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## **Bridging Emic and Etic Readings: Idiom Translation Strategies in Yusuf Idris's The Cheapest Nights<sup>(\*)</sup>**

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## الجمع بين الدراسات الإيميكية والإيتيكية (الداخل الثقافي والخارج الثقافي): ترجمة العبارات الإصطلاحية في مجموعة يوسف أدريس القصصية أرخص ليالي

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### الملخص

تُعنى هذه الورقية البحثية بدراسة ترجمة العبارات الإصطلاحية في بعض من قصص يوسف إدريس المترجمة إلى اللغة إلى اللغة الإنجليزية تحت عنوان أرخص ليالي من منظور نظرية الإيميك والإيتيك (Emic-etic)، وتهدف هذه الدراسة الوقوف على إلى أي مدى نجحت المترجمة (المصرية الجنسية) أو فشلت في توصيل المعاني والمضامين الثقافية لهذا النوع من العبارات ذات الخصوصية الثقافية والتي تنتمي إلى لغة المصدر دون اللغة الهدف.. هذا وقد استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتحديد المعاني الإيحائية الثقافية في عبارات النص الأصلي والوقوف على ترجماتها وهل نحت المترجمة في توصيلها أو لا... هذا وقد تم جدولة العبارات وجدولتها لتبيان استراتيجيات الترجمة المستخدمة لترجمة كلا منها.. الغرض من هذه الجداول هو لتبيان أي استراتيجيات الترجمة المستخدمة كانت فاعلة في توصيل المعاني الثقافية... هذا وقد أظهرت النتائج قدرة المترجمة على إيصال المعنى العميق (المعنى التواصل للعبارة) لأربع عشرة من مجموع تسع عشرة عبارة والتي تمثل عينة الدراسة، لكنها فشلت في توصيل المضامين الثقافية الرمزية للمعنى السطحي لذات العبارات... المعاني السطحية هي معاني ليست بذات جدوى عندما يتعلق الأمر بالمعنى التواصل، ولكنها ذات أهمية بالغة عندما يتعلق الأمر بالابحاث التاريخية أو تلك الموحية بحقبة زمنية أو تمثل الذهنية الجمعية لمحدثي اللغة المصدر.. هذا وأوضحنا الدراسة بأن استراتيجيات الترجمة التي أفضت إلى توصيل المعنى التواصل للعبارة هما استراتيجيات التكييف الثقافي، من خلال استخدام المكافئ الإصطلاحية في اللغة الهدف وكذلك استراتيجيات إعادة صياغة العبارة من أجل توصيل رسالتها التواصلية. كما أحجمت المترجمة عن ترجمة بقية الخمس عبارات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإيميك (الداخل الثقافي)، الإيتيك (الخارج الثقافي)، العبارات الثقافية الحركية، العبارات الإصطلاحية، المعنى العميق، الدلالات الرمزية للمعنى السطحي

## Bridging Emic and Etic Readings: Idiom Translation Strategies in Yusuf Idris's The Cheapest Nights

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### Abstract

This study is an attempt to approach the translation of idiomatic expression in some of Yusuf Idris's short stories into English language from an emic-etic perspective. This study aims to investigate if the translator (a native Egyptian-Arabic speaker) succeeded or failed to represent the cultural implications of this category of culture-specific expressions, namely idiomatic expressions. A descriptive, comparative analytical approach is used to figure out the cultural meanings conveyed or lost in the ST. The idioms and their translations are tabulated along with translation strategies utilized to get insight into what strategies were suitable so far as cultural meanings of idioms are concerned. The results of the study showed that the translator succeeded to represent the deep-structure meaning (the communicative meaning) of 14 out of 19 idioms, but failed to account for their surface-structure emics, which are insignificant in a communication process but imbued with cultural connotations like anecdotic, historic meanings or community worldviews. The translation strategies of adaptation and paraphrasing proved useful in rendering communicative meanings; culture-related surface-structure meanings (surface-structure culturemes) remained in the dark corner. The other five expressions in the data are omitted in the TT.

**Keywords:** Emic, etic, culture-specific expressions (CSEs), idioms, deep-structure meaning, surface-structure culturemes.

## Introduction:

An idiom is "an expression whose meaning cannot be worked out from the meaning of its constituent parts" (Trask, p. 80). Their meanings are unpredictable and, therefore should be learned separately. Knowing the meaning of each word in an idiom does not entail understanding its meaning as one unit. Strässler (1982) defines the idiom as a linguistic phenomenon which cannot be fully understood without a stratificational view of language. It is "unitary in meaning, unpredictable as to syntax, and complex, hence misleading in expression" (p. 43). For Newmark idioms are related to collocations. He identifies idioms with collocations because they constitute groups of collocated patterns with no clear meaning when considering its constituent parts. Due to their nature, Newmark (1991) argues, "any literal translation of such idioms into another language is more often than not nonsense" (p. 58).

Language is the most complicated human phenomenon. It is more than a signifier-signified system; it is the outcome of social interaction over hundreds if not thousands of years. The geographical, political, climatic, religion and many more factors play a vital in forming the worldview of the people speaking a given language. Therefore, each language has different cultural mappings which are far from being grasped easily by nonspeakers of that language. Due to this fact, each language has its own proverbs, idioms and other specific expressions. Arabic, and more specifically Egyptian, Arabic encompasses idioms derived from the different aspects of life. In this regard Al-Masri (p. 27) concludes that idioms are gems of Arabic language. She adds that they are loaded with cultural aspects and pragmatic values that are rooted in their social and religious contexts. Idris' short stories are full of such culture-specific patterns. An emic-etic account of their translation by Wassef uncover some of the issues in rendering them to a language with different worldviews.

## Statement of the Study:

Idioms are fixed expressions that sound natural to native speakers of a particular language. According to Longman Idioms Dictionary (1998), an idiom is "a sequence of words which has a different meaning as a group from the meaning it would have if understand each word separately" (p. vii). In other words, the meaning of the whole unit does not result from the sum

of its individual words. People sharing the languaculture find no difficulty decoding the multiple layers of meanings of idioms as they belong to the same emic system. From a translation standpoint, however, idioms are a major challenge to translators due to (1) their inherently idiomatic nature, and (2) their cultural specificity. In translation contexts where cultural aspects are peripheral, rendering idioms is relatively unproblematic. When culture lies at the center of the translational endeavor, culturally-laden phenomena such as idioms should be treated with particular care in order to ensure the faithful emic representation of cultural components.

### Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to:

- 1- investigate layers of emic meanings embedded within purposively selected idioms in Yusuf Idris' collection of short story translated by Wadida Wassef under the title, *The Cheapest Nights*.
- 2- investigate the translation of idiomatic expressions from an emic-etic perspective to find to what extent the translator acted as a cultural insider
- 3- Question the Translation strategies utilized to render the expressions to find out which one(s) were useful in corresponding the emics of ST.

### Rationale of the Study:

This study is of great significance because of the new dimensions meant to be discovered when translating these multi-word patterns deeply-rooted in different cultural aspects of life. On surveying the related literatures one finds that the issues of translating idioms cross-culturally are not yet addressed sufficiently. All studies have come up with a consensus that idioms as a linguistic phenomenon reflect their specificity as they are deeply rooted in culture-related contexts like religion, history, situations and worldviews. The fact that idioms are inflexible sequence of words with communicative meanings irrelevant to the separate meanings of their elements, which poses great challenges to translators, has been tackled extensively. Suggestions involving a nuanced understanding of the cultural and social factors is required as well a concise interpretation of idioms' implied meanings towards more adequate translations have also been elaborated. Yet, this issue should be approached from a different cultural perspective so as to ensure similar understanding by TT readers of the emic features as perceived by ST readers. This paper is an endeavor to investigate

the emic-etic perspective to the translation of highly culture-specific expressions, namely, idioms. So long as culture is concerned the question remains, are communicative understandings of idioms enough? The issue of rendering idioms should be taken one step ahead.

### Theoretical Framework:

Headland (1990) gave an account of how the terms 'emics' vs. 'etics' came into existence. They were first used in print by Pike in 1954 (Pike, 1967). Then Harris grasped the idea of 'emics' and 'etics' and started using them in his own way. He first used them in print in his *The Nature of Cultural Things* (Harris, 1964). Their legacy, however, belongs to the American linguist Kenneth Pike. He found it possible to describe both verbal and nonverbal behavior from emic and etic points of view. The two terms 'emics' and 'etics' were created to include some components of nonverbal behavior in linguistic description. Pike observed that like a particular language that can be described in terms of phonemic units, nonverbal behavior can be identified in terms of categories relevant to emic verbal behavior. For theoretical purposes Pike (1990) found it awkward to use the terms 'phonetics' and 'phonemics' to refer to nonverbal behavior, and coined the words 'emics' and 'etics' to refer to both verbal and nonverbal behavior. Pike (1990) defines an emic unit as "a physical or mental item or system treated by insiders as relevant to their system behavior and as the same emic unit in spite of etic variability" (p. 18). The etic approach is cross-cultural in that it treats all cultures at one time. In spite of that, etic analysis is not at odds with emic analysis as argued by Berry (1990) in his *Imposed Etics, Emics, and Derived Etics: Their Conceptual and Operational Status in Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Etic analysis is a preliminary step towards emic understanding. This operational model of "etic-emic-etic," however, has found its way to translation practices and translation analysis. Background knowledge of the translator and presuppositions (functioning as "etics") about the text to be translated precedes an emic analysis of the situated beliefs, cultural norms and social customs represented in the ST (Al-Masri, 2017).

### Methodology of the Study:

Conducting a product-oriented translation case study entails devising a well-netted methodology for the comparative analysis of ST and TT as

described by Jose Lambert and Van Gorp in their *On Describing Translations* (1985). Comparing ST CSEs and their translations in TT, and establishing a semantic, pragmatic and ethnographic filters will eventually give reliable indications about gains and losses at the level of cultural meanings, which form an integral part of literary translation. As has been suggested here, a comparative, descriptive methodology that functions across many disciplines is set into operation, i.e., a multidisciplinary methodology because "translation borders on too many provinces" (Mcfarlane, 1935, p. 93). In this way, linguistics elements cannot be analyzed apart from literary intertextuality and sociocultural situationality (Holmes, 1988/2000). Therefore, comparative analyses of ST segments (CSEs in this context) and TT segments are carried out by mapping ST segments to TT segments, bearing in mind all emic meaning components (meanings specific to and shared by all people of the same linguistic and cultural background, i.e., meanings "relative to the internal characteristics of the system" (Berry, 1990, p. 85) of a ST segment while doing the analysis. An analysis of an emic unit, however, entails considering its defining feature among which is that the appropriateness of its occurrence is determined by its relevant place in patterns of cultural frames (Pike, 1990). The appropriateness of idiomatic expressions as a linguistic phenomenon to be represented in a new cultural frame is considered to judge the rendition's emicity or eticity.

In DTS, such as this one, Toury (1995) suggests identifying relationships between coupled pairs of ST and TT segments and attempting generalization about the underlying concept of translation. To attain the objectives of this research, each ST excerpt and its TT representation are subjected to detailed contrastive analysis in which the emic ST descriptions are discussed and highlighted as perceived by people within the system (Egyptian in this context). When the emic understandings of an idiom have been stated, its translation is subjected to similar analysis procedures to investigate what cultural implications have been conveyed. Does the translation have the same emic meanings as that of the ST idiom, or they have distorted, altered, omitted, reduced, globalized or foreignized it just to be unintelligible, etc.? Here, emic analyses of both texts are carried out within an etic comparative measures, taking into account knowledge about both cultural contexts,

pragmatics, semantics, stylistics, translation strategies suggested by specialists, etc.

The translation procedure used is recognized; it is also approached and discussed from insider-outsider standpoint to assess how it brought about a cultural insider representation or an outsider one. Relatedness of a translation procedure to the translator's success or failure to act as a cultural insider is discussed. In other words, the translator's options are evaluated based on the theoretical framework of this research.

Idioms are categorized into three types based on their structure. The emics of the ST idiom are analyzed, sorted out and listed into categories. Their English renditions are investigated to see what cultural colors of the idiom have been conveyed. Cultural losses are accounted for; alternative versions are suggested and discussions of translation strategies are included. Translation strategies used to describe the translation of the data (idioms) are not confined to one particular model, instead, names of strategies from different models, e.g. Newmark (1988), Davies (2003), Baker (1992), Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) among others are used.

### Related Literature:

Rohmawati, et al (2022) aimed to explore translation procedures for idioms and culture-specific items, as well as their categories. The data of the study were idioms (146) and CSE (26) from Lucy M. Montgomery's novel *Anne's House of Dreams* and Maria Lubis Indonesian translation of the novel. The results revealed that the most translation approach used to render idioms was translation by paraphrasing and the least common was translation by omission. Results on CSEs showed that the most regularly used approach was transfer while deletion was the least used.

Almaaytah's study (2022) is dedicated to the translation of idioms by artificial intelligence. He concluded that in spite of the major changes that have taken place since the inception of machine translation in the 1950s, still there are certain difficulties in the present decade. To overcome problems of erroneous translation of idioms in machine translation, the researcher suggested "the machine translation system must be able to segregate the phrases from idioms". The next process by the software is to find out the idiom's category and give a suitable translation that is taken out

from database stored in the translation memory. In case there is no corresponding idiom is in the TL, then the paraphrased phrase should be output so that final outputs do not have any errors.

Vula and Tyfekçi (2024) investigated the difficulties the translators faced and the strategies they used to maintain the authenticity of the source material. An analysis of English idioms translated into Albanian language showed the need for careful consideration to linguistic nuances to convey the messages effectively. The paper also emphasized the role of translators to bridge the linguistic gaps due to the complexity of translating idioms. They must possess better understanding of ST and TT and the cultural context from which idioms evolve.

According to Mona Ahmad and Mahadi (2012), idioms translation challenges ensu from disparity among languages and the variation in their cultures. Other results included that the translator should have knowledge about culture and should be highly sensitive to the rhetorical hints of the language. They also concluded that strategies like using a parallel idiom, using a similar meaning but dissimilar form, using notes, etc. may guide the translator as well.

Oualif (2017) emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding and cross-cultural awareness in the translation process. His article highlighted the difficulties of rendering idioms because of cultural and social differences between languages. Therefore, the process of translation necessitates a deep understanding of both SLC and TLC. The set of cultural parameters shapes people's attitudes, beliefs, and values, which, definitely, influence the way language is used. A particular challenge in translation is posed so long as idiomatic expressions are concerned is that literal translation does not work. Moreover, idioms are influenced by many factors like the situation in which they are used, the implied connotations they suggest and the emotions they correspond. So a nuanced understanding of the cultural and social factors is required as well a concise interpretation of idioms' implied meanings.

### Limitations of the Study:

The data of this study are 19 idioms from Idris's short stories translated by Wadida Wassef and given the name *The Cheapest nights* though they are taken from different collections of short stories by the same short story

writer, e.g. *Laylat Saif* (translated under the title *All on a Summer's Night*), *Abou'l Hol* (translated under the title *The Caller of the Night*) are taken from the short story collection *Qua'a Al-Madinah*, the short story *Al-Sheikh Sheika* (translated as *The Freak*) is taken from the collection *Akhir Ad-Dunya*, etc. Each story in the ST is closely read in search for idioms.

Seventeen excerpts are taken from the short stories. They include twenty idioms. The twenty idioms will be divided into three categories based on their nature (metaphorical idioms, idioms containing similes and plain idioms). Illustrative tables will be used to facilitate comparisons and analytical processes.

## Data Analysis:

### 1- Metaphorical Idioms

(1) ST: (Idris, 2017, p. 139). وكان عمله «ألسطة» وحساده كثيرين وكان حال امرأته معه على كف عفريت

TT: And so it went on. Many people envied him. As for his wife, **it all depended** (p. 41)

The ST excerpt includes two culture-specific items. The first one ألسطة *alīṣṭa* and the second one is على كف عفريت *'alā kaf 'ifrīt*, an idiom in most Arabic varieties. ألسطة *alīṣṭa* is Italian by origin and means 'ready' or 'prepared' (Ameen, p. 62). It is bound to Egyptian variety of Arabic. The interpretation given by all Egyptians interpreters of this research sample is the same. This word is said to mean that the work assigned to someone has been performed in a perfect way without any noticeable problems. Here, ironically, Yusuf Idris wants to say that Abdou, the hero of the short story, who, under the hardships of life, has been compelled to sell his blood in return of some money, is doing a great job. Egyptians, when they tend to praise anyone's performance in his/her job (e.g. builder, baker, carpenter, etc.) they say that his work is *alīṣṭa*. The item is represented in the TT as "and so it went on." Here the problem is not with the translation shift which replaces an adjective *alīṣṭa* by a phrasal verb (went on). The irony is that Abdou, the miserable man selling his blood for a living, is doing a good job. The problem is that the translator failed to account for the ironical implication embedded in emics of the ST item.

The idiom *كف عفريت* *alā kaf 'efrīt* is rendered as "it all depended." The Egyptian interpreters explained its cultural meaning as a changeable state that never lasts for too long. Wassef's rendition "it all depended" is neutralization of the ST item so as to be understood by TT readers. The translation implies that Abdou's wife's reactions towards him depends on his coming back home with food (smiling) or his sleeping throughout the week (complaining and nagging about his deteriorating health conditions). In this way the communicative message implied by the figurative device of the idiom under discussion that something/a situation is not stable and is amenable to change is communicated. The figurative meaning that the unstable and changeable situation is like something in the hand of a supernatural being is not conveyed to TT readers signaling a cultural loss at the symbolic level.

(2) ST: *غير أنهم لم يكون يقيمون لعصبيته وسبابه وزناً فقد كان يعرفون أنه أبيض من الداخل*: (Idris, Hadithat Sharaf, 2017, p. 60).

TT: But nobody seemed to mind him for they knew **there was no harm in him** (p. 35).

The idiomatic metaphor used in the ST excerpt under discussion is *abyadh min addākhil* neutralized as "there was no harm in him." The metaphor implies that the man is good-hearted and no harm can ensue from him. The word *أبيض* *abyadh* in the ST is used metaphorically: the white color in Arabic culture has symbolic meanings: if something is white, it is not stained with anything unpleasant. Therefore, Gharib's father, whose swearing and cursing are endless, is genuinely good at heart. The translator grasped the implied message that there was no harm in the man. The metaphorical flavor that Gharib's father's inside (inclinations and intentions) is white (innocent with no harmful motivations). The cultural implication that a good fellow's inside (heart sometimes) is likened to the white color, the color of purity and innocence. In this way the denotative meaning is accounted for, but the cultural implications remained implicit to TT reader.

(3) ST: *سألته فأكد لي أن ما قاله الرجل صحيح وإن بنته ماتت حقيقة في المستشفى وقد أصبح بموتها وحيداً*: (Idris, Hadithat Sharaf, 2017, p. 114).

TT: He confirmed what the man said. It was true that his daughter had died in the hospital and that by her death he was **left alone in this world**.

In the ST the phrase مقطوع من شجرة *maktū'e min shajarah* is a figurative collocation. If someone is said to be *maktū'e min shajarah* (as if cut off from a tree) it means that he has no relatives left to stand by him/her, to support him/her, to comfort him, and to make his/her life happier. The ST metaphor *maktū'e min shajarah* induces an image of someone with no relative as a branch cut off from a tree. Now the man described in the excerpt has lost his only daughter. He is left alone in the world. This is the implicit message of the ST metaphor. The translation strategy opted for by Wassef is explicitation. The reading of translation sounds natural to English native speakers as the STE is domesticated. Metaphors in any language reflect the worldview of the people speaking that language: how they perceive the world around them. The worldview of Arabic native speaker is that when somebody is alone in this world because relatives have died or because he is the sole person in his family, people conceive him as a branch cut off from a tree with no stem nutrition. This cultural conception is not to be understood by TT readers through the explicitation strategy.

وامرأة فاجرة هي التي سرقتها لتحترف بها. إنه لن يسترجع الساعة فقط لكن شهرت لن تنفذ من يده...:ST (4). (Idris, 2021, p. 55). سوف يريها أنه ليس بالضعف والطيبة التي تتصورها وأنه ليس من الطير الذي يؤكل لحمه.

TT: That shameless woman was daring him, but he was going to show her, he was shouting now to Sharaf. She won't get away with it. **He wasn't going to let her make a monkey out of him** (p. 93).

The ST expression المرأة الفاجرة *almar'atu alfajirah* is rendered as "the shameless woman." The word shameless is defined in Cambridge dictionary (n.d.) in the second entry as behaving in a way intended to attract sexual interest, without feeling ashamed about it. Even this shade of meaning does not correspond to the ST expression, in which Judge Abdullah explicitly calls Shohrat *fajirah*. *Fajirah* has two dictionary meanings, one is she is a liar and the other one is that she is a whore. She is head over ears indulged in intercourse with many men. This meaning with all the social attitudes towards a woman like this one is lost.

The other ST expression *innahu laisa min atfair* أنه ليس من الطير الذي يؤكل لحمه *alladhi yu'kal lahmeh* is a metaphor idiom. In this situation, Judge Abdullah's watch has been stolen. After considering who could the thief be, he ends up accusing Shorat, the maidservant. Now he is irritated about how she dared to steal his watch, and that she would not go unpunished with her act. Moreover, he will let her know who he is, and that he is not the one to be fooled/trifled with. The metaphor is used to tell that the speaker has been faulted for a naive, but that he is too shrewd to be fooled. This is the deep-structure meaning of the metaphor. The symbolic meaning or cultural worldview suggested by the surface structure is that Judge Abdullah is not the bird whose meat is edible as Shohrat might have thought. On the contrary, he is a bird of prey, he feasts on other birds, not feasted on. The implied comparison is that Judge Abdullah is a bird of prey, a symbol of strength, predator not a prey. This SL idiom is adapted into "He wasn't going to let her make a monkey out of him." The translator used the cultural substitution strategy to render this CSE. Merriam Webster dictionary (n.d.) explains this idiom "to cause (someone) to look very foolish: to make a fool out of (someone). Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defined it as to make someone appear stupid. The two idioms have the same deep-structure meaning, which means the translator succeeded to account for the communication emics, but did she succeed to account for the symbolic emics (surface-structure cultural implications or worldviews)? To answer this question let's examine the TC worldview: judge Abdullah is not a monkey, the animal kept for amusement and laughter. Therefore, "a bird of prey" has symbolic meanings different from that of "a monkey." The communicative meanings of the two idioms are the same. The cultural mapping of the Arabic idiom goes as follows: Judge Abdullah is not like the meat of an edible bird; rather, he is like the meat of an inedible bird, and, therefore, should not be trifled with. The comparison in the second example is between Judge Abdullah and a monkey which is the subject of laughter. He will not let this happen and will get back his lost watch. Idioms are representative of social experiences over the years and how people perceive the world around them. Based on that, literal translation of idioms will produce nonsensical structures (Newmark, 1991). Only if the ST cultural worldview (ST metaphor) is explicated can literal translation be not only meaningful, but provide a good account of how native speakers realize the world.

(5) ST: اعتدل الشيخ رجب فوق حمارته وانجصص إلى الوراء كما يفعل الأبطال المغاوير، واستردَّ الخمسمائة : ST: (5) من أهل كفر العزب أنفاسهم الهاربة ووقفوا وراءه - ربما لأول مرة في حياتهم - وقفه رجل واحد يؤيدونه ويحذونه (Idris, 2017, p. 53).

TT: But there was nothing doing with Sheikh Ragab, who sat up in the saddle and declared to Ambar, **backed by all five hundred of the inhabitants of Kafr Azab**, that they were there to stay. Their dignity would not let them turn back, having come this far on the persistent invitation of El Sandik Bey (The cheapest nights, p. 143).

Sheikh Ragab is the one chosen by the people of Kafr Azab to negotiate Ambar and the people of El Sandik Bey when stopped them to head to El Sandik's village as it had been a custom to interrupt a pride's procession and invite the pride and the people in the procession. This excerpt includes two collocational idiomatic expressions that cannot be translated literally. The expressions are الأبطال المغاوير *alabtāl almaghawīr*, and وقفه رجل واحد *waqfat rajul wāhid*. The following table will be helpful for analysis purposes:

**Table (1)**  
**Metaphorical Idioms 1**

STEs	TT	Translation strategy	Cultural meanings	Emic meanings
الأبطال المغاوير <i>alabtāl almaghawīr</i>	Omitted	omission	Heroes who have fallen deadly fighting and come out triumphant	lost
وقفه رجل واحد <i>waqfat rajul wāhid</i>	backed by the five hundred	paraphrasing	They took the same position with regards to a particular situation as if they were one man taking his own decision.	Correspo nded

The ST expression الأبطال المغاوير *alabtāl almaghawīr* is ironical in this context. The story teller meant to mock Sheikh Ragab who like triumphant warriors, sat up in the saddle taking the posture of a medieval knight who had won the battle against his enemies. Sheikh Ragab along with the five hundred men are headed to El Sandik's village by force when they should have resisted that bridal invitation. Such invitations to people in brides' processions are a cause of shame to them. This irony as well as the cultural

implications that Sheikh Ragab and his people did not act like heroes in protecting the processions is lost.

The STE *waqfat rajul wāhid* وقفه رجل واحد is rendered as "backed by the five hundred." Once they were at El-Sandik's village, he got angry with him for having headed them to the village and ordered them to turn them back unserved. Sheikh Ragab heroically refused to go back without being honored and hosted. All his five hundred men united as one man supported him and showed great heroism towards turning them back unattended. Paraphrasing the ST metaphorical idiom (that the people were united in their attitude as if they were one man went home) resulted in an emic representation of the ST expression.

أما العزابوة فبعد أن شربوا قهوة الصباح ورشفوها بمزاج وأشعلوا السجائر أربعة وعشرين قرياط وتوكلوا: ST (6) (Idris, Hadithat Sharaf, 2017, p. 54). على الله وامتطوا ركائبهم واستأنفوا طريقهم إلى بلد العريس

TT: As for the bride's company, having contentedly sipped their morning coffee, and drawn on their first cigarettes, they started on the remainder of their journey with no end of praise for Sheikh Ragab and his wisdom (p. 129)

This excerpt is taken from the short story *Tahweed Al-Aroussa* rendered as *Bringing in the Bride*. In Egyptian Arabic dialect people use the idiomatic expression *arba'ah wa 'eshrīn qīrāt* أربعة وعشرين قرياط to express full contention with how a sort of action is performed especially if it has something to do with mood being in a very good state. The meaning already provided is the deep meaning of the expression, which if translated literally (and lit up their cigarettes twenty-four carats) will give no sense to target readers. The reason for that is because this ST idiom has a metaphorical meaning, that if something is done when someone is in a perfect mood, it is like twenty-four carats gold, which is the purest value of gold when it is not combined with any other metal. Gold is the most precious metal and the purer it is, the more precious it is. This metaphorical idiom is used in social contexts to say how something or some sort of action is done without troubles when someone is in a high mood. This CSE expression is left untranslated because the translator failed to give a TT equivalent to satisfy both the communication emics (deep-structure meaning) as well as symbolic emics (the cultural worldview that if something is done when someone is in a perfect mood, it

is like twenty-four carats gold). The target readers will not happen to comprehend that cultural metaphor: Kafr Azab people are in a very good mood and it is like pure gold of twenty-four carats. Omission results in a complete loss of the ST emics (Al-Masri, 2009). Thus the translator fails to be an insider in either texts.

(7) ST: ولما تأكد للبيك أنه ما لم فسيفضحونه في طول البلاد وعرضها وسيضحكون عليه طوب الأرض (Idris, Hadithat Sharaf, 2017, p. 54).

TT: When it became clear to the Bey that if he persisted in withdrawing his invitation he was going to be exposed to all and sundry as a miserable miser and **made the laughingstock of the area for miles around** there was nothing for him but to take them in. (p. 129)

The ST idiom *wa-sayudhikûn alaihi tûb alardh* is rendered as "and made the laughing stock of the area for miles", an English idiom used to express the same pragmatic meanings of the ST idiom. The TL idiom is defined in Merriam Webster (n.d.) as 'an object of ridicule.' The two idioms are equivalent as they represent the same communicative meaning, i.e., the same deep-structure meaning. The translation strategy used here is cultural substitution/adaptation. The TT readers will grasp the same message the ST readers grasp on reading the ST version. This strategy seems inevitable, as literal rendering would produce meaningless phrases in the TT. Of course the metaphorical meaning of the ST (the exaggeration that even the bricks of the earth would also laugh at him because people of Kafr Azab would narrate this episode to everyone they happen to meet even without being asked to do so, and the image of bricks laughing at the man) is lost with the translation opted for as literalness might suggest. Yet, the ST style (use of idiomatic language) is retained, in addition to the identical communication emics of both ST and TT idioms. Based on the analysis provided so far, the translator seems to have grasped the emics of the ST idioms and successfully acted as an insider in the TL on the communicative level, but failed to account for the symbolic emics or SL worldview, i.e., the exaggeration that even the bricks of the earth would laugh at someone.

(8) ST: ولم تكن هذه أول مرة يحتاج فيها عبده، فقد أمضى عمره باحثًا عن القرشين (Idris, Arkhas Layali, 2017, p. 135).

TT: Abdou was hard up. Not for the first time. The condition was chronic. He had spent most of his life until now **trying to make both ends meet**. (p. 181).

The ST expression *باحثًا عن القرشين* *baḥthan 'an alqirshain* is a metaphorical fixed expressions translated as "trying to make both ends meet." With this translation the translator captures the communication emics of the ST item through use of cultural substitution/adaptation. The Arabic idiom connotes that the man works too hard to collect what can hardly be enough to sustain him and his wife. The literal translation of *القرش* *alqirsh* (singular of *qirshain* and the smallest monetary unit) is 'penny.' Literal translation would look something like, "he spent his life in search for the two pennies," a meaningless rendition to TT readers as it does not belong to the TL's worldviews. Substituting the ST idiom with "trying to make both ends meet," an equivalent TT idiom with the same deep-structure meaning, was adequate. In Cambridge dictionary (n.d.), the TL idiom means "to have just enough money to pay for the things you need." In this way the communicative meaning was transferred; however, the SL worldview remains vague.

(9) ST: صحيح أن الناس تتكلم، وكلام الناس كثير، ولكن المهم أن وابورهم والع واجبارهم مدفوع، والذي لا: (Idris, 2017, p. 139).

TT: It was also true that people talked, but at least the stove was going and the rent was paid. **People could go to hell**. (p. 42)

The Arabic idiom, *فاليشرب من أوسع بحر* *fal-yashrab min albahr*, most often used in Egyptian variety, is used to tell that the person involved in any social or personal activity is not ashamed of what he is doing nor is careful about what people would say about him/her. This ST idiom is rendered as, "People could go to hell," an English idiom used to express the same deep meaning of the equivalent Arabic idiom. The translation strategy used is cultural adaptation. It can be affirmed that Wassef has been an insider in the ST idiom and opted for an equivalent TT idiom. What is lost in this translation is the cultural worldview of Egyptians that people indignant with some personal affair would be asked to drink the salty water of sea instead of going to hell (TL world view).

Table (2)

## Metaphorical Idioms 2

Metaphorical idiom	TT Translation	Translation Strategy	Communication emics	Symbolic emics
على كف عفريت <i>alā kaf ifrīt</i>	it all depended	Explicitation	conveyed	lost
أبيض من الداخل <i>abyadh min ad-dakhil</i>	there was no harm in him	Explicitation	conveyed	lost
مقطوع من شجرة <i>maqṭū'e min shajarah</i>	he was left alone in the world	Explicitation	conveyed	lost
ليس من الطير الذي يؤكل لحمه <i>laysa min aṭ-ṭair allathi yu'kal lahmuh</i>	he wasn't going to let her make a monkey out of him.	Adaptation	conveyed	lost
وقفه رجل واحد <i>waqfat rajulun wahid</i>	backed by all five hundred	Explicitation	conveyed	lost
أربعة وعشرين قيراط <i>arba'ah wa-'ishrīn qīrāt</i>	—	Omission	lost	lost
وسيضحكون عليه طوب الأرض <i>wasayudhikūn alaihi tūb alardh</i>	and made the laughing stock of the area for miles	Adaptation + addition	conveyed	lost
كان عبده في حاجة إلى قرشين <i>kana abdu bi-hājah ila alqirshīn</i>	trying to make both ends meet	adaptation	conveyed	lost
فليشرب من أوسع بحر <i>fal-yashrab min awsa'e bahr</i>	people could go to hell	Adaptation	conveyed	lost

Out of the nine examples four were translated by the explicitation strategy. This means the translator took care to communicate the conceptual meanings, but did not turn to the symbolic meanings of the ST idioms, which represent the ST worldviews. Four examples are rendered by TL equivalent idioms in the TC. These TC idioms have identical conceptual respective meanings, but different figurative meaning.

### Idioms Containing Similes:

(10) ST: وأن الحال مثل القشطة (Idris, 2017, p. 104).

TT: Seeing **all was well and everything in order**, he removed his wide uniform belt and relaxed (Idris, 2020, p. 29).

This ST idiom is used more in Egyptian Arabic dialect than any other register. It is used to tell that the described situation is going smoothly without any disturbances. An idiom, as defined in Meriam Webster (n.d.), is "an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements." Such culture-specific expression is not to be translated literally, and if so, the production will be nonsense to TT readers. This idiom *مثل القشطة* *mithl alqishtah*, taken from the short story *Mishwār* translated as *The Errand*, has a simile in it that the situation is like "condensed cream." The worldview of Egyptians as inherited from generation to generation is that *القشطة* *alqishtah*, condensed cream, is very white, with the color white symbolizing peace of mind. This idiom with its embedded connotations is rendered as "all was well and everything in order." The message of the ST idiom is communicated to readers of the TT. The translation strategy is explicitation. This strategy, as noticed in the translation of this idiom and some other examples in this research work, preserves the communicative meaning of the ST idiom, but fails to account for the symbolic emics: Egyptians realize that *alqishtah's* white color is pure enough, and comparing someone's heart to it is symbolical of his/her good-heartedness.

(11) ST: ولكن شطارته كلها تظهر إذا حَلَّتْ بالعزبة كارثة ما، حينئذ يقف كغراب البين على التربة وقد أمسك بذيل جلبابه من الخلف ويمضي يشتم ويسب ويصق مضغته ويسب أهل العزبة لوما وتأنيبا وكأنهم هم المسئولون عن وقوع الكارثة، (Idris, 2017, p. 60).

TT: His talent for swearing was revealed at its best when a calamity befell the farm. Then he would take his position by the canal, **like a bird of ill omen** and holding his gallabieh up by the hem, he would curse and swear, at the same time spewing out his tobacco chew and spluttering abuse on the peasants as if they alone were responsible for the misfortune. (p. 35).

The two expressions meant to be analyzed here are the two idiomatic similes in the ST *kaghurāb albain* and *abyadh min addākhil*. In Arabic tradition, if nothing good comes out of someone, it is likened to *ghurāb albain*. Crows are always black in color and their cries are ominous. Throughout history people in different cultures associate happenings with birds having crossed their path, or come to their homes, or even the direction of their flight. Other four-legged animals are considered ominous in different culture. In this context, the crow is the symbol of bad omen. In the Pre-Islamic era people would not feel happy about seeing a crew as they depart their loved ones; it is a bad omen that something bad will happen during this parting, like death of a relative. This is the cultural shade of meaning of the expression.

Here, Abou Gharib is someone about whom people feel unhappy; seeing him is like seeing a bird of ill omen. Because cultures share the belief that some birds bear bad omen, the translation strategy of cultural borrowing is sufficient to correspond the embedded superstitious meanings of the ST expression. However, not all the implicit overtones are transferred to TT readers, like that the bird of bad omen in Arabic tradition is particularly the crow, and that the crow is taken to be ominous when seeing it in situations of parting with dear ones. All these symbolic hidden meanings could have been footnoted or explained in endnotes.

**Table (3)**  
**Idioms Containing Similes**

Idioms containing simile	TT Translation	Translation Strategy	Communication emics	Symbolic emics
وان الحال مثل القشطة <i>wa-in alhāl mithl alqishtah</i>	all was well and everything in order	Explicitation	conveyed	failed
كغراب البين <i>ka-ghurāb albain</i>	like a bird of ill omen	Adaptation	conveyed	partially conveyed due to cultural consistency

### Plain Idioms:

(12) ST: والشهحي جالس بجواره، يقص بكل ما في صوته من زنين، ما حدث في الليالي التي شاب لها شعره (Idris, 2017, p. 9).

TT: El Sheehy would be there, sitting near him, telling of the nights **that made his hair turn gray** (Idris, 2020, p. 16).

This excerpt taken from the short story *Arkhas Layālī, The Cheapest Nights* includes the idiom شاب لها شعره *shāba lahā sha'ruh*. It is translated as "his hair turned gray." In Egypt, as it is in all Arab countries, people would speak of frightening experiences/things or difficult situations that would cause their hair go gray. In the example provided here, El Sheehy is expected to be where Abdelkarem was planning to go telling of such experiences that made him worried or upset as the meaning of the idiom would imply. The translator has succeeded to grasp the connotation of the ST idiom and represent it in the TT text with the same cultural flavor. This rendition's success could be attributed to the fact that both idioms imply the same cultural allusion that the notion of extreme anxiety, fear or grief can cause one's hair to turn gray.

(13) ST: حداكم اياه، أي متيري منه! اعملوا فيه الي تقدروا تعملوه (Idris, Hadithat Sharaf, 2017, p. 61).

TT: "There he is," he would say, "do what you like with him. **I wash my hand**" (p. 56).

Idioms are culture specific expressions and, therefore, their translation is a challenge to those who happen to take up the job. Strategies of translating idioms varies depending on whether the SL and TL share the same world view of a given social situation or not. If they share the same worldview of a particular social situation, translation is not an issue as cultural borrowing strategy will serve the purpose. On the other hand, if a SL expression does not share the same worldview expressed by an idiom, the rendering of that idiom will pose great difficulty. If the translator opts for message translation, a cultural loss is sure to ensue as the cultural meanings inherent in an idiom are likely to get lost, like SL worldviews.

In this example the ST idiomatic expression *anā mitbarī minu* is rendered as "I wash my hands," an idiom in the TL culture. The cultural meaning of the TL idiom means to "disclaim interest in, responsibility for, or further connection with" as defined in Mariam Webster (n.d.). The dictionary meaning of the expression suggests refusing to accept responsibility for; abandoning or renouncing. This expression alludes to Pontius Pilate's washing his hands before having Jesus put to death, saying "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Matthew 27:24, King James Bible, 1769/2017).

The substitution strategy has domesticated the expression. However, the deep meaning of the idiom (I am no longer to be held responsible for him, and I disclaim all his deeds) has been rendered successfully. From an emic-etic perspective the translator succeeds to act as an insider in the ST and, then, as an insider in the TT. The meanings of the ST expression and its translation are identical to great extents if the religious allusion is counted out.

(14) ST: وكل مرة كان يعود وكأننا يا بدر لا رحنا ولا جينا (Idris, Arkhas Layali, 2017, p. 26)

TT: **Nothing worked** (p. 25).

This proverb *wa-ka'nanā yā badr lā ruhna wa-lā gīnā* is taken from the short story *Abū Sayed* translated as *You Are Everything to Me*. Wadidah Wassef rendered this culture-bound utterance simply as "Nothing worked." Before proceeding any further with the discussion, it is worth mentioning that Egyptian variety of Arabic is highly idiomatic. Like idioms, proverbs are the outcome of social interactions over the years. A literal translation of the idiom would bring about meaningless

account in the TT unless the translator supplies his translation with explanation about the idiom, its origin, the anecdote of the saying and the social context in which it is likely to occur.

Proverbs are an essential part of any culture that found their way to a given language over the years just to be part of that culture. This proverb is said to mean as if we had done nothing because our efforts came to nothing (Ameen, p. 316). It is used to mean that in spite of all efforts to bring about a change, the situation remains the same, as if nothing has been done. The deep meaning of the saying was stated explicitly that although Ramadan tried many ways to solve his problem of sexual dysfunction, things remained the same. In this way, all his endeavors proved fruitless and nothing worked. Wassef grasped this meaning and rendered the expression as "nothing worked." This translation strategy is called explicitation. What is lost because of this method is the metaphorical flavor of the STE. The intended meaning was explicitly rendered. It is effective in communicating the semantic meaning, but fails to preserve the idiomatic flavor and the implications of the SL stylistics.

(15) ST: ولما تأكد للبيك أنه ما لم يستضفهم فسيفضحونه في طول البلاد وعرضها وسيضحكون عليه (Idris, Hadithat Sharaf, 2017, p. 54).  
طوب الأرض

TT: When it became clear to the Bey that if he persisted in withdrawing his invitation **he was going to be exposed to all and sundry as a miserable miser** and made the laughingstock of the area for miles around there was nothing for him but to take them in. All night he was on his feet arranging for covers and plates and food to fill up those hundreds of hungry stomachs (p. 129).

To analyze the expression's emics, it is in place to consider its contextual occurrence in the story. El Sandik Bey is now in trouble, and he has been trying to convince the five hundred people from Kafr Azab who had been unwillingly brought in to go back. This act of bringing them in is called 'invitation' when it is not that way. But after all, the Bey must feed them because if he lets them go without doing the hosting duties, they will speak of that to all neighboring villages, which, in turn, will bring home disgrace and ill-reputation to the Bey. The two expressions used by the short story

teller are collocational and idiomatic, فسيُفضحونه في طول البلاد وعرضها وسيُضحكون عليه، فسيُفضحونه في طول البلاد وعرضها *fasayafdhahūnahu fī tūl albilādi wa ardhiha, wasayudhikūna alaihi tūb alardh*. The first one is rendered as "he was going to be exposed to all and sundry as a miserable miser." The Arabic collocation, طول البلاد وعرضها *tūl albilādi wa 'erdhiha* is represented by the English collocation "to all and sundry," an idiom in the target language carrying the same surface-structure as that of the SL. "All and sundry" means 'everyone' as defined in Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.). The English phrase "as a miserable miser" is added to compensate for the implicit meaning in the ST. A ST reader will definitely understand that the Bey will be exposed to all people of surrounding villages as a miser, a mean grasping person as "miser" is defined in Meriam Webster Dictionary (n.d.). The translator uses the addition strategy to compensate for the implied meanings suggested by the Arabic idioms. Symbolically speaking, the ST expression *fī tūl albilādi wa ardhiha* connotes geographical dimensions, whereas "to all and sundry" connotes human dimension.

(16) ST: مصرين على أنهم ضيوف السنديك بيك تلك الليلة، ما في ذلك كلام أو سلام، وأن كرامتهم لا يمكن أن تسمح بأن يُهانوا على تلك الصورة، هي الحكاية أيه؟ لعب عيال؟! (Idris, 2017, p. 53).

TT: Their dignity would not let them turn back, having come this far on the persistent invitation of El Sandik Bey who was bound to honor his word (Idris, 2020, p. 143).

**Table (4)**

**Plain Idioms 1**

STEs	Cultural meanings	Translation strategy	TT
ما في ذلك كلام أو سلام <i>ma fi thālik kalām aw salām</i>	There is no way out. It is not to be negotiated	omission	Omitted
هي الحكاية أيه؟ لعب عيال؟ <i>hiya alhikāyah aih? li'eb 'eyāl?</i>	An exclamation posed by someone to tell that the matter is serious and it is not like children's gaming that turns up to nothing.	omission	Omitted

The ST expression ما في ذلك كلام أو سلام *ma fi thālik kalām aw salām* is idiomatic and has pragmatic meanings other than its literal meaning might suggest. Cultural equivalence like, "there is no way out," could have been used even though the foreign flavor would have got lost. The same applies to the expression هي الحكاية إيه؟ لعب عيال؟! *hiya alhikāyah aih? li'eb 'eyāl?*, which could have been compensated by the cultural equivalent, "it isn't a child's play," which carries the cultural meaning provided in the table above and preserves the ST metaphor. Generally, the paraphrasing strategy within which omission is used in this example secured the semantic account of the ST excerpt, but failed to account for the ironical tone and idiomatic use of the language. In other words, the ST sarcastic stylistics was robbed of its mockery and sarcasm, just to communicate the idea that Ragab and his fellowmen from Kafr Azab are determined to stay and enjoy the delicious meal to be served to them by El Sandik Bey. The ideas that they (Kafr Azab people) have been humiliated, that on the back of their mounts they looked like heroes when they are only a group of cowards who failed to react as was expected of them and protect the pride's procession, that they are Don Quixote who went to fight the windmills, were lost. As a whole, the TT fails to preserve the emics and stylistics of the ST expressions.

(17) ST: تحودوا بالتي هي أحسن

TT: We want you to call on our farm **without another word**

The ST idiom بالتي هي أحسن *bil-latī hiyya ahsan* literally means by peaceful means, which indicates that if you refuse to 'call on' our farm peacefully, we shall bring you in to our farm by force. This idiom is replaced by the TL idiom 'without another word,' which indicates that you are to have a short visit to our farm and this is not negotiable. So the translation strategy is adaptation. Both idioms are identical pragmatically and are used in similar social contexts.

Table (5)

## Plain Idioms 2

STEs	TT translation	Translation Strategy	Communication Emics	Symbolic Emics
شاب لها شعر رأسه <i>shāba lahā sha'r ra'sahu</i>	made his hair turn gray	literal translation	conveyed	conveyed because of cultural consistency
أني متبري منه <i>anī mutbarī minnuh</i>	I wash my hand	Adaptation	conveyed	conveyed
وكأننا يا بدر لا رحنا ولا جينا <i>wa-ka'nnana yā badr lā ruhna wa-lā jīnā</i>	Nothing happened	Explication	conveyed	lost
الأبطال المغاوير <i>alabṭāl almaghāwīr</i>	—	Omission	lost	lost
ما في ذلك كلام أو سلام <i>mā fī kalām wa lā salām</i>	—	Omission	lost	lost
هي الحكاية أيه؟ لعب عيال؟ <i>hīya alhikāyah li'b 'eyyāl</i>	—	Omission	lost	lost
بالتي هي أحسن <i>bil-latī hiyya ahsan</i>	without another word	adaptation	conveyed	conveyed

## Conclusion:

The findings indicate that the translator succeeded in rendering the deep-structure meanings (communication emics) of the majority of idioms (14 out of 19; 73.7%), primarily through adaptation, explication, and paraphrasing, while the symbolic emics (surface-structure cultural worldviews) were almost entirely lost, except in one case of literal translation where cultural overlap existed. Omission was used five times resulting in a complete loss of communication emics and symbolic emics (SL worldviews). Idioms, as culture-bound expressions with dual layers of meaning, pose a unique challenge: although their communicative functions were largely preserved, their cultural symbolism was downplayed. This outcome suggests that the translator prioritized communicative clarity over cultural nuance, a choice that ensured message transfer but at the expense of idiomatic and symbolic resonance. Nevertheless, the losses can be considered minor, as they did not significantly compromise the thematic content of the source text. This goes in line with Pike's principle of appropriateness of occurrence of an emic unit determined by its relevant place in patterns of cultural frames (Pike, 1990, p. 29).

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