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Abstract:

One of the major challenges posed by machine translation (MT) when translating between English and Arabic is idiomatic expressions since their meanings are not taken literally but have a cultural meaning behind them, and they are “all in all metaphorical and cannot be understood directly” (Ghazala, 2003). Therefore, the main aim of the present study is to evaluate and compare the performance of three online MT systems namely, Google, Microsoft Bing, and Systran in translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic in online newspapers. To achieve the goals of the present study, twenty idiomatic expressions which are the most frequently used in six British and American online newspapers have been identified, fed, discussed, compared and analyzed qualitatively by the researchers. Findings of the present study show that although the three online MT systems were not able to provide accurate translations of the English idiomatic expressions into Arabic in six online newspapers, Microsoft Bing machine is rated the best and has a better performance. Whereas Google's translation is found the least accurate as some words were not translated at all, and others were mistranslated. The study concludes that MT systems can be improved to get a better quality and provide an accurate translation if they deal with the idiomatic expressions as a unit and not individually. Since these are fixed idiomatic expressions, they are usually resolved using a simple memory translation, which sets side-by-side the English and the Arabic expressions without much cognitive effort.

Keywords: MT Evaluation, Three MT Systems, Idiomatic expressions, online newspapers.



1. Introduction

Technology is dominating everything and is becoming a necessity for all of us. As we live today in a world of global village, one cannot imagine life without tools of communication such as computers, cellphones and internet. Thanks to the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computational Linguistics (CL) for providing such tools with languages and for their support of machine translation (MT). Machine translation has been a very helpful instrument for human translators. It highly improves the work of translators as well as learners of foreign languages. Machine translation, according to some linguists, is a sub-field of computational linguistics that investigates the use of software to translate text or speech from one natural language to another.

Translation plays an essential role in the communication between nations. Besides, it is difficult, nowadays, for translators to do their job and respond to the increasing need of translation without the help of machine. Due to the growing need for communication between people of different languages and cultures, the need for machine translation has been increased. Ceramella (2008, p. 5) put it right, "now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, translation has begun to play a key role in supporting the globalization process and the exchange of all sorts of information through the use of the internet, machine translation and technology." People come to know the language and culture of each other including idioms, norms, proverbs etc.

Translators bear a great responsibility to produce real and precise translation. They have to be very careful when translating that complex type of language – idioms. Idiomatic expressions are considered as an integral part of any language. The meaning of idioms cannot be understood from the literal meanings of their constituent parts. This implies a special consideration in the process of understanding and translating the idioms. People of different languages use very different expressions to convey the same meaning. For example, the idiom "**conceited as a barber's cat**" refers to having a high opinion of oneself. This idiom, if translated word by word, will make no sense to Arabs "مغرور كقطعة الحلاق". In Arabic (dialect), we can say "شاييف نفسه". If we retranslate this Arabic translation into English, it will mean "**He is seeing himself**", something that is very far from the original English idiom, "**conceited as a barber's cat**". In fact, each language has its own culture-specific items that are completely different from the corresponding items in the other language. Therefore, the process of translating idioms from one language into another obliges translators to have a good deal of knowledge of both languages and cultures.



Arabic and English languages belong to two different language families. The former is a Semitic language whereas the latter is an Indo-European. They are culturally unrelated and alien. People of the two languages have different religions, geographical locations, and different ideologies. Such differences make any translation between such languages so hard, let alone the translation of idioms.

Investigation on the use of automatic MT systems to translate English idioms into Arabic has not been done so far. The current study aims at studying the translation of three MT systems: Google Translate, Microsoft Bing and Systran. Put specifically, the study compares the translation of Arabic idioms using these MT systems. This will also help in identifying the most accurate MT system, and will give a firm ground to those who are working in the development of MT systems. The study will provide the professional Arabic-to-English translators, students, teachers, and critics of translation with some valuable insights that might open new vistas of idiom translation.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Idioms

2.1.1 Definition of Idioms

Idioms are an indispensable component of every language. One could understand from using his own language that an idiom gives a different meaning other than the meaning of its words. Many scholars have given definitions for idioms. Oxford Dictionary defines idioms as, "an idiom is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words". Ghazala (2003, p. 204) describes idioms as "special, metaphorical, fixed phrases whose meanings and forms are not negotiable". Almaaytah (2022, p. 8843) considers an idiom as "an expression that has at least two words and the meaning of the idiom cannot be deduced or predicted from the meanings of the individual words that make up the idiom".

Scholars, to some extent, differ in their categorizations of idioms. Newmark (1988, p. 104), relates idioms to be "extended" metaphors, and says that an idiom has two main functions: pragmatic and referential. The pragmatic function is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to surprise, to delight, while the referential function is "to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language". Kavka and Zybert (2004, p. 55) point out that "idiomatic expressions are based on semantic rather than lexical grounds". Ghazala



(2003) categorizes idioms into five major types: full and pure idioms, semi-idioms, proverbs, popular sayings and semi-proverbial expressions, metaphorical catchphrases and popular expressions.

2.1.2. Understanding Idioms

Idioms comprise an important part of every language. They are considered as a prerequisite to master any language. According to Weinreich (1969, p. 23), idiomaticity is important because “there is so much of it in every language.” Therefore, translating cultural elements of the source texts into the target language is very important. John and Smithback, (1991) considered Idioms as vivid and verbal images which add life to speech and writing, and without them language would be very bland and unexciting (In Ali, 2013, p. 24). We hear idioms and tend to use them in conversation every day. The use of idioms attracts the attention of those we speak to. Moreover, using idioms in language shows that we understand the language better and can fully express our thoughts and ideas.

Idioms are very difficult to grasp and reaching the level of understanding them is a sign language proficiency. It is not enough to translate the meaning of words in isolation. Learners and/or translators need to understand the culture specificity of the idiomatic expressions. For example, the English equivalent idiom for the Arabic idiomatic expression **كمن يبيع** “الماء في حارة السقاين”, which means “**like someone selling water in the water sellers quarter**”, is something like “**to carry coals to Newcastle**”. Looking at another example, it is difficult even to imagine that the equivalent idiom of the English saying, “**before you can say Jack Robinson**”, which means **extremely quickly**, could mean “**في لمح البصر**” in Arabic. Whereas an English idiom like “**put the cart before the horse**” has an equivalent meaning in Arabic “**يضع الحصان أمام العربة**”. Both of them mean, **make things complicated**.

Therefore, the meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot always be inferred from the meanings of the individual parts/words or from the surface meaning. Idioms are language and culture-specific, which adds more complexity to understanding and translating them. Thus, literal translation of the English idioms into Arabic and vice versa will be an absolute distortion.

2.1.3. Translating Idioms

Idioms differ from one language to another, as they are culture bound elements. Therefore, idioms are difficult for translators and foreign language learners. Translators should avoid translating idioms literally or word for word translation (Newmark, 1988, p. 69).



The translation of idioms is not like the translation of simple sentences such as “هذا كتاب” “**This is a book**”. The meaning of individual words here is not far from the meaning of the entire sentence. The translation of an idiom has different principles and strategies from the translation of simple sentences. In other words, idiomatic expressions cannot be understood literally. An example of an Arabic idiom: “عاد بخفي حنين” means “**came back empty handed**” in English. The literal meaning of Arabic words are like **came back holding the shoes of Hunain** (name of a man). Individual words of the idiom do not coincide with the meaning of the words as a whole.

Thus, the translator will face a real challenge to understand the meaning of the idiom and then give an accurate translation to it in English. An idiom has a specific usage and a context in which it is used. The linguistic knowledge of the structure is not enough to translate such an expression. It is very necessary to understand the linguistic and the cultural makeup of the source language to give a good and convenient translation.

Although Arabic is different from English, we can find an equivalent for English idioms in it and vice versa. A large number of Arabic idioms have equivalents in English. For example, the Arabic idiom “يصيب كبد الحقيقة” (literally: to hit the liver of the truth) is an equivalent of the English idiom “**to hit the nail on the head**”. More than this, some idioms are similar in both languages, Arabic and English, in terms of meaning and form. For example, the Arabic idiom “يلع لسانه” has the same form and meaning as the English idiom “**to swallow your tongue**” which means **to keep silent**. However, some idioms in the source language may look similar to those in the target language but they are different. A case in point is the idiomatic expression “**to eat your words**” may mean **to speak very quickly so some letters or words are not uttered**. Another example is the idiomatic question “**has the cat got your tongue?**” It is identically used in the two languages, Arabic and English, to ask someone to why he/she cannot speak. In this regard, Ali (2013, p. 29) advised translators “to avoid targeting the direct, literal meanings of idiomatic English expressions and opt for appreciating their figurative, metaphorical and contextual meanings”. He adds that translators “ought to be, to a certain extent, familiar with the idiomatic behaviour of these expressions which are characterized by their lack of transparency mainly due to their language and culture-specific nature”.

Requiring a deep knowledge of both languages and cultures, the translation of idioms has been more than just a challenge. Idioms may contain words or expressions known in the source language and unknown in



the target language. Similarly, MT systems cannot always produce an accurate translation of idioms. It is not easy to find equivalent in the target language that corresponds to the idiom in the source language, both in meaning and form. Ali and Sayyiyed Al-Rushaidi (2017, p. 192) relate difficulties in translating idioms to “the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly on one hand, and success in looking for the most suitable equivalent in the target language.” Baker (1992, p. 69) outlines the difficulties encountered when translating idioms as: 1) unavailability of an equivalent idiom, 2) similar idiom with a different context, and 3) idiom having both literal and idiomatic senses. The first two relate to the target language and the last relates to the source language. Regarding the first difficulty, no two languages have equivalent idioms. In the second difficulty identified by Baker, the target language idiom is similar to that of a source language but is used in a different context. The third difficulty is when a source text idiom gives both literal and idiomatic senses.

In addition to the knowledge of both languages and their culture, translating idioms requires knowledge of strategies that are appropriate for rendering and conveying the intended meaning (Dweik & Thalji, 2016, Howwar, 2013). The translator, according to Nida (1964, p. 167), has to make a natural rendering of the message and meaning and facilitate the transfer of cultural elements from one language into another. We have to consider idiomaticity, according to Palmer, (2014, p. 216), “as something to be dealt with in the lexicon or dictionary rather than the grammar”. Ali, (2013, p. 23), summarized six fruitful insights regarding idiomaticity in both Arabic and English:

1. both languages rely on idiomatic expressions in all aspects of their spoken and written modes;
2. idiomatic expressions in both languages are of a special nature and subject to syntactic and semantic restrictions;
3. they are rather language and culture-specific and their meanings are far from the sum of the meanings of their individual components;
4. their semantic and syntactic complexities require a high proficiency level to understand and produce them properly;
5. unlike English which allows idioms to be grammatically ill-formed, Arabic idioms are perfectly grammatical; and
6. English gives a clear prominence to phrasal verbs as one of the most important types of idiomatic expressions; Arabic does not categorize them as such.



2.1.4. English and Arabic – Background

English is originated from the Indo-European language family. It has spread around the world because of the influence of Britain and the United States of America in the world. The British Empire is called the place where the sun never sets. English has become the leading language of international discourse and the lingua franca in many regions and professional contexts as science, navigation and law. It is the most spoken language in the world and widely needed by people of many countries. Moreover, English is one of the official languages of international organizations such as the United Nations and International Olympic Committee as well as the official language in various countries, such as in South Africa, Philippines, Hong Kong, Ireland, Canada, Nigeria, Singapore, and others.

Arabic is one of the world's major languages and one of the five official languages of the United Nations. It is the native and official language of the people of twenty-two countries in North Africa and the Middle East covering an area of about 14 million km².

Though Arabs speak many dialects, they share the standard Arabic or classical Arabic. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the language of media, education, and government. However, dialects exist in songs, movies, and TV shows as it represents people's daily communication, and nowadays people write it on social media – Facebook and Twitter (Habash, 2010, p. 50).

Some linguists relate the complexity of Arabic to its morphology (as a sematic language). The differences between Arabic and English, in morphology and syntax, is a source of difficulty for Arabic machine translation. However, Satti (2019, p. 2167) stipulates that though Arabic does not have any genetic or real relation with English, both languages share some notable similarities at several linguistic levels, phonological, syntactic and morphological. In her investigation of the level at which Arabic and English are similar, Satti concludes that both languages use almost the same morphological processes of affixation, internal change, compounding etc.

2.2. Machine Translation

Machine Translation (MT) means the use of computer software to translate texts or speech from one human language to another. Hutchins and Somers (1992, p. 3) define Machine Translation (MT) as the name “for computerised systems responsible for the production of translations from one natural language into another, with or without human assistance.” Humans always need tools that help them doing their work and spare much



of their time and energy and the computer is one of these tools. It can help in meeting the huge and growing demand of translation in a short time. Recently, learners of English and/or translators rely so much upon machine translation, which is being developed with the pass of time.

Shoeeb (2015) refers the idea of creating a device to translate automatically to the early of the seventeenth century (In Aizouky, Z., 2020, p. 58). On the other hand, some researchers relate research on using the computer in translation to the time of its invention. In March 1949, Warren Weaver used the term “computer translation” to describe his work in this area. Since then, scholars started to think of using computer in translation. Machine translation has advanced technologically since 1950 (Almaaytah, 2020, p. 8844). It has become a reality in research and the first MT conference was convened in 1952 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Hutchins and Somers, 1992). In 1954 at Georgetown, a sample of 49 Russian sentences was translated into English, using 250 words and just six grammar rules (Hutchins, 2004, p. 102). Researchers of the Georgetown experiment asserted that machine translation would be a solved problem within some years.

Then, it was not until the 1970s that various research projects paved way to working, commercially available systems (Arnold et al., 1994, p. 15). Lee, J., & Liao, P. (2011, p. 107) adds:

“.... in the 1990s the Internet boom in the 1990s ushered MT into a new era, as the enormous amount of available multilingual documents enabled corpus-based MT techniques, consequently motivating ever more research effort into online MT systems. Today, numerous translation software applications are available on the market that can help those who are lacking language skills to translate a source text into a target text with a simple mouse click. The results of these systems should mean that MT has been established as a useful application of technology in translation.”

The installation of Systran for Russian-English system was done in 1970 and German-English system appeared in 1982; during the 1980s, other language pairs were developed. Systran is a free online hybrid machine translation engine that combines rule-based and statistical machine translation (Costa et al., 2015, p. 128). In addition, Google Company has provided Google Translate, the widespread translation engine, which allows us to perform translations of texts in many languages.

For a long time, people have been interested in translating their cultural heritage and values to ensure its continuation on one hand, and to spread it



on the other hand (Aizouky, Z., 2020, p. 66). Shoeeb, (2015) points out that there are now about 1,000 machine translation programs in the market. He adds that Arabic automated translation is still less accurate than automated translation of other languages like English (In Aizouky, Z., 2020, p. 35). The research of Aizouky (2020, p. 58) shows that Google Translate has better performance when translating new Arabic poems written in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as compared to older poems or poems written mostly in dialect. But machine translation needs more research and investment. To evaluate any automated translation tool's performance, we measure how close its translation is to human translation (Papineni et al. 2002, p. 311).

Research in natural language processing in Computational Linguistics and Artificial Intelligence has fulfilled the dream of humans to get the assistance of computer programs in translation. A great job has been done to make computers produce language through understanding the language and using linguistic input. However, this translation needs human intervention to be acceptable. The major difficulties to translating by the help of computer is more relevant to the differences between languages. Therefore, it is still somehow far to have high-quality translations. As we experience translation, we always do a revision for the output of MT.

2.3. Related work

Although an important issue, research on the use of automatic MT systems in the translation of idioms is rare. As far as we know, nobody has done a research that evaluates the MT of idioms from English into Arabic. A very few researchers evaluate free online machine translators in specific terms like idioms. Taleghani & Pazouki (2018) have conducted a study on assessing idioms and phrasal verbs between English and Persian using free online translators. The aim of their paper was to evaluate and compare four free online translators in terms of translating English idioms (including idiomatic phrasal verbs) into Persian. Ten chosen texts from the book "*Oxford Word Skills: idioms and phrasal verbs*" were translated by four online translators: www.bing.com, www.translate.google.com, www.freetranslation.com and www.targoman.com. Comparison of the results shows that www.targoman.com has a better performance in translating idioms from English to Persian.

Many researchers studied the idioms either in one language or compared the idioms among languages. They used strategies to solve the problems of translating idioms. For example, Meryem (2010) investigated the problems of non-equivalence faced by first year master students, at Mentouri University Constantine, in translating English idioms into or from Arabic.



She attempted to identify strategies that might help overcome such difficulties. The students were asked to translate 12 English idioms and other 10 Arabic ones. The empirical analysis showed that more problems lie in the translation of idioms from English into Arabic. The study displayed that student employ word for word translation as the most frequent strategy of translation.

Salim and Mehawesh (2013) conducted a study on the translation of idiomatic expressions related to colors and their cultural specifications from Arabic into English in Naguib Mahfouz's novel *The Thief and the Dogs*. They explored the various translation strategies used in translating color idioms, proving that the translator employs four translation strategies namely: using an English idiom of a similar meaning and form of the Arabic idiom, translating by using cultural substitution, translating by paraphrasing and translating by omission.

Kovacs (2016) described the characteristics of idioms and analysed the translational strategies proposed by many scholars to decide on the appropriateness and acceptability of translated idioms in the novel of *A Game of Thrones* from English into Hungarian, from a pedagogical point of view. The results show that the novel is an adequate source as a teaching material. The study also displays how to deduce the meaning of idioms from the context and find alternative translations of the same idiom within the same context.

Oualif (2017) identified some existing obstacles in the process of translating idiomatic pairs, and then suggested some theoretical strategies to overcome such difficulties. The study shows a number of factors that should be considered in order to translate idiomatic expressions correctly. The most important factors include socio-linguistic elements, cultural aspects, linguistic and stylistic considerations.

Ali and Sayyied Al-Rushaidi (2017) investigated difficulties encountered by Omani undergraduate students, majoring in English language teaching and literature, when translating idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic. They attempted to identify and demonstrate some of the strategies that they used to translate and overcome such challenges. They concluded that it is not enough to rely on the context for interpreting the meaning of idioms. They suggested the possibility of using paraphrasing and literal translation to convey the meaning of the idiom. A literal translation of '**scratch my back and I will scratch yours**' does not lead to unintelligibility while a literal translation of '**it rains cats and dogs**' does. They added that although omitting some parts of the idiom may be desirable



in certain situations, the meaning should be compensated somewhere else in the text in order to avoid abridged and mutilated translations.

3. Objectives of the Study

Making use of three online MT systems (namely: Google, Microsoft Bing, and Systran) in translating idioms from English (SL) into Arabic (TL) in six online newspapers (namely: *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Metro*, *New York Post*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*), the present study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To evaluate and compare the performance of the three online MT systems in translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic in six online newspapers.
2. To find out which MT system is a more accurate in translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic in six online newspapers.
3. To provide MT systems with some significant insights that can improve them to get a better quality and an accurate translation in rendering English idiomatic expressions into Arabic.

4. Questions of the Study

1. To what extent online MT systems (GL, MB and SN) are able to render English idiomatic expressions into Arabic.
2. Which MT system could perform a more accurate in translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic in six online newspapers?
3. How can the MT systems be improved to get a better quality and provide an accurate translation in rendering English idiomatic expressions into Arabic?

5. Research methodology

The present study is using a qualitative approach to achieve its main objectives. That is to evaluate the performance of the three MT systems, namely Google (GL), Microsoft Bing (MB) and Systran (SN) in translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic in online newspapers, and to find out which MT system could perform a more accurate in translating idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic. It is important pointing out that English is the source language (SL), while Arabic is the target language (TL) which are different linguistically and culturally since they belong to different family of languages.

It should be noticed here that there are many online MT services; however, the choice of these three MT systems is based on two factors: (a) they are free online services and (b) they are among the most commonly used by translators, translation studies scholars and translation trainees in general.



5.1. Data Collection

The data collected (twenty idiomatic expressions used in natural English) were taken from:

- three British online newspapers, namely, The Guardian (7 articles), The Independent (2 articles), Metro (one article).
- three American online newspapers, namely, New York Post (6 articles), The Washington Post (3 articles) and The New York Times (one article).

It is worth adding that the samples collected were taken from articles published between July to October 2022.

5.2. Data Analysis

The collected data under study is analyzed qualitatively and it will follow the following four steps:

- Identifying the most recurrent 20 idiomatic expressions in the selected British and American newspapers.
- Feeding these idiomatic expressions as they have been used in online newspapers into the MT systems;
- Comparing and analyzing the output of each system with the meanings given by two English dictionaries: *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (1999, 2004) and *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (1998).
- Comparing the same output with meanings provided by Ba'alabki's (2013) '*A dictionary of Idiomatic Expressions* (English-Arabic)'.

6. Results and Discussion

Given below are the twenty English idiomatic expressions as used in the online newspapers along with the translations provided by the three MT systems.

Text 1

"Elon Musk said Donald Trump should **"hang up his hat"** and it is too old to run for the Oval Office in 2024." (*The Guardian*, 2022).

Table 1. The translation output of the idiomatic expression "hang up his hat" by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Sysran
"Elon Musk said Donald Trump should "hang up his hat" and is too old to run for the Oval Office in 2024." (<i>The Guardian</i> , 2022).	قال إيلون ماسك إن على دونالد ترامب أن "يعلق قبعته" وأن الترشيح للمكتب البيضاوي في عام 2024 أصبح قديماً جداً.	قال إيلون ماسك إن دونالد ترامب يجب أن "يعلق قبعته" وأن من القديم جدا الترشيح للمكتب البيضاوي في عام 2024.	وقالت إيلون مسك إن على دونالد ترامب "تعلق قبعته" وأنه من العجوز جدا أن يخوض الانتخابات في المكتب البيضاوي في عام 2024.

The English idiomatic expression *hangs up his hat* means “to leave his work for ever” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 179). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the translation output was ‘يعلق قبعته’ in both GL and MB systems and it was ‘تعليق قبعته’ in SN system. This means that the three systems translated the words of the given idiomatic expression gave a literal translation which is unacceptable owing to the weakness of the information parameters fed into the translation system.

It is worth indicating here that though the three online systems translated the idiomatic expression literally. There was a bit difference in their literal translation. Whereas the two systems GL and MB used an Arabic verbal sentence ‘يعلق’, SN used an Arabic nominal sentence ‘تعليق’. Despite the fact that these errors do not affect the literal translation, they make it poor and erroneous.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the Arabic equivalent idiomatic expression as mentioned in Ba’alabki (2013), “يتقاعد: ” (p. 221), we can find out that this idiomatic expression was wrongly translated by the three online systems and therefore, the resulting translations are completely meaningless.

Text 2

“Senator Joe Manchin III, Democrat of West Virginia, **pulled the plug** on Thursday on negotiations to salvage key pieces of President Biden’s agenda.” (*The New York Times*, 2022)

Table 2. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “pull the plug” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Senator Joe Manchin III, Democrat of West Virginia, pulled the plug on Thursday on negotiations to salvage key pieces of President Biden’s agenda.” (<i>The New York Times</i> , 2022)	السناتور جومانشين الثالث، الديمقراطي من ولاية فرجينيا الغربية، أوقف يوم الخميس الماضي عن المفاوضات لإنقاذ الأجزاء الرئيسية من أجندة الرئيس بايدن.	السيناتور جو مانشين الثالث، الديمقراطي عن ولاية فرجينيا الغربية، سحب القابس يوم الخميس بشأن المفاوضات لإنقاذ الأجزاء الرئيسية من جدول أعمال الرئيس بايدن.	سحب السيناتور جو مانشين الثالث، الديمقراطي من ولاية ويست فرجينيا، وصلته يوم الخميس بشأن المفاوضات لإنقاذ الأجزاء الرئيسية من جدول أعمال الرئيس بايدن.

The English idiomatic expression *pulled the plug* means “to do something which prevents an activity from continuing, especially to stop giving money” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 303). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online

systems, the output was literal translations by the MB and SN systems. While, the GL machine was unable to provide even a literal translation for the expression. Besides, the second part (i.e. “the plug”) was completely left out.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as indicated by Ba'alabki (2013): “يوقف؛ يضع” [وخاصة على نحو فجائي] (p. 348), we can realize that the idiomatic expression was wrongly translated by the three MT systems. None of these translations gets even close to the Arabic meaning Al Ba'alabki provides.

Text 3

“Western officials are engaged in “prudent planning” behind the scenes to prevent chaos and panic in their home countries.” (*The Guardian*, 2022)

Table 3. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “behind the scenes” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Western officials are engaged in “prudent planning” <u>behind the scenes</u> to prevent chaos and panic in their home countries.” (<i>The Guardian</i> , 2022).	المسؤولون الغربيون منخرطون في "التخطيط الحكيم" وراء الكواليس لمنع الفوضى والذعر في بلادهم.	وينخرط المسؤولون الغربيون في "تخطيط حكيم" <u>خلف الكواليس</u> لمنع الفوضى والذعر في بلدانهم الأصلية.	ويقوم المسؤولون الغربيون "بالتخطيط الحذر" <u>وراء الكواليس</u> لمنع الفوضى والذعر في بلدانهم.

It is obvious that the English idiomatic expression *behind the scenes*, which is commonly used in English, means “in private; secretly” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 253). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the Arabic translation was ‘وراء الكواليس’ in the two MT systems GL and SN and ‘خلف الكواليس’ in the MB. Both the Arabic lexical items ‘وراء’ and ‘خلف’ are synonyms. Although the translation was literal, it is acceptable and quite understandable. This shows that sometimes the three MT systems produce good translations.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as given by Ba'alabki (2013): “1. خلف 2. سرا” (p. 397), we can say that the Arabic translation produced by the three online systems is accurate and it can be understood clearly by the target readers.

Text 4

“Biden is just too old, is what it comes down to. It’s time to pass the torch to the next generation,” said Adam Kane. (*The Washington Post*, 2022)



Table 4. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “pass the torch” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Biden is just too old, is what it comes down to. It’s time to <u>pass the torch</u> to the next generation,” said Adam Kane. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 2022).	وقال آدم كين: "بايدن كبير في السن، وهذا ما يعنيه الأمر. حان الوقت <u>لتمرير الشعلة</u> إلى الجيل القادم".	"بايدن كبير في السن، وهذا ما يتعلق به. لقد حان الوقت <u>لتمرير الشعلة</u> إلى الجيل القادم"، قال آدم كين.	"بايدن قديم جداً، هذا ما وصلنا إليه. لقد حان الوقت <u>لتمرير الشعلة</u> إلى الجيل القادم.

The English idiomatic expression *pass the torch* reads “pass on a tradition, especially one of learning or enlightenment” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 295). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online systems, the result was that the three systems translated the words of the given idiomatic expression literally. Such translations are unacceptable and irrelevant to the real meaning of the idiom.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as mentioned in Ba'alabki (2013): “يعطيه” (p. 472), we can deduce that the translation, which is completely literal, failed to transfer the meaning of the idiomatic expression displayed in the source text.

Text 5

“Ten days ago, the magician pulled this rabbit out of the hat and – as you may dimly be aware – has since detected some kind of adverse reaction to the trick.” (*The Guardian*, 2022)

Table 5. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “pull this rabbit out of the hat” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Ten days ago, the magician <u>pulled this rabbit out of the hat</u> and – as you may dimly be aware – has since detected some kind of adverse reaction to the trick.” (<i>The Guardian</i> , 2022).	قبل عشرة أيام، سحب الساحر هذا الأرنب من القبة – وكما قد تدرك بشكل خافت – اكتشف منذ ذلك الحين نوعاً من رد الفعل العكسي للخدعة.	قبل عشرة أيام، سحب الساحر هذا الأرنب من القبة – كما قد تكون على دراية خافتة – اكتشف منذ ذلك الحين نوعاً من رد الفعل السلبي على الخدعة.	قبل عشرة أيام، أخرج الساحر هذا الأرنب من القبة، ومنذ ذلك الحين اكتشف نوعاً من رد الفعل المعاكس على الخدعة كما قد تكون مدركة بشكل خافت.

The English idiomatic expression *pull this rabbit out of the hat* points to “to bring off an unexpected trick in an apparently desperate situation” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 137). When it was fed into the three online systems, the result was completely literal translation and unacceptable in Arabic. It is worth mentioning that the word ‘pulled’ was translated literally into ‘سحب’ in both systems GL and MB whereas SN used another lexical item ‘أخرج’. However, both Arabic lexical items are similar in meaning.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as indicated by Ba'alabki (2013): “يجترح حلاً” (p. 221), we find out that the Arabic translations produced by the three MT systems are literal and they are completely irrelevant to the meaning in the SL idiomatic expression. This must have resulted from the translation of the idioms as separate individual words.

Text 6

“The bottom line is that, at a moment when economic clouds are darkening, we need to avoid an unnecessary oil supply shock.” (*The Washington Post*, 2022).

Table 6. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “the bottom line” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“ <u>The bottom line</u> is that, at a moment when economic clouds are darkening, we need to avoid an unnecessary oil supply shock.” (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 2022).	خلاصة القول هي أنه في الوقت الذي أصبح فيه الغيوم الاقتصادية مظلمة، نحتاج إلى تجنب حدوث صدمة غير ضرورية في إمدادات النفط.	خلاصة القول هي أنه في لحظة حيث تظلم السحب الاقتصادية، نحتاج إلى تجنب صدمة إمدادات النفط غير الضرورية.	وخلص القول إنه في لحظة حيث أصبحت الغيوم الاقتصادية أكثر غموضاً، يتعين علينا أن نتجنب صدمات الإمدادات غير الضرورية من النفط.

The English idiomatic expression *the bottom line* means “the final reality; the important conclusion” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 174). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online systems, the English idiomatic expression was translated accurately. The meaning is transferred precisely and clearly by the three online systems.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as given by Ba'alabki (2013): “النقطة 1. الأساسية أو الجوهرية. 2. النتيجة النهائية” (p. 62), we can realize that the idiomatic expression is translated correctly and precisely by the three online MT systems and the meaning is easily understood.

Text 7

“Sometimes people just want to not feel as if they are walking on eggshells,” Obama added. (*New York Post*, 2022)



Table 7. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “walk on eggshell” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Sometimes people just want to not feel as if they are <u>walking on eggshells</u> ,” Obama added. (<i>New York Post</i> , 2022).	وأضاف أوباما: "في بعض الأحيان، يريد الناس فقط ألا يشعروا وكأنهم يسرون <u>على قشر البيض</u> ".	وأضاف أوباما "في بعض الأحيان يريد الناس فقط ألا يشعروا <u>كما لو أنهم يسرون على قشر البيض</u> ".	وأضاف أوباما: "في بعض الأحيان، لا يريد الناس أن يشعروا وكأنهم <u>يمشون على قشر البيض</u> ".

The English idiomatic expression *walk on eggshells* means “be extremely cautious about your words or actions.” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 306). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the Arabic translation was literal and acceptable. The meaning is understood indirectly. It is noteworthy here that that the word ‘walk’ was translated literally into ‘يسرون’ in both the GL and MB systems whereas the SN used another lexical item ‘يمشون’. However, both lexical items provide the same meaning.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent Arabic idiom as mentioned in Ba'alabki (2013): (p. 155), we can say that, even literal, the three MT systems are able to provide an acceptable translation though there is a metaphorical meaning behind them.

Text 8

“The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, also opened the door to a revision of the EU’s founding treaties.” (*The Guardian*, 2022).

Table 8. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “open the door” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, also <u>opened the door</u> to a revision of the EU’s founding treaties.” (<i>The Guardian</i> , 2022).	كما <u>فتحت</u> رئيسة المفوضية الأوروبية، أورسولا فون دير لاين، <u>الباب</u> أمام مراجعة المعاهدات التأسيسية للاتحاد الأوروبي.	كما <u>فتحت</u> رئيسة المفوضية الأوروبية، أورسولا فون دير لاين، <u>الباب</u> أمام مراجعة المعاهدات التأسيسية للاتحاد الأوروبي.	كما <u>فتحت</u> رئيسة المفوضية الأوروبية، أورسولا فون دير لاين، <u>الباب</u> أمام مراجعة المعاهدات المؤسسة للاتحاد الأوروبي.

The English idiomatic expression *open the door* which is one of the most commonly used in English newspapers and it means “to create an



opportunity for” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 83). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online systems, the Arabic translation, though, literal, was acceptable. The metaphorical meaning is easy to grasp.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as indicated by Ba'alabki (2013): “يفسح في المجال لـ؛ يفسح المجال أمام” (p. 321), we can deduce that, though a literal translation, the three MT systems gave an accurate Arabic translation.

Text 9

“Jim Biden may have suspected that his business partner was threatening Joe Biden’s candidacy by **dishing the dirt** on his family’s China deals.” (*New York Post*, 2022).

Table 9. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “dish the dirt” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Jim Biden may have suspected that his business partner was threatening Joe Biden’s candidacy by dishing the dirt on his family’s China deals.” (<i>New York Post</i> , 2022).	ربما اشتبه جيم بايدن في أن شريكه في العمل كان يخطط ترشيح جو بايدن من خلال التلاعب في صفقات عائلته مع الصين.	ربما اشتبه جيم بايدن في أن شريكه التجاري كان يخطط ترشيح جو بايدن من خلال إلقاء الأوساخ على صفقات عائلته مع الصين.	ولعل جيم بايدن كان ليشك في أن شريكه في العمل كان يخطط ترشيح جو بايدن بتبديد القذارة التي خلفتها الصفقات التي عقدتها أسرته في الصين.

The English idiomatic expression *dish the dirt* points to “to reveal or spread scandalous information or gossip” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 80). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the result was an incorrect translation by all of them. The MB and SN systems produced an identical literal translation, while the GL could not provide even a literal translation.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as provided by Ba'alabki (2013): “ينقل عن الأقاليل؛ ينهمك في نشر الإشاعات عن” (p. 138), we can find out that the MT system mistranslated this idiomatic expression. Such translations were irrelevant to the meaning of the target idiomatic expression.

Text 10

“Zorka Milin, senior advisor at Global Witness, said the US gas industry was “**licking its lips**” at the onset of the Ukraine war.” (*The Guardian*, 2022).



Table 10. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “lick its lips” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Zorka Milin, senior advisor at Global Witness, said the US gas industry was “licking its lips” at the onset of the Ukraine war.” (<i>The Guardian</i> , 2022).	قال زوكا ميلين، كبير المستشارين في جلوبال ويتنس، إن صناعة الغاز كانت “تلعق شفاهها” في بداية الحرب الأوكرانية.	وقالت زوكا ميلين، كبيرة المستشارين في جلوبال ويتنس، إن صناعة الغاز الأمريكية كانت “تلعق شفيتها” في بداية الحرب الأوكرانية.	وقال زوكا ميلين كبير المستشارين في مؤسسة غلوبال ويتنس ان صناعة الغاز الامريكية كانت “تلعق شفيتها” في بداية الحرب الاوكرانية.

The English idiomatic expression *lick its lips* means “to feel pleased and excited about something that is going to happen, usually because you think you will get something good from it” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 232). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three systems, the output was completely a literal translation. Interestingly, there is a bit difference between the three systems; while Google MT used the lexical item ‘شفاهها’ [literally: its lips], the other two systems used another lexical item, i.e. ‘شفيتها’ [literally: its lips]. Anyhow, this does not affect the meaning of the literal translation is erroneous.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as provided by Ba’alabki (2013): “يتلمظ: يظهر” (p. 269), we can notice that the translation was literal and far beyond the figurative meaning displayed by the SL.

Text 11

“You can’t predict what’s **around the corner**,” said a senior Biden administration official. (*The Washington Post*, 2022)

Table 11. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “around the corner” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“You can’t predict what’s around the corner ,” said a senior Biden administration official. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 2022).	قال مسؤول رفيع في إدارة بايدن: “لا يمكنك التنبؤ بما هو قارب قوسين أو أدنى.”	“لا يمكنك التنبؤ بما هو قارب قوسين أو أدنى”، قال مسؤول كبير في إدارة بايدن.	وقال مسؤول كبير في إدارة بايدن لا يمكنك التنبؤ بما هو قريب .

The English idiomatic expression *around the corner* reads “going to happen very soon” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 80). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the output translation was ‘قاب قوسين أو أدنى’ in both GL and MB and ‘قريب’ in SN. However, the three MT systems were accurate in rendering this idiomatic expression and they conveyed the same meaning of the target idiomatic expression.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as indicated by Ba'alabki (2013): “وشيك؛” (p. 114), we can observe that the three MT systems provide accurate translations of the SL idiomatic expression and the meaning can be clearly understood by the target readers.

Text 12

“Ms Rayner said: “These new revelations raise fresh questions about Rishi Sunak’s woeful judgment in resurrecting ministers who left government under a cloud of misconduct.” (*Independent*, 2022).

Table 12. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “under a cloud” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Ms Rayner said: “These new revelations raise fresh questions about Rishi Sunak’s woeful judgment in resurrecting ministers who left government <u>under a cloud</u> of misconduct.” (<i>Independent</i> , 2022).	هذه الاكتشافات الجديدة تثير أسئلة جديدة حول الحكم المؤسف لريشي سوناك في إعادة إحياء الوزراء الذين تركوا الحكومة <u>تحت سحابة</u> من سوء السلوك.	تثير هذه الاكتشافات الجديدة أسئلة جديدة حول الحكم البائس لريشي سوناك في إحياء الوزراء الذين غادروا الحكومة <u>تحت سحابة</u> من سوء السلوك.	تثير هذه الاكتشافات الجديدة أسئلة جديدة حول حكم ريشي سوناك المشؤوم في إعادة إحياء الوزراء الذين تركوا الحكومة <u>تحت سحابة</u> من سوء السلوك.

The English idiomatic expression *under a cloud of misconduct* points to “under suspicion or discredited” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 56). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online systems, the Arabic translation was literal and unacceptable since it is far away from the real meaning of the SL idiomatic expression.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as given by Ba'alabki (2013): “مشبوه؛ موضع ريبة” (p. 100), we can deduce that the three MT systems failed to transfer the meaning displayed in the SL idiomatic expression.



Text 13

“Tharoor and his supporters complained of an uneven playing field and said party leaders **gave him the cold shoulder**.” (*The Guardian*, 2022).

Table 13. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “give him the cold shoulder” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Tharoor and his supporters complained of an uneven playing field and said party leaders <u>gave him the cold shoulder</u> .” (<i>The Guardian</i> , 2022).	واشتكى ثارور وأنصاره من عدم تكافؤ الفرص وقالوا إن قادة الحزب <u>شعروا بالبرد</u> .	واشتكى ثارور وأنصاره من عدم تكافؤ الفرص وقالوا إن قادة الحزب <u>أعطوه الكتف البارد</u> .	واشتكى ثارور ومؤيدوه من عدم تكافؤ الفرص، وقالوا إن قادة الحزب <u>أعطوه الكتف البارد</u> .

The English idiomatic expression *give him the cold shoulder* indicates to “to behave towards someone in a way that is not at all friendly, sometimes for reasons that this person does not understand” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 76). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the result was a literal translation in the two systems MB and SN. The output was an unacceptable in Arabic. More importantly, GL machine has some problems; the first problem is that the lexical item ‘shoulder’ is deleted in the translation output and the second one is that the lexical item ‘gave’ is mistranslated as ‘شعروا’ [literally: they felt]. Thus, the GL system produced a poor and erroneous translation.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as mentioned in Ba’alabki (2013): “يعرض” (p. 412), GL, MB and SN systems provide an acceptable translation for the given idiomatic expression.

Text 14

“...after Tory spoke **behind closed doors** to MPs in a Common committee room having been announced the winner today.” (*Metro*, 2022).

Table 14. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “behind closed doors” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“...after Tory spoke <u>behind closed doors</u> to MPs in a Common committee room having been announced the winner today.” (<i>Metro</i> , 2022).	... بعد أن تحدث حزب المحافظين <u>خلف أبواب مغلقة</u> أمام النواب في غرفة اللجان المشتركة.	... بعد أن تحدث حزب المحافظين <u>خلف أبواب مغلقة</u> أمام النواب في قاعة اللجنة المشتركة.	... بعد أن تحدث "توري" <u>خلف</u> الأبواب المغلقة إلى أعضاء البرلمان في قاعة لجنة مشتركة.



The English idiomatic expression *behind closed doors*, which is one of the most commonly used in English newspapers, means “it is done in private” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 72). When this idiomatic expression was tested in the three online systems, the result was a literal translation. The SN system provided the Arabic definite article (المغلقة) while the other two systems did not. Although the translation of the idiomatic expression was literal, it is acceptable. The meaning in Arabic is clear and can be understood even metaphorically.

By comparing the translations of the three online systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression as indicated by Ba'alabki (2013): “سراً؛ بعيداً عن الأعين” (p. 142), we realize that the three online MT systems provide an acceptable translation.

Text 15

“Addressing the Florida governor’s political ambitions beyond the Sunshine State, Habba advised: “**Don’t jump the gun.**”” (*New York Post*, 2022).

Table 15. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “jump the gun” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Addressing the Florida governor’s political ambitions beyond the Sunshine State, Habba advised: “ <u>Don’t jump the gun.</u> ”” (<i>New York Post</i> , 2022).	وفي حديثه عن الطموحات السياسية لحاكم فلوريدا فيما وراء ولاية الشمس المشرقة، نصح هبة: <u>“لا تقفزوا على البندقية.”</u>	وفي معرض حياته عن الطموحات السياسية لحاكم فلوريدا خارج ولاية صن شاين، نصح هابا: <u>“لا تقفز من البندقية.”</u>	وفي معرض حديثه عن الطموحات السياسية لحاكم ولاية فلوريدا فيما وراء ولاية الشمس المشرقة، نصح هابا: <u>“لا تقفزى السلاح.”</u>

The English idiomatic expression *jump the gun* points to “act before the proper or appropriate time” (*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 2004, p. 157). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the results were literal and unacceptable translations.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as given by Ba'alabki (2013): “شيئاً قبل الأوان” (p. 249), we notice that the three MT systems failed to transfer the meaning of the original idiomatic expression.

Text 16

“I was taken aback by the hostility towards Sunak from grassroots Tory members who thought he **stabbed Boris Johnson in the back.**” (*Independent*, 2022).



Table 16. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “stab in the back” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“I was taken aback by the hostility towards Sunak from grassroots Tory members who thought he <u>stabbed Boris Johnson in the back</u> .” (Independent, 2022).	لقد فوجئت بالعداء تجاه سوناك من أعضاء حزب المحافظين على مستوى القاعدة الذين اعتقدوا أنه <u>طعن بوريس جونسون في ظهره</u> .	لقد فوجئت بالعداء تجاه سوناك من أعضاء المحافظين على مستوى القاعدة الشعبية الذين اعتقدوا أنه <u>طعن بوريس جونسون في الظهر</u> .	فوجئت بالعداء تجاه سوناك من أعضاء حزب المحافظين الذين اعتقدوا أنه <u>طعن بوريس جونسون في ظهره</u> .

The English idiomatic expression *stab in the back* means “a treacherous act or statement; a betrayal” (Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, 2004, p. 274). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online systems, the result, though literal, is acceptable in Arabic and the meaning is quite clear. It could be even understood figuratively.

By comparing the translations of the three online systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression as mentioned in Ba'alabki (2013): “يخون (أ) (ب) فلاناً. (ب) يشوه سمعة فلان. يطعن في الظهر: (أ) (p. 433)”, we can realize that, though literal, the three MT systems managed to translate the idiomatic expression correctly.

Text 17

“Our region jumped at the chance to throw our hat into the ring to help Eurovision 2023 rise like a phoenix.” (The Guardian, 2022)

Table 17. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “throw our hat into the ring” by the three online MT systems

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Our region jumped at the chance to <u>throw our hat into the ring</u> to help Eurovision 2023 rise like a phoenix.” (The Guardian, 2022).	انتهزت منطقتنا فرصة <u>رمي قبعتنا في الحلبة</u> لمساعدة 2023 يورو فيجن مثل طائر الفينيق.	لقد انتهزت منطقتنا الفرصة <u>لإلقاء قبعتنا في الحلبة</u> لمساعدة يورو فيجن 2023 على النهوض مثل طائر الفينيق.	لقد باغت منطقتنا الفرصة <u>لرمي قبعتنا في الحلبة</u> لمساعدة "يورو فيجن 2023" على الصعود مثل طائر العنقاء.

The English idiomatic expression *throw our hat into the ring* means “willingness to take up a challenge or enter a contest” (Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, 2004, p. 138). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online MT systems, they translated the given idiomatic expression literally. The translation was an unacceptable. The three systems were not able to provide accurate Arabic equivalents to the SL idiomatic expressions.



By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as mentioned in Ba'alabki (2013): “بيدي” (p. 221), we can find out that the three MT systems convey the right meaning of the original idiomatic expression.

Text 18

“The president Biden said he believed Russian and Ukrainian leaders would “**lick their wounds**” after the withdrawal.” (New York Post, 2022).

Table 18. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “lick their wounds” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“The president Biden said he believed Russian and Ukrainian leaders would “ lick their wounds ” after the withdrawal.” (New York Post, 2022).	وقال الرئيس بايدن إنه يعتقد أن الزعماء الروس والأوكرانيين سوف “يلعقون جراحهم” بعد الانسحاب.	وقال الرئيس بايدن إنه يعتقد أن القادة الروس والأوكرانيين “سيلعقون جراحهم” بعد الانسحاب.	وقال الرئيس بايدن إنه يعتقد أن القادة الروس والأوكرانيين “سيلعقون جروحهم” بعد الانسحاب.

The idiomatic expression *lick their wounds* points to “to retire to recover your strength or confidence after a defeat or humiliating experience” (Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, 2004, p. 172). This idiomatic expression was tested into the three MT systems and the result was a literal translation where both GL and MB used the lexical item ‘جراحهم’ [their wounds], while SN used the lexical item ‘جروحهم’ [their wounds]. However, both lexical choices have the same meaning.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as given by Ba'alabki (2013): “يداوي جراحه:” (p. 269), we can realize that the output is inaccurate because of not having the TL equivalents.

Text 19

“Your **nest egg** losses this year are likely to be above \$ 75,000.” (New York Post, 2022).

Table 19. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “nest egg” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Your nest egg losses this year are likely to be above \$ 75,000.” (New York Post, 2022).	من المحتمل أن تكون خسائر بيض العش هذا العام أعلى من 75000 دولار.	من المرجح أن تكون خسائر بيض العش هذا العام أعلى من 75000 دولار.	ومن المرجح أن تكون خسارة بيضة عشكم هذه السنة أكثر من 75000 دولار امريكي.



The English idiomatic expression *nest egg* means “an amount of money that you have saved” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 269). When this idiomatic expression was fed into the three online systems, the result was a literal translation. The output was completely an unacceptable translation.

By comparing the translations of the three MT systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression mentioned in Ba'alabki (2013): “مال مُدخَر” (p. 306), we can say that the Arabic translation of the English idiomatic expression produced by the three online MT systems was literal, which made the translation erroneous and incorrect.

Text 20

“Control of the Senate was still hanging in the balance Wednesday.” (*New York Post*, 2022).

Table 20. The translation output of the idiomatic expression “hang in the balance” by the three online MT systems.

Source Text	Target Text translated by Google	Target Text translated by Microsoft Bing	Target Text translated by Systran
“Control of the Senate was still <u>hanging in the balance</u> Wednesday.” (<i>New York Post</i> , 2022)	السيطرة على مجلس الشيوخ كانت لا تزال <u>معلقة في الميزان</u> يوم الأربعاء.	كانت السيطرة على مجلس الشيوخ لا تزال <u>معلقة في الميزان</u> يوم الأربعاء.	وكانت السيطرة على مجلس الشيوخ ما زالت <u>معلقة في الميزان</u> يوم الأربعاء.

The English idiomatic expression *hang in the balance* means “no one knows whether it will continue to exist in the future or what will happen to it” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, 1998, p. 20). When this idiomatic expression was tested into the three online systems, the result was a literal translation.

By comparing the translations of the three systems to the equivalent idiomatic expression in Arabic as indicated by Ba'alabki (2013), “يكون في كفة”، “القدر؛ يكون مجهول المصير أو النتائج” (p. 218), we can infer that the translations provided by the three MT systems was inaccurate and irrelevant to the right translation.

7. Conclusion

The present study aimed to evaluate and compare the performance of the three online MT systems namely, Google, Microsoft Bing and Systran in translating English idiomatic expressions into Arabic. For this purpose, twenty English idiomatic expressions are identified from six British and American online newspapers and are analyzed qualitatively and compared with their equivalents in Arabic.



Findings of the current study show that translating idiomatic expressions by the three MT systems between unrelated languages such as English and Arabic (linguistically and culturally different), pose challenges for designers of machine translation.

Based on the result of the data analysis, the current study finds that 70% of the English idiomatic expressions have been translated literally into Arabic by the three online MT systems. The three MT systems were unable to provide accurate Arabic translations to the selected English idiomatic expressions. The MB machine is, nevertheless, rated the best. It has given a better performance whereas GL translation is found the least accurate since some words remained untranslated and other words were found mistranslated.

The current study concludes that the MT systems can be improved to get a better quality of MT systems output in translating idiomatic expressions and can provide an accurate translation if they deal with the idiomatic expressions as a unit and not as an individual word. Some idioms, even if translated literally, are still acceptable, even though they carry a metaphorical meaning. A simple memory translation, which sets side-by-side the English and the Arabic idiomatic expressions is sufficient for the translation of such idioms by the machine translation systems.

It is highly recommended that more studies can help in reducing the faults and deficiencies in translating idioms and can provide solutions and suggestions that could enhance the quality of MT systems translation.

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