the person who is coward. It might be translated into; “He is a friady cat” / “He is a scaredy cat”/ “He is a chicken”. The strategy of paraphrasing is used in the transformation of the meaning into the TL. Another strategy is used that is omission. The item *قلبه* is not mentioned in the translation. Instead, other words are used conveying a close meaning.

*Text 8: eidi bzennarak* ( ايدي بزئارك )

In this idiom, we have failed to find an equivalent expression, therefore, we may use one of these expressions to convey the meaning. The strategy of paraphrasing and the strategy of omission are used. The suggested translations are; “Give me a hand” or “Lend me a hand”. The strategy used is dissimilar form and similar meaning.

*Text 9: ghazel eidoh* ( غاسل ايدو )

This idiomatic expression has the meaning of hopelessness. It might be translated into one of these suggestions; “In Your Dreams” or “When Hell Freezes” or “I will eat my hat if you win the match”. In the three suggestions, the strategy of paraphrasing is used. The literal translation “washing his hand” has a very far and different meaning.

*Text 10: eidoh wel kaf ( ايدو والكف )*

This last selected idiom has the meaning of anger. The person is very angry and nervous. The suggested translation for this expression is “I’ll get banana”. The strategy used is paraphrasing. Another translation that may convey a synonymous meaning is “AT MY WITS’ END”. When you are at your wits' end, you are on the verge of exploding. But you're attempting to remain calm, it's becoming impossible. Another translation is “THROW A FIT”. This idiom is flawless for individuals who have totally lost it. They are so angry that they completely lose control. There are lots of other idioms with very similar meanings such as: throw a wobbler, go off the deep end, go spare, blow a fuse, do (his) nut and lose it, and so many others. In all these examples, the strategy of paraphrasing is used.

The research shows that the most used strategy for translating idioms is by paraphrasing. Then comes the strategy of an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form. This proves that the translators have a good cultural experience concerning the idiomatic terminologies they faced. The strategy of ‘same meaning, same form’ comes in the third level, and finally the strategy of omission comes in the fourth level.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to study IDIOMS with the pragmatic tools of analysis and pinpoint how they are tackled via speech acts and implicated. It is also advisable to study them with Critical Discourse Analysis and identify their ideology. Transferring ideas and meanings from one language into another requires hard work of translation. Yet, translating some ideas from one language into another might be challenging. Among these ideas, idioms—particularly those used in everyday speech—have a prominent position. Many scholars including ‘Mona Baker’ suggest some strategies to ease the translation of idioms.

## APPENDIX

### The Arabic Hand Idioms

ايدو مالحة (بيخرب كل شيء يمسكه)

ايدو على قلبه (بيخاف كثير)

ايد من ورا وايد من قدام (مفلس)

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